Sensory Evaluation of Chocolate Products

Small to mid-size companies can maintain the quality of their signature products by defining their attributes and tasting daily.

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Last year, arguably one of the toughest years confectionary has seen in quite a while, there still were successful companies and products. The consumer still had a willingness to splurge on indulgent treats with which they felt a connection.

Your product or company has a unique story, which should be used to connect with the consumer. This story may be what is keeping a confectioner in business. It is all about differentiation in the marketplace. Give customers a reason to select your product off the store shelf or drive to your store. Some ways to do this are to tell your company story or a particular product story. If your company has an interesting history or path to a product introduction, tell it. Most confectionery companies have at least one quirky character, usually the founder, who makes for an interesting story.

Besides your company story, there is a product story. How was this product invented? Was it by accident? Was it ingenuity to use aging milk to produce a unique milk chocolate with which we are all familiar? It all comes down to a product’s flavor or sensory experience to tell the story. The words used to describe and define individual products are the words we use to write our product story. Does your company have the story (or words) that describe your product and evaluate current production against these key attributes?

We will review why tasting your product is so important, who should do it and how to get started or expand the program that is already in place. We will be concentrating on the small to mid-size confectioner, since most of the large confectioners may have whole departments to oversee this function. I respect the product guidance that these groups provide, but there are lot of companies that need basic information that works on the plant floor. We will focus on sensory evaluation at its most basic level.