



Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf appoints Formula AOR

BY KIMBERLY MAUL

LOS ANGELES: West Coast-based The Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf hired Formula as its AOR for a four-pronged PR approach.

Formula president Michael Olguin said that the agency's LA office will handle the franchise's national media relations, store openings, online communications, and product launches tied in to regional PR strategy. As part of its online efforts, the agency plans to aggressively reach out to bloggers, especially those targeting the 18- to 35-year-old target market, Olguin said.

After a formal RFP that included about 20 agencies, Formula was chosen for the one-year, \$200,000 account, said Terry Mansky, the chief administrative officer of International Coffee & Tea LLC, which does business as The Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf.

The company only recently made the announcement about the new AOR because of some changes it handled in its marketing department, including the addition of Sydney Reiner as a consultant to the marketing department, who led



Formula competed with 20 other agencies for the \$200,000 account

the search. However, Formula was chosen effective February 1.

"When we brought in Sydney as a consultant, one of her first [focal] points that she had was to have a competitive RFP go out, because it's critical for us to get the PR firm

right," Mansky said. "To a certain degree, some of the prior folks in the marketing department were still living in a 'Garden of Eden' environment of retail that we're not in anymore."

To pitch for the account, Formula staffers, including Olguin, worked as baristas for a day at six different store locations, learning about coffee, tea, and the brand.

"Ultimately, the people who we have to serve are our baristas, and so putting the flashlight on that was really an absolutely correct retail mentality that we want a public relations firm to share with us," Mansky explains. Formula has already won the company mentions in a variety of publications, including *OK Magazine*, with tween superstar Miley Cyrus drinking its products, he noted.

The Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf's outgoing agency was JS2 Communications. JS2 CEO and cofounder Jeff Smith told *PRWeek* via e-mail that the two companies separated amicably in March of 2007. JS2 did not participate in the recent RFP. ■