

The Mysterious Mixes of Flavorman



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Peeking through a window that overlooks the beverage laboratory at Flavorman, marketing director Colleen Rice compares the view to a glimpse within Willy Wonka's factory. Employees mix and sample liquids, creating inventive prototypes that could be the next big iced coffee or liqueur to hit shelves.

Akin to the wacky concoctions in the classic Roald Dahl children's novel *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, the formulations created at Louisville, Kentucky-based Flavorman are a bit of a mystery. The company specializes in beverage development, creating unique flavors for a range of products, from energy drinks to coconut waters to pediatric dog formulas. Project leaders work with clients to ensure that each drink meets their color, taste, ingredient and performance specifications. Balancing elements such as

caffeine, additives, vitamins, minerals, extracts and sweeteners, testers tinker until they have found the perfect combination.

Flavorman founder David Dafoe is an expert at such feats. In his first post-college job at a company in Cincinnati, a test revealed that he had the palate of a "supertaster." After gaining valuable beverage development experience, including crafting a new Jack Daniels line for Brown-Forman, Dafoe employed his skills and instincts to found Flavorman in 1992, and hasn't looked back since.

One of the most intriguing aspects of Flavorman is the secrecy surrounding its' client list. Businesses such as Jones Soda Company, Starbucks, and Ocean Spray are openly discussed, but the identities of many others remain closely guarded. "You wouldn't believe some of the clients we have," Rice says, although she can't share who they are, even to potential new customers, due to confidentiality agreements. With Flavorman's strong reputation, one can only speculate on the companies that might request its services. Rice hints that some of the most popular recent requests involve energy drinks and infused alcohols such as vodkas and whiskies.

Flavorman is proof of how quality output creates steady business. Rice notes that until 2011, the twenty-one year-old company didn't pay for a single ad. In spite of Flavorman's mystique, the secret is out on its' success.