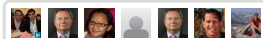


A New York Mom Outsmarts Coke And Pepsi With A Cool Marketing Idea



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New York City is about to crack down on soda but parents still face a challenge: weaning their children of the sugary stuff. Awareness of childhood obesity is just beginning, and the statistics are troubling: one in three children are obese and this generation of children is expected to have a shorter lifespan than their parents.

Non-sugary drinks, like water, are just not cool enough for kids, says Rose Cameron. Between 2005 and 2007, before she launched her WAT-AAH! brand of bottled water for kids, 36 beverages aimed at the younger demographic were introduced and all of them contained colors or sweeteners.

“As a mom, I’ve tried it all, all the tricks,” says Cameron, who has two boys aged 13 and 9, “Bribe them, promise them this or that, put a dash of lemon or orange in the water.” Nothing worked. Cameron, a former advertising executive, decided to bring her branding skills to bear and tried serving water in a “cute little container.” This time her approach stuck. The kids thought that the new container was cool.



And that’s how Rose Cameron stumbled on an idea that the big soft drink companies missed altogether: a healthy drink that kids would adopt as cool. She realized that many mothers face the same dilemma about getting their kids to avoid sugary drinks, but the alternatives were not appealing to kids. Cameron decided to come up with *a water brand for kids, by kids*. And in 2008, the WAT-AAH! brand of water was born.

Cameron gathered her two sons and her partner’s children around her dining room table to discuss the potential for a kid brand. The name WAT-AAH! was born during an informal focus group after the kids screamed “water”, and it sounded like “Wat-aah.” The screaming also inspired the brand’s logo, which came from her sons drawing each other with large mouths. Her sons chose the colors, the style, and the sleek shaped bottle. They even starred in the first commercials for WAT-AAH!

The kids pretty much made all the creative decisions, which gave the brand its authenticity.

Cameron started selling WAT-AAH! from the trunk of her car. “We went door to door,” she says. “I started in my neighborhood, in TriBeCa, knocked on every door, every single deli. In our first week, we got about seven delis.”

Now, her little water company has grown from five unpaid interns to 30 full-time employees with national distribution. And WAT-AAH! is selling in more than 10,000 stores across the country including Whole Foods Market, Albertson’s, Shop-Rite, Food Lion, Shaw’s and Kroger.

Rose Cameron says her company is about much more than making a profit, “It really is about helping kids stay healthy.” WAT-AAH! has been the sponsor of the “Let’s Move! Flash Workout”, one of First Lady [Michelle Obama](#)’s anti-obesity projects, and it is involved in a number of other programs helping kids lead a healthier lifestyle.

I asked Cameron what advice she’d give other entrepreneurs. “If you believe in your idea, don’t give up,” she says, “Even if people tell you that you can’t succeed because the competition is too powerful.”