

# Rebuilding a Brand to Remain Relevant: An Interview with Dunkin' CMO Tony Weisman

## ARTICLE |

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**I**n his two years in the role, Dunkin' Brands' CMO Tony Weisman has led the company through a rebrand, updating Dunkin's image to reflect its growing beverage priorities; expanded brand partnerships, working with companies that may not seem obvious for a business focused on drinks and donuts; and become laser-focused on user-generated content (UGC).

As part of our upcoming report on the future of the CMO, Weisman spoke to us about partnership transformations, meeting consumers where they're at, and of course—coffee.

**The company has established its brand over the last 70 years. Why did you decide to go with a rebrand?**

During our lifetime, brands like Sears and Woolworths have come and gone. We have no automatic right to exist or thrive in a rapidly changing world. We are always going to be respectful of our heritage, but we're not going to be bound by it. Dunkin' Donuts was our original name, but we've had a number of different names over the years.

Dunkin' is very colloquial, friendly and easier to communicate in our packaging and advertising. It's the original font, but refreshed, brighter.

It also was a way to underscore our heavier focus on beverages than on doughnuts. ... We're not out of the doughnut business. But our growth and the industry growth is in coffee and related beverages. By being just Dunkin', it's easier for us to be all-in.

### **How has Dunkin' evolved under your tenure?**

We have started to get very sophisticated in our digital channels. If it's a particularly hot day, [we'll serve you an ad for] an iced beverage. We've started to do more to be contextually relevant, thinking about time of day, day of week or weather.

We've also started to transform our partnerships—from Saucony Shoes to Harpoon Beer. These are not directly related to our food or coffee, but they are a way to connect with millennial consumers over our brand in a way that brings freshness to the brand that they relate to.

And we've transformed our menu. We made a commitment to espresso, got new machines and recipes and created new products. We've dramatically increased our espresso sales, they're up to 10% of our product mix, which is essentially a 50% increase.

### **You mentioned the importance of relating to the millennial customer—is this Dunkin's target audience now?**

We're a 70-year-old brand and have a lot of customers who've grown up with us and are fans for life. But in the last generation or so, a lot of people came to their caffeine habit through Frappuccinos at Starbucks. We didn't have compelling alternative products, and they became latte lovers at Starbucks and the like. To be very specific, our target—if you will—is any and every one. We are a very accessible brand regardless of where you live or your walk of life. But most of our energy is focused on bringing younger consumers into the brand who have grown up and haven't naturally followed their parents into the brand as much as we would have hoped.

### **How is the brand meeting millennials where they're at?**

[Millennial consumers] are content creators. Some of them have small followings, some have large followings; they come in all shapes and sizes. I want to empower them with a palette that they can work from. To do this, we've been very aggressive with Giphy, Stickers, celebrating UGC—with letting consumers take over our various handles. [We are] doing everything we can to create experiences and events where people can post and share about our brand.

I'm a very big believer in peer-to-peer. I can tell you all day long that I've got a great latte, but if your friend tells you, "Hey I went to Dunkin' today, and I got this latte; it was a lot better than I thought it would be," you're much more likely to come in. All of my time spent obsessing over these channels was trying to figure out the easiest way to let other people tell our story for us.

**I have to say, you all have a great app. I used it recently to purchase a gift card for a friend, and I love that you can put your own pictures on the digital and physical cards.**

I love that. I love that you love that. I'm very proud of that. We worked hard on it. And you know, I think that's another example of how we're letting consumers own the brand and put their imprint on it. If you're very lucky, one day, your face might end up on a donut—which is a fun thing we do periodically.

*For more interviews with CMOs, make sure to read our report publishing in October.*