

THE BOYDEN VIEW: Management Trends in the Food & Beverage Sector

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What are the biggest shifts you're seeing in the food and beverage sector?

Dempsey: First, health and wellness have been the main trend driving change in food and beverages globally and will continue to impact the sector at a faster pace in the next 10 years. An increase in consumer demand for plant-based foods with an emphasis on fresh and natural ingredients is already making an impact on supermarket shelves. Newer, healthier-focused companies are challenging the large CPG market leaders and forcing them to adapt in faster and more innovative ways to meet consumer expectations. Second, CBD oil will also play a key role in driving growth. And third, as the romaine lettuce recall of 2018 reminded us, food safety and transparency will be a major factor.

Which type of leaders tend to be most successful in the food and beverage sector? And how have those attributes changed over the last few years?

Dempsey: Given the challenges in today's food and beverage industry, the ability for executives to become "innovation disruptors" and think like a startup are crucial. The ability to constantly challenge your team and push back on the norm are key to a successful culture. Innovation in the sector is accelerating and the need to differentiate and stay ahead are paramount attributes for successful executives.

How important is the global piece for companies to grow? Or should some companies consider moderate pullback in the international arena?

Dempsey: International expansion is still a very important strategy for food and beverage companies to grow their bottom lines.

Beverage companies, particularly, often get too dependent on customer loyalty in the U.S. The rise of a large middle class overseas, especially in urban areas of Asia-Pacific and Latin America, represent real opportunity for growth. Companies that should be wary of international expansion are those unprepared for the risks involved, including supply chain disruption, regulatory differences, etc.

What companies in the sector stand out today?

Dempsey: The smaller, more flexible health and wellness companies are posing real challenges to the traditional corporate giants. As the larger companies struggle to maintain growth, smaller and more agile firms are exploiting the health and wellness trend to offer retailers a greater variety of healthy ingredients that consumers can choose from.

Which executives in food and beverage do you admire today?

Dempsey: Dirk Van de Put of Mondelez International faced a daunting task, but he has led the company in offering a wider range of healthy snacking to drive future growth. Jolie Weber of Wise Foods and Rhonda Levene of Bettera Brands are two dynamic women executives who are passionate about their companies and about women taking a leading role in today's workplace. Aji Parayil, CEO of ManusBio, founded a biotech company that uses technology to provide sustainable, cost-effective ingredients for health and wellness. And last but not least, Nigel Travis of Dunkin' Brands is someone I've long admired for his commitment to successful culture change at all the companies he has led.