

Forward Thinking

Proximo Spirits Attracts Customers by Making it Fun

BY ELYSE GLICKMAN

Putting a high quality spirit on the market—even when the packaging is exquisite and the liquid is handcrafted—isn't enough for Proximo Spirits. Take Three Olives, for example.

While the mixology elite may suggest one good product is the simple formula for success and survival in the cluttered vodka market, Proximo thinks otherwise. In 2008, the company celebrated its 10th anniversary with medals from the San Francisco Wine and Spirits Competition for Three Olives Chocolate Vodka, Three Olives Pomegranate Vodka, Three Olives Mango Vodka and the original Three Olives Vodka for purists. Perhaps most importantly, Three Olives' *What's Your O-Face* multi-media campaign demonstrates to vodka fans that the brand transcends mere mixology and symbolizes a playful lifestyle.

With the launch of Three-O Rangtang, merging orange and tangerine essences to create a vodka markedly different from other citrus vodkas, 2010 is poised to be a banner year for the Three-O brand.

"We wanted to reinvent our Three-O Orange by introducing a new flavor combination that adds a tangy profile to the traditional orange vodka flavor adopted by so many brands," says Elwyn Gladstone, Proximo's VP of marketing. "The development of Rangtang and the new packaging (for the first time the vibrant color will be visible through the bottle) was driven

by research that produced two key findings. First, consumers felt the fun had been taken out of vodka with virtually all brands scrambling for the same crowded, so-called 'luxury' positioning, and second, the Three-O flavor range has become the benchmark among flavored vodkas for its wild, surprising and intense taste experience."

MARKETING IS AN ART

1800 Tequila, meanwhile, is taking the "bigger is better" approach for its ascent in the Tequila category. One of the biggest major league moves for the 1800 Tequila brand in 2010 involves an ambitious \$15.5 million television commercial campaign with actor Michael Imperioli, best known for his role in *The Sopranos*. In these theatrically photographed ads, a dapper but street-wise Imperioli compares 1800 Tequila to another established luxury brand in a no-nonsense fashion.

"These ads are radical, highly differentiated and daring," says Gladstone. "Like a *Sopranos* character, they efficiently, stylishly and provocatively get the message out about 1800 Tequila's merging of quality and value, getting what consumers really want out of their Tequila."

The brand also taps into the arts sphere with its second annual limited-edition Essential Artists collection, featuring 12 new bottles designed by up-and-coming artists from New York to Hawaii. Eleven of the final designs were chosen from over

15,000 online submissions selected by the 1800 Tequila judging panel, and the collection is rounded out by one special edition 'celebrity artist' bottle. "This new line is a vibrant example of the undiscovered, yet soon-to-be-recognized talent residing across the country," points out Gladstone. "The first installation of the series proved to be a compelling initiative, attracting attention from a wide range of both world-renowned and unknown artists. This year, in addition to the eclectic variety of 11 user-generated designs, 1800 Tequila is excited to feature a special-edition bottle by Studio Number One, a group of rising star designers whose work is now being recognized as 'essential' in the art world."

SEA WORTHY

Another milestone for Proximo Spirits is the recent launch of The Kraken, a heady rum accentuating its mythic association between rum and Maritime and Pirate folklore.

The Trinidad and Tobago-made Kraken rum distinguishes itself on the outside of its jug-shaped bottle with an evocative image of the menacing namesake giant squid and on the inside with its inky black substance. The Kraken's proprietary bottle, designed by London-based Stranger and Stranger, is a replica of a Victorian rum bottle and features two handles that allow for easy portability and pour-ability.

Beyond its dramatic appearance and an affordable price point (\$20), the rum also contains an interesting mix of flavors: chocolate, molasses, cinnamon, ginger, cloves, allspice and vanilla.

"It's a treasure in the making," says Gladstone. ■

