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The most important element of a successful marketing plan is not the budget or media selection, but the idea. *Advertising Age* presents its eighth annual salute to the people whose ideas have built strong brands.

Carter Welch

Brach's Fruit Snacks Shapes

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By: Laurie Freeman

Brach & Brock Confections' strategy of linking high-profile brand names to its own fruit snacks and candies quickly is paying off.

"We believe that using strong co-brands and licenses is a quicker way to communicate our quality to consumers," says Carter Welch, 35, director of marketing-fruit snacks and chocolate confections, who developed the licensing strategy. "We go directly to moms with the brand names she knows and trusts."

Three years ago, the company's fruit snacks sales totaled less than \$10 million. Under the new licensing strategy, sales have doubled each of the last two years, and are on track to do the same this year.

Three years ago, Brach's Fruit Snacks Shapes unit market share was 1%, according to Information Resources Inc. Now, with a 22% unit market share of the dry fruit snacks segment, Brach is a leading competitor with such licensed names as ReaLemon, Chiquita, Hot Wheels, Smucker's, Batman, Donkey Kong, Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey and Godzilla. (Fruit snack shapes represent about 50% of the total dry fruit snacks category; fruit rolls make up the other segment. Brach's does not compete in that segment).

Brach's 1997 introduction of Hi-C candies and fruit snacks, under a licensing agreement with Coca-Cola Co.'s Minute Maid, further raised Brach's profile. The line, consisting of hard candies, gummies, fruit slices and orange slices and chewy fruit snacks in seven flavors, "have really done well," particularly fruit snacks under the Hi-C name, says Mr. Welch, who began his marketing career at Procter & Gamble Co., working on Duncan Hines cookies and Crisco shortening.

"We use images mom feels comfortable with because she or dad have grown up with," says Mr. Welch. "At the same time, we've focused on licensing partners who are leaders in their categories and have been for many years. We're not doing in-and-out licenses, but adding licenses that do well, year after year."

The success of the Hi-C brands, initially supported with print advertising that focused on key mom-preferred benefits such as vitamins, nutrition and real fruit juice, has led to this year's introduction of Brach's Hi-C Juice Fillers fruit snacks and Smucker's Fruit Fillers.

The two newest fruit snacks will be supported by a \$5 million to \$10 million TV and print campaign that will begin airing this summer via Tandem Advertising, Blue Bell, Pa.