



Getting a nation to talk tissue

by Jodie Watt
TAPPSA Journal

You will have probably seen the latest Kimberly-Clark television advert, in which men's voices and thoughts are superimposed over a group of young women as they talk about periods and feminine care products. The punch line? Find your own voice and start a real conversation about feminine care products, menstrual cycles and other personal care taboos that we rarely talk about. For Kimberly-Clark South Africa, it's the spark to create interest and ignite social dialogue about their feminine care and family care tissue products – and in doing so, build and brighten their brand equity through genuine involvement with consumers.

For Kevin Clayton, the new Managing Director of Kimberly-Clark South Africa (K-CSA) since January this year, it's about overcoming what he believes is the biggest challenge to the local tissue industry: generally lower levels of involvement. It's no real secret that feminine and family care products and habits are rarely brought up at dinner parties, book clubs and day to day conversations and therefore this makes more of a challenge to build brand equity.

In response, K-CSA has implemented a number of innovative, national marketing campaigns to pre-empt positive social dialogue about its products. Over and above the company's successful KOTEX* campaign already mentioned, K-CSA has also entered toilet paper into daily table talk through its revitalisation of the BABY SOFT* brand. Here, K-CSA decided to enlist the public in deciding whether the brand icon will remain a puppy or change to an equally cute kitten and, in doing so, has created a new public dialogue about toilet paper that would not have otherwise existed while also building a stronger interaction between the K-CSA and the consumer. "We're trying to gain a sense of necessity in personal care products, growing the excitement and interest in them," says Kevin.

Building brands is certainly an integral part of K-CSA's growth strategies, especially as the company's mantra centres on the belief that brands drive innovation as much as meaningful innovation drives brands. While some international competitors have vowed to knock Kimberly-Clark from the position of top global tissue producer by 2015, for K-CSA the focus is more on providing branded quality essentials for better lives – In other words meaningful innovation-driven performance. We're concerned with driving market share but we're even more concerned with increasing

people's quality of life, through our products and through our environmental standing.”

But how do you build your brands when times get hard and consumers are cash-strapped? Smaller household goods such as family and personal care tissue products remain necessities and even though there is a tendency for the average consumer to want to buy cheaper, those that are carefully watching their pennies are in fact more brand loyal as they can't afford to make a mistake by buying an inferior product.

As Managing Director, Kevin intends to continue Kimberly-Clark's growth strategies as a premium products company. “We are a heartfelt company, ethically bound to the environment and our community,” says Kevin. K-CSA's core values of authenticity, accountability, innovation and caring will certainly go a long way in igniting further conversations about the importance of feminine and personal care products in our lives. ■



As Managing Director of K-CSA, Kevin Clayton moves back to South African operations after almost 7 years in the company's Middle East region and continues his extensive involvement in Kimberly-Clark's Professional and Health Care business since joining K-CSA in 1981. From 1997 to 1999, Kevin was the Family Care Director, responsible for the marketing

and manufacturing of the consumer tissue business in South Africa. From 2000 to 2005, he held the position of Business Director before joining in 2006 the MEA regional team as leader of the Family Care Sector, as well as the LAN business, followed by leadership of the BCC Sector in March 2008. In June 2009, Kevin was appointed Managing Director for the GCC business while retaining responsibility for LAN.

This extensive management experience stands Kevin in good stead to overcome the challenges facing South Africa's tissue market, the biggest of which is what Kevin refers to as the low involvement levels in tissue.