



Johnson & Johnson's AMBI

When Johnson & Johnson acquired the AMBI brand in 2004 from Sara Lee Household and Body Care USA to strengthen the company's existing skin care portfolio, the company knew something had to change. Although AMBI's fade creams and beauty bars had a loyal following, its out-of-date packaging and formulations were out of step with the current multicultural consumer. However, giving AMBI a new look was only a small part of Johnson & Johnson's plan for the brand; its primary focus is educating women of color about the importance of establishing an effective skin care regimen, from cleansing the skin to protecting it from the sun's damaging rays.

To find out how Johnson & Johnson used consumer research to redefine the AMBI brand and to learn more about the new products it developed for the line, *OTC Beauty Magazine* chatted with Sherry Thompson, AMBI product director, and Monica Neufang, director of public relations for Johnson & Johnson Consumer Products Company.

AMBI

199 Grandview Rd.
Skillman, NJ 08558
888-879-2624
www.ambiskincare.com

Top 3 Products:

AMBI Even & Clear Daily
Moisturizer with SPF 30
AMBI Fade Cream-Normal Skin
AMBI Even & Clear
Exfoliating Wash

OTC Beauty Magazine(OTC):
Please give our readers a brief history of the AMBI brand.

Monica Neufang (MN): AMBI turned 40 in 2006, and it had primarily been a brand focused on reaching or meeting the needs of African American women. In some of the focus groups Johnson & Johnson held, the AMBI of yesterday was all about the fade creams and beauty bars. It is something that their moms used—it was always around in the house—but the old packaging looked very dated and did not meet the needs of today's woman with richer skin tones.

(OTC): How did Johnson & Johnson use consumer research to improve the AMBI brand?

(MN): Upon the acquisition, we spent almost two years working through research to understand the consumers and what they want. We made them a part of the development process by asking what is it that they need and what we could make specifically for them that they don't already have. We really took our time to understand the products—how they were formulated and what needs they were meeting from the consumers. We found that there was great opportunity to optimize the formulas of the fade creams and really improve the aesthetics, in terms of the smell and feel of them. We have reformulated everything, except for the beauty bars. We have also repackaged and contemporized all AMBI products. The new advertising has really elevated the entire brand to a much sleeker, more elegant, aspiring place.

(OTC): Tell our readers about the AMBI of today.

(MN): The AMBI Even & Clear line launched in June 2006. Four products are part of this line. The AMBI Even & Clear Foaming Cleanser, AMBI Even & Clear Exfoliating Wash and AMBI Even & Clear Acne Clearing Treatment all have something called the Even Blend Complex, which combines soy extract and antioxidant vitamins C and E; all of these help to even the tone and texture of skin and to soften the skin.

The fourth product in the line is the AMBI Even & Clear Daily Moisturizer with SPF 30. The SPF 30 in this product is the same SPF that is in the Neutrogena products with helioplex, as well as our Aveeno sun care products with active photobarrier complex. This SPF is unique and quite wonderful because it is the only product on the market that offers consumers broad UVA and UVB protection. That is really important because with richer toned skin, if you have a dark mark and are out in the sun without wearing sunscreen, that dark mark is just going to get darker. It also has soy in it, which helps even out skin tone and visibly reduce skin discolorations.



We do everything that we can to help the consumers understand the benefits of taking care of their skin, not only from an anti-aging perspective, but from a general skin-health perspective.

Part of our job is educating women on the importance of caring for the skin and having a regimen that includes the use of sunscreen, regardless of how light or dark their skin might be. So, not only do we develop these products because we know that these are things that women wanted, but we also realize that there is an opportunity for us to educate them on what, perhaps, they need that they haven't even realized.

What is very compelling about the AMBI line in its entirety is that it had been formerly shelved at retail with ethnic hair care and other ethnic or multicultural products, but the AMBI brand has actually been reshelved, or reassigned in terms of the shelf set, to be put with all of the other skin care products. It is a pretty dramatic change for this brand, which for its entire history has been not where women would be looking for these skin care products.

(OTC): What's your primary message to owners of beauty supply stores?

Sherry Thompson (ST): The AMBI skin care brand is dedicated to developing scientifically proven products that address the unique skin care needs of multicultural women. AMBI recognizes the value beauty supply stores bring to multicultural women and to the community—they provide valuable products and services that cater to multicultural consumers. And, it is important to the AMBI brand to have a strong presence in their stores.

(OTC): How do you partner with beauty supply stores to maximize market penetration and profits?

(ST): We participate in key industry distributor trade shows that cater to beauty supply stores. We've also developed different promotional materials (i.e. posters, brochures, displays, etc.) to help drive awareness and trial of AMBI in their stores. [For instance, a bilingual informational consumer brochure includes an overview of the AMBI product line and tips for proper skin care.] As we go further into 2007, we are optimizing our plans to better meet their needs.

(OTC): Why do you go beyond pitching the product and tailor your marketing materials to educate?

(MN): Well, if it is just about selling coffee, Starbucks wouldn't be what it is today. It's a matter of educating people about how to drink a coffee, how you can make it your own what the different kinds of beans are. You may not even know what a macchiato is, but you know they will help you with that.

Just like Starbucks does with their coffee, we want people to make AMBI something that consumers feel passionately about. It's about making sure that if I run out of my acne clearing treatment, I am not going to buy just another acne clearing treatment; I'm going to want the AMBI Even & Clear Acne Clearing Treatment because it works for me and because I feel great about the brand. Consumers know we give back to the community and are committed to them (the women of color) through education and support. As a consumer, I can say for myself that I want a brand that is going to live up to its promise; it is not just going to sell me a marketing message. AMBI wants for consumers to understand that it is not just about selling a product; it's about being there to be a trusted skin care advisor.

We do everything that we can to help the consumers understand the benefits of taking care of their skin, not only from an anti-aging perspective, but from a general skin-health perspective. This summer, we are going to be doing the Celebrate Your Beauty Everyday Tour again, which is an entire aesthetic experience of the AMBI brand; it is exactly how we want people to experience AMBI. We went to MegaFest, Harlem Week and Black Family Reunion with our booths, and it is essentially a mobile-marketing initiative. We have aestheticians on hand to do one-on-one skin care exams, talking to the consumers directly about the kind of products that should consider for their skin care regimen and educate them about the need for sunscreen, etc. I think that is an area that separates our J&J brands from other skin care brands.

(OTC): What is the biggest challenge of doing business in our industry today?

(ST): The industry is quite fragmented, and most stores have such different formats that it can be a challenge to develop programs that are executable across the majority of the industry. However, the AMBI brand is committed to better understanding their needs so we can maximize sales for both of our businesses. **JM**