

Del Monte CMO Elana Gold on Grocery Shopping, the Pandemic and Pink Pineapples

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The pandemic has been a learning curve for many marketers, including Elana Gold, who began her role as Del Monte's newly appointed global CMO in the midst of it.

We recently spoke with Gold about the food company's recent campaign, what it was like to start her position during a pandemic, and how consumer shopping behaviors are changing.

You started your position at Del Monte in the middle of a pandemic. What was that like?

I jumped right in. I participated in key initiatives and projects to help drive our business and support our customers. Luckily, I've been a global CMO a few times throughout my career where I managed teams all over the world, so I had to adapt quickly in those environments.

What's difficult [this time] is not having one-on-one interactions with people and customers. But I do go to the grocery stores to check out the aisles, view the competition and look for our brands.

More people have ordered their groceries online during the past few months. Do you think that behavior will stick?

Online grocery is absolutely growing, and [Del Monte] is going to be doing some of that as well. I won't go into details since it's coming soon, but you have to meet the consumer where they are.

You can capture incremental folks who have never shopped online for groceries before and then discover that they really enjoy it. So, of course, there is organic growth of that habit in this sector. But I don't believe that everyone will shift from stores to online—consumer behavior is difficult to change. Once things settle down, and that might not be until next year, you will see a drop in online [grocery] shopping.

Right now, we're doing a lot of research into the behaviors of our customers, particularly those who love shopping for fresh produce; they love to smell and touch it. [We've found that] many people miss going into physical spaces like farmers markets and grocery stores.

Del Monte recently launched a campaign to highlight its essential workers. Can you speak on that?

Yes, the “Can Do Done Daily” campaign was born very naturally, and it highlights our essential workers on our site and social media. Some of our employees featured are merchandiser Paul Obos and warehouse and operations manager Kerry Johnson. For example, Kerry took the initiative to pick up all processes that were controlled by the retailer distribution center and bring them inside the company.

When I heard about our employees going above and beyond during a global pandemic, I felt it was important to share those stories, and there are dozens more that we want to put out in the coming weeks.

Are there any marketing efforts on the horizon that you can speak about?

We're launching a pink pineapple from Costa Rica very soon. Also, on the veggie side of the business, we have new, naturally grown products, like caulilini (a vegetable similar to baby cauliflower or broccolini), which was invented in a very natural way by our Mann Packing Company.

Pink pineapples—that sounds like a millennial's dream come true.

I've never seen anything like it or tasted anything so delicious. The crop is still growing, so we have very limited quantity.

To promote the product, we're going to leverage influencers and social media. It's rare when you have an opportunity to launch something cool like this. And one thing people may not know is that these products take years to grow.

But at the end of the day, it's all about the consumers and giving them what they need. We must offer new things for them to experiment with and to entice their taste buds. So, you will be seeing a lot of added value for consumers in terms of our brand and portfolio of products.