

Coca-Cola's Tastes Run To Organic Drink

LA Aloe pockets funds from soda giant in bid to bottle up market.

LA Aloe, producer of organic beverage Aloe Gloe, got a boost earlier this month when the Venturing & Emerging Brands unit of Coca-Cola Co. bought a minority stake in the Arcadia company.

"It gave us the resources to execute our long-term business plan," said **Dino Sarti**, LA Aloe's chief executive.

Sarti declined to say how much Coca-Cola invested, but said he considers the stake "significant."

Aloe Gloe, which bottles its beverage in Corona, is already available in 20,000 stores across the country and had a two-year growth rate of 64 percent, according to the company. It comes in four aloe vera-based flavors, including crisp aloe, white grape, lemonade, and coconut.

Sarti said the company wants to grow market by market.

"We'll establish it on the East and West coasts, and then move to the middle,"



Making Its Case to Buyers: Aloe Gloe beverages from drink company LA Aloe.

he said.

Venturing & Emerging Brands focuses on cultivating brands with billion-dollar potential. Its other drinks include Zico Coconut Water, Honest Tea, and Hansen's Natural soda.

"Our minority investment in Aloe Gloe gives VEB a further entry in the emerging market segment for plant-based beverages," **Scott Uzzell**, president of Venturing & Emerging Brands, said in a statement. "We look forward to partnering with Aloe Gloe to help them capture growth

from this exciting consumer trend."

Despite looking to dominate the market for its healthy drink, Sarti said he wouldn't mind having a competitor.

"I was a veteran of the coconut wars," he said. "I don't think Zico could be as big without Vita Coco. They had to create a craze. With one company, it could be really hard to do that."

Sarti and his partners, **Daniel Stepper** and **Patrick Bolden**, met while working for Coke. They started L.A.

Libations in 2009, another beverage company that Coca-Cola also invested in two years ago. L.A. Libations "incubated" several of VEB's products, including Zico Coconut Water. Aloe Gloe was the first brand created by L.A. Libations and was later spun off as its own company.

In the future, Sarti wants to experiment with different package sizes and making Aloe Gloe a fountain drink. The company is considering a capital round at the end of the year, he said.

— Caroline Anderson

Intravenous Treatments Hit Homes

KabaFusion to pursue healthy boost from demand for therapies.

People suffering from life-threatening autoimmune diseases and neurological disorders can now get the treatment and medication they need from the comfort of their own home.

Dr. Sohail Masood, founder and chief executive of infusion therapy firm **KabaFusion**

in Cerritos, said his business is likely to grow as treatments utilizing intravenous immunoglobulin (IVIG) become more commonplace

"A lot of different diseases that have been historically untreatable, such as Hepatitis C, are now treatable," said Masood, who was nominated last month for an **Ernst & Young** Entrepreneur of the Year award for the L.A. region. "But these specialty drugs are very expensive. Until generics are available, which may take 10 to 15 years, specialty pharmacy is going to continue to grow, and

the problem for payers will be how to manage the costs."

KabaFusion's certified pharmacists and nurses travel to patients' homes and administer plasma-based medication to treat Hepatitis C, HIV, abnormal blood clots, and other ailments.

It is also an accredited specialty pharmacy, meaning its employees can dispense

expensive medications that often have special handling, storage, and distribution requirements.

Such pharmacies dispensed about \$98 billion in drugs last year, according to

Philadelphia research and consulting firm **Pembroke Consulting Inc.**

While most of California's 23 accredited specialty pharmacies act only as dispensaries, KabaFusion's in-home services set it apart, Masood said. The expensive IVIG treatments account for about 90 percent of the company's revenue and allows KabaFusion to keep profit margins around 40 percent compared with the roughly 8 percent margin common among specialty pharmacies.

— Carter Stoddard



Masood

Attorney's Practice Includes Punches, Kicks

Corporate attorney **Tamara Kurtzman**, 35, doesn't throw punches at opponents in the courtroom. But her classes in the Israeli martial art of Krav Maga are another matter.



Kurtzman

"You're punching at full strength, kicking at full strength," she said. "Your mission is to disable this person entirely. To some extent, that's how I approach law, too."

Kurtzman launched Beverly

Hills-based **TMK Attorneys** in 2009 after feeling frustrated as a small cog in a big downtown firm. Charting a solo path as a young attorney didn't worry her; Kurtzman said she has always done things a little differently.

As a kid, she studied fencing and played the bagpipes — hobbies that she still pursues, even if it means blasting her neighbors with high-volume bursts of music. Kurtzman stumbled upon Krav

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JONATHAN DIAMOND

Maga a couple of years ago, and the intense sport appealed to her as an alternative to gym workouts and a way to get off the "legal clock" for a few hours a week.

She has since advanced to the second skill level, a yellow belt. Tackling 60-year-old female classmates was the hardest move to master.

"At first I felt awkward, like

hitting my mother. Not a good thing. But everybody takes it so well," Kurtzman said. "You get to really know people because you sit there for an hour trying to beat them up."



King

Peak Interest

When **Coby King**, chief executive of downtown L.A. PR firm **High Point Strategies**, went hiking 30 years ago, he didn't expect the trip would turn into a lifelong passion.

"I was blown away by how

beautiful those places are," he said about his first trip to the San Gabriel Mountains. "With just a little effort, you could get to the most incredible places."

King, who is now 55, can't go a week without

hiking, rock climbing, or backpacking. His latest goal is to visit the highest points in each of California's 58 counties.

"The list forces you to go to new places and it's been a lot of fun," he said. "The more places

you hike, the better you get at it."

The highest peak he has reached so far is Mount Whitney, with an elevation of 14,505 feet, in Sierra Nevada. King is planning to climb the peak this month for the third time.

"For me, getting outdoors and spending time around nature is a spiritual experience," he said. "It teaches you so much."

Staff reporters **Daina Beth Solomon** and **Olga Grigoryants** contributed to this column. Page 3 is compiled by Editor **Jonathan Diamond**. He can be reached at jdiamond@labusinessjournal.com.

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