



« IZZE FORTIFIED provides the same natural goodness of original Izze with added vitamins and minerals to target kids and young adults.

has maintained its close relationship with its consumers through grass roots marketing and community events.

“The consumers always tell you what they want from you as a brand. The consumers who are passionate about the brand, the logo and the

product tell us where they want to buy us and what they want to see and we just try to listen to them,” Durham says. “Izze consumers like to discover brands and share Izze with their friends and colleagues so we’re staying true to the activities that brought the first years of growth to the brand.”

As part of the brand’s ongoing consumer interaction, Izze encouraged consumers to go onto its website and design their own iron-on designs incorporating the Izze logo. Many of the designs are now on display in an image gallery on the Izze website.

While Pepsi has allowed Izze a certain amount of autonomy in order to maintain its entrepreneurial culture, Durham admits there are advantages to being a part of a larger company.

“We have long-term shareholders and this is not a short-term venture fund looking for a quick return. We do things the right way and from time to time, we have resources that a small business can’t afford, such as packaging engineers and procurement experts,” Durham says.

Now experiencing strong growth, Izze is continuing to expand its distribution.

“Our distribution strategy is less state by state and more, which are the food

VITAL STATS

IZZE BEVERAGE CO.

CEO: Mikel Durham

HEADQUARTERS: Boulder, Colo., USA

VOLUME: Double-digit growth in 2008

EMPLOYEES: 50

GOALS: To continue to be a leader in the natural sparkling juice category and have a positive impact on the world through its partnership with The Global Education Fund.

Natural Evolution

Izze Beverage Co. plays out the ‘small-town brand makes good’ story with continued growth in the New Age beverage market. By Heather Landi

In only seven years, Izze has transitioned from a new entrant in the once small beverage category known as New Age to an established player in the natural beverage market. The brand, recognizable by glass bottles with a stylishly colorful, yet simple logo, can now be found in large natural food chains like Whole Foods as well as conventional grocery stores, mega retailers like Target, as well as coffee shops, restaurants and airports across the country.

Marketed with the tagline “Naturally Delightful. Refreshingly Different,” Izze was founded on the principle of offering an all-natural alternative to carbon-

ated soft drinks by developing a line of drinks made with high quality ingredients. The brand is now enjoying double-digit growth as it continues to expand its distribution into new markets, pushing eastward from its Boulder, Colo., USA-based roots.

Along the way the entrepreneurial company started by friends Todd Woloson and Greg Stroh was acquired by beverage behemoth PepsiCo, yet Izze has stuck to its early roots by remaining focused on the brand’s core equities—all natural and the simplicity of mixing sparkling water and fruit juice. Mikel Durham, CEO of Izze Beverage Co., says the company also

service locations we'd like to be present in," Durham remarks. "So, for example, we're present at Chipotle Grill, and we're also in Target. So we decide where we want the brand to be experienced first and then as it grows we spread out."

Made with 70 percent fruit juice and sparkling water, Izze contains no artificial colors, flavors or preservatives. Extending beyond its initial seven flavors, Izze now offers Sparkling Lime as well as two new flavors—Ginger

Mandarin, Izze Esque has half the calories—only 60—compared to the 120 that's in the original juice drink.

"Izze Esque is incubating in Whole Food stores and is not a full-blown product out in the market yet. It's a lower calorie alternative with less fruit juice in it — it has 25 percent fruit juice," Durham says.

Part of Izze's company philosophy since its inception was to use profits from sales of the beverage to raise awareness for The Global Education

Fund (GEF), a non-profit organization dedicated to providing educational opportunities for under-represented individuals throughout the world.

For the past several years, Izze and GEF focused on providing services and programs in Kenya, including implementing leadership programs. There are 2.5 million children orphaned in Kenya, according to Durham, and it is often expensive for students to attend high school.

"The idea was to create leadership programs that

provide promising children and young adults with a four-year secondary school scholarship as well as skills training. In 2009, we offered 60 scholarships for children in Kenya," she says.

GEF also funds book programs to establish libraries, provide textbooks and supplementary reading materials. Izze also partners with GEF to promote book drives with an Izze book trailer positioned throughout the Denver/Boulder area. Each bottle and can of Izze also mentions the GEF programs.

"The brand was born from good and remains rooted in good," Durham notes. "We find that our consumers are very world conscious and there continues to be a close connection between Izze and The Global Education Fund." **BW**



« IZZE STREET TEAMS interact with consumers at promotional events and spread the word about the brand's community involvement.

and Birch—currently only available in Whole Foods stores. The company also has expanded its line from the original sparkling juice to include a fortified version in cans and Izze Esque in bottles.

Available in five flavors, Izze Fortified is designed to be kid-friendly by offering 30 percent of the recommended daily value of vitamin C and 10 percent B6 and Niacin. The canned beverages are now available in more than 4,000 schools throughout the country, Durham notes.

Following health trends, Izze Esque offers the same sweet, natural sparkling flavor, but with less calories. Available in three flavors, Sparkling Limon, Sparkling Black Raspberry and Sparkling

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