

## Positioning a line of gourmet snacks for introduction into a national marketplace.

Our client, a boutique regional producer of artisan gourmet snacks, was seeking to expand their business to a national market as well as into corporate gifts and were looking for guidance in making this initiative an unqualified success.

Online focus groups were held with their target audience of affluent consumers with participants being recruited from across the country who regularly entertain friends in their homes and/or are involved with some aspect of corporate gift-giving. Prior to conducting the focus groups, unbranded samples of the entire product line were mailed to each participant to be served to friends and family and evaluated during the focus group discussion.

The focus group was conducted using the Zoom platform and moderated by Chief Insights Officer, Ellen Sills-Levy using a pre-approved discussion guide. The CEO of the company and her branding consultant listened in, sending probes where a more in-depth understanding was needed. The discussions were also recorded for later viewing.

Key learnings from the research came as a surprise to our client:

- Unbranded, participants loved the entire product line, finding the snacks to be tasty and something they would serve to guests or gladly give as hostess gifts. Pricing was also in line with IRS corporate gift guidelines.
- Branded, participants were much less enthusiastic, as they not find the branding and packaging appealing. In fact, their reaction to the packaging and branding was that they would be unlikely to consider purchasing these snacks for their own personal use, and certainly not as a gift for friends or business colleagues.
- To even consider purchasing this product as a gift for friends or business colleagues, they would require a much more streamlined and upscale look and feel in the packaging as well as a product name that would positively reflect their own self image as a sophisticated consumer.

Based on these learnings, our client completely changed their branding and packaging, starting with a new company name, paving the way for a successful national launch and corporate gift business.

