

Constant creation

To keep up with kid demands, confectioners rely on their inventive imaginations and accessible technology. Taste always takes center stage, but health and education are waiting in the wings. **By Kelly Rehan**

From an illuminated, bug-shaped lollipop to sour spray candies that cut calories and sugar, the interactive candy industry continues to literally pull out all the bells and whistles to vie for children's taste buds.

In the interactive or novelty candy segment, staying on top of the trends determines whether a company survives. But new technology and some good ol' fashioned imagination have enabled novelty confectioners to always keep consumers guessing and hungry for more.

"As technologies become commonplace and cheaper, they can be incorporated into novelty candy," says Andy Telatnik, director of marketing for Colorado Springs, Colo.-based Impact Confections. "We have seen many products that include lights and sounds, that 10 years ago would not have been financially possible. I would expect to see, as new technologies become available, more complicated and sophisticated products."

Impact Confections tapped into technology in their Buggin' Glow Pop. The confection features a lightning bug-shaped lollipop in a plastic mason jar. A button on the top of the jar cues a light that shines through the lollipop.

"It has interactivity during the eating, play value after the candy is gone and a nostalgic factor for the parents who remember catching

lightning bugs," Telatnik says.

Telatnik says that Impact Confections follows the latest candy and culture trends for idea inspiration. For many novelty confectioners, pop culture provides the ideal basis for innovation. Louisville, Ky.-based CandyRific, for instance, licenses its novelty candy products to keep its generic product lines fresh.

"Our philosophy is we launch items generically to make sure that the item can sell on its own," says Rob Auerbach, president of CandyRific. "If it sells well generically, we'll add a license to it."

The company first released its Giggle Head Pops, for example, without any licensing. The positive response prompted the launch of the "Shrek" and Tweety Bird counterparts, which found immediate success.

"We tend to go with licenses that are very evergreen, such as *Slinky*, *Etch A Sketch*, *M&M's*, *Skittles*, *Starburst*,



Tweety Bird—they're still going to be popular

50 years from now," Auerbach says. "We also mix it with topical entertainment properties like "Shrek" and "Spiderman" and other movie and DVD releases."

CandyRific is currently anticipating the launch of its newest licensing endeavor with M&M's candy. The partnership generated 15 different products, including a dual license M&M's character fan with NASCAR, an M&M's purse embossed with characters on the front and filled with candy, and an M&M's music player, which features a sound clip of each M&M's character playing an instrument.

Though attaching a recognizable figure to the candy attracts consumers and can be sold at a premium, Auerbach says the company doesn't live and die by movie and character licensing.

"If the movie's terrible, the candy sales don't get prettier, either," he adds.

