

# On Site. Insight.



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Mars Chocolate North America manufactures and markets some of the world's favorite brands such as Dove®, M&M's®, Milky Way®, Snickers®, 3 Musketeers®, TWIX® and more.

*This is one in a series of industry dialogues.*

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## **What drove Mars to develop the In-Store Obsession Team?**

Mars Chocolate North America has consistently been the leader in understanding the category consumer. Over the past few years we saw, first-hand, the strong shift to more buying decisions being made at the point-of-purchase. With this change in buying behavior, we re-assessed our internal structure to better understand how to make our iconic brands even more relevant to shoppers. The In-Store Obsession Team is a major commitment that closely aligns our strategies from the top of the organization all the way to the folks building displays in-store.

## **What are the Team's goals?**

Our global, iconic brands are sold within the largest impulse category in the entire store. So we strive to gain our "Fair Share of Availability" by leveraging our shopper insights to gain "More Around the Store." The checkout area is a great example. We're using all our combined knowledge to stretch the checkout area for confectionery into Self Scan, the Express Lane and other new areas in the front of the store. We're also combining our skillsets to create solutions that extend impulse purchase opportunities into adjacent areas such as the cooler, greeting cards and magazines.

## **Does this approach require new capabilities and skill sets?**

Yes. Our lead managers for In-Store Obsession are becoming what we call "Total Solution Providers." They have to know display spec requirements in all parts of the store and be able to tap into our preferred-vendor base for innovative, productive displays. They can offer the appropriate initiatives to drive in-store presence and consumption of our brands. Inherent in this customer-facing role is that our managers must have a great command of the details of retail merchandising programs.

## **Has the new approach impacted your external partners?**

Absolutely. First, we re-evaluated all of our suppliers to see which ones could best support the In-Store Obsession Team's new approach. We want to partner with companies that bring insights that actually make a difference at retail, and who can translate our consumer messages into shopper messaging. We want to communicate Mars' equity and key marketing assets, such as our NFL and NASCAR properties, in ways that align with our retailer-customers' needs, calendars and initiatives.

Our external partners also have to be able to "score the store," which means anticipating promotional opportunities out on sales floors or finding ways to link Mars' brands to complementary products in innovative, multi-brand solutions. Finally, they have to be able to optimize our fairly complex supply-chain needs and help manage our display projects from idea (which includes programming & messaging) all the way to execution. It's a tall order.

## **How have your relationships with key retail customers changed?**

We've already achieved significant progress in the few short months since the team ramped up. At CVS, for example, our new external partners helped the In-Store Obsession Team obtain "Brand of The Year" in three different segments. At convenience stores, we have leveraged the power of Mars and Wrigley to retrofit merchandising vehicles that are driving increased availability.

Through our robust Collaborative Planning Process, we now include In-Store Obsession to help drive category growth for all of our partners. As we come to understand our customers better and deliver on their expectations, our satisfaction metrics continue to improve. It's working.

