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# MillerCoors Exec Discusses Way Forward For Light Beer

## Six Questions With VP-Brand Marketing Gannon Jones



Miller Lite Original Can

The next few months are a critical period for MillerCoors as it transitions Miller Lite to a new creative agency and seeks to reverse the recent decline of Coors Light.

The brewer, as CEO Tom Long recently outlined to distributors, is changing its messaging to talk more about what it sees as the inherent strengths of its big light beer brands, which have suffered during the craft beer craze.

Americans still want to drink light beers, "they just do it on fewer occasions," he said during a private meeting at a recent National Beer Wholesalers Association gathering in New Orleans, according to a transcript of his speech. "And so we don't have to convince them to come back to premium lights. We just have to give them good reasons to be proud to drink our premium lights whenever and wherever they may be, and that means making sure our brands are as high-quality as our beers."

One person who will help lead that charge is Gannon Jones, a former PepsiCo marketer who joined MillerCoors a year ago as VP-brand marketing, reporting directly to Chief Marketing Officer Andy England.



MillerCoors VP-Brand  
Marketing Gannon  
Jones

Ad Age caught up with Mr. Jones at the NBWA event to get his thoughts on the light beer category, as well as the brewer's recent hiring of TBWA Worldwide, Los Angeles for the Miller Lite creative account.

**Ad Age:** Why did you pick TBWA for Miller Lite?

**Mr. Jones:** We said all along that we were looking for a long-term partner. This wasn't about picking a specific script that was great chemistry with us [and TBWA]. They got the brands really, they also had a great understanding of millennials and particularly millennials. It was really a unanimous decision. It was easy for us | wanted to move quickly.

**Ad Age:** Some analysts have suggested that big beer brands are in an inevitable and irreversible decline, saying that millennials don't drink their father's beer. What is your response to this theory?

**Mr. Jones:** I think there is truth to that, but I don't think that it is like any category, brands need to constantly reinvent themselves | relevant for the next generation of consumers.



If there is a mistake that perhaps we've made the industry, it's forgetting that who brought going to bring you to where you need to go. V conscious of that. And we are very conscious need to win with in the future, and that's who putting our resources. You obviously don't w who brought you here, but as they age, they : drinking as much. So you have to go after the coming into the fold.

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**Ad Age:** Now that you have a new agency for what can we expect creatively? Will you move humor at all?

**Mr. Jones:** Humor is a part of our category, i our brand. And I would expect that it will stil of what we do.

You will probably see us evolve to a form of h also helps elevate the brand and reflects the i our consumer. We definitely will talk about c just like we've been talking about our produc Because I think we do believe there is an opp speak about the beer credentials of our brand

**Ad Age:** Has MillerCoors adequately defende beer category and Miller Lite against critics?

**Mr. Jones:** Any time a brand gets away from generally starts to suffer. I do think that we g really what we were all about, probably over t decade. The packaging and the white can [fo helped us rediscover that.

If you actually look at the world of lighter, se beers, consumers are still drinking a lot of th moved away perhaps a bit from what we've defined as the big three

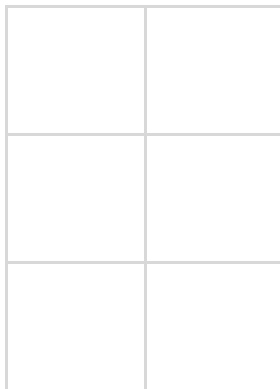
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re talking to some and they said, 'I drink light beer. My favorite light beer is Miller Hi Obviously it's not a light beer by our definition. But just because a have the word 'lite' or 'light' at the end of it doesn't mean that they part of a different category.

**Ad Age:** What, specifically, was the mistake that Miller Lite made?

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**Mr. Jones:** For one, we did move away from talking about our product. The time we talked about our product was probably six or seven or eight years ago. And so as somebody who is 21 or 22 now today, they never heard of that.

We are a great, authentic light beer. We invented this category. We have a lot of great credential stories that we definitely stole about. Maybe we did start to play the game a little bit of chasing each other [chasing competitors] ... instead of being true to who we really were.

**Ad Age:** Where is Coors Light headed?

**Mr. Jones:** Fundamentally, our strategy is sound on Coors Light. [Over the course of the last six months, we] discovered a few things. One, we own the notion of cold, consumers aren't laddering that to a specific particular, benefit that is relevant to them. So what you will see us ... is connect the dots between what cold gives you. ... Again, back about the product: Our obsession with cold, cold filtered, cold bottled and exposed to the extremes of heat -- all of that gives you a cleaner, crisper, smoother, more refreshing beer, which supports the notion of us being the world's most refreshing beer.

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