

# Neuma gives salons/consumers a sustainable choice

**N**euma Research was created to answer the growing demand for an authentic and healthy sustainable lifestyle brand that salons and spas can offer their clients with a clean conscience. After just one year, the company has made its mark, with distribution set in 36 states and plans to launch Canada later this year and international markets in 2013. *Beauty Industry Report* recently caught up with **Jeff Orrell**, senior vice president of sales and marketing, for an update and a look ahead **BIR: Welcome, Jeff. Neuma Research has certainly had an exciting first year. Please fill in BIR's readers on your company's story.**

**Jeff Orrell (JO):** For years, our industry has hung its hat on clever buzzwords, like "pure and natural," "eco friendly" and "organic." But consumers' access to information has outpaced marketers' ability to distract their attention with smoke and mirrors. Brands who counted on seductive front label claims of "organic" or "natural" but whose ingredients were the same as those found in their "unhealthy" competitors, exposed themselves with no way to justify their claims. We set out to create a high-performing, transparent professional hair care brand that allows professionals to feel confident prescribing it, not only because of its high level of performance, but knowing that they are recommending a product that meets or exceeds the expectations of today's educated consumers.

It has been said that bad news travels faster than good news, so it is time to stop and think before making a claim. Social media is growing at an exponential rate, and when there is lack of credibility, it spreads like a virus.

**BIR: Please tell us about your products. What sets them apart? What does the sustainable positioning mean?**

**JO:** Neuma offers high-performing, transparent hair care products, giving professionals and consumers a healthier and more sustainable choice. From our formulations to our bottles, from our marketing materials and human resource management to our PETA and fair trade approvals, Neuma shows that our passion for "because everything matters" is more than just words. We often say,

don't believe a word we say, go online, do your own research and see it for yourself. As one salon professional put it, "I'm embarrassed that I did not do my own research (about other brands)." As a result, distributors, salons and spas love the growth and success that they are experiencing with Neuma.

**BIR: What makes these products special?**

**JO:** It's what we choose not to use that makes Neuma's formulations special. We have an extensive list of harmful ingredients that we place on the back panel of every bottle under the heading "Zero," showing clearly what we choose to not use. Being able to create a transparent, sustainable lifestyle brand without utilizing synthetically manipulated fragrance that hides several of the no-no ingredients is an example of why we feel our formulations are special. Another example is utilizing actual fragrant oils at higher levels that have a secondary benefit of enhancing performance while maintaining ingredient integrity. Our formulas are about sustaining health, beauty and color and lowering our carbon footprint. That's why we use sustainable materials from vendors who use sustainable business practices utilizing sustainable plant-based materials that do not fade color and are not harmful to our planet and us.

**BIR: Tell me about the company's roll out.**

**JO:** This has definitely been the fastest roll out that I have had the pleasure of being a part of—and I've been involved with some big ones! We started shipping September 17, 2010, and have launched 15 distributors who are representing Neuma in 36 states. Distributors are looking for authentic, sustainable, green brands, as they see them as a viable growth category. Salons are requesting healthier alternatives because of ingredient challenges that they, a friend or family member need to avoid due to health-related challenges. More and more professionals and consumers are

looking for products that do not contain harmful ingredients. Together, those are the reason for Neuma's immediate acceptance and success in the marketplace.

**BIR: Given that success, you must have targeted distributors carefully.**

**JO:** There has been a very positive response from distributors across the country and internationally, as well. We qualify distributors based upon a successful history of brand representation, a good fit for Neuma with their existing brands, territory coverage, how well they work with the distributor(s) they border, their commitment to education and their reputation in the marketplace. That information is vital to establishing successful relationships with the right distributors and is critical for establishing the right fit for both companies.

**BIR: What is the profile of the salon and/or spa that Neuma can benefit?**

**JO:** Neuma targets salons and spas that are interested in providing a solution to evolving green consumers and believe in healthier alternatives,



*Neuma's attractive packaging is also sustainable.*

sustainability or want to create a green lifestyle retail section. We are the answer for salons and spas that are looking for a high performing, transparent, lifestyle brand. Spas love Neuma, because it meets their expectations for compatible, prescriptive, sophisticated, healthy sustainable products. Salons love Neuma, because it puts the prescriptive power back into professionals' hands without sacrificing performance.

**BIR: What is your story? How did you get to where you are today?**

**JO:** Twenty-four years ago, my sister convinced me to take a look at the beauty industry. She was attending **Oceanside Beauty College** at the time. I got my start on the distribution level in 1988, working for an **Aveda** distributor in southern California. In 1991, I was recruited by a larger Aveda distributor in the

Pacific Northwest, where I eventually happened upon **ABBA** products. I wrote a letter in 1993 to **Jim Markham**, who was the founder/CEO, then joined the company as a regional sales manager and served in that position until 1996 when the company was sold. I then purchased a distribution company in Bozeman, MT, which proved to be a great experience. In 1999, Jim Markham approached me with the opportunity to help him create a new hair care brand. We launched **Pureology** July 30, 2001. In 2007, Pureology was sold to **L'Oréal**, and after a short hiatus, I consulted for a couple of years before getting involved in bringing Neuma to market.

**BIR: Who else is on the management team?**

**JO: Tommy Dionisio**, chief sustainability officer (CSO); **Mikea Lawhon**, director of education; **Greg Garcia**, western regional sales manager; and **Lee McCall**, eastern regional sales manager, are on our management team.

How fortunate we are to have our very own CSO. You are starting to see more companies making a commitment to being greener and implementing sustainable business and manufacturing practices. Tommy has been committed to this cause since day one, ensuring that Neuma incorporates sustainability measures by lowering our company's carbon footprint and ensuring our utilization of sustainable, post consumer and recyclable materials. He updates the team on a regular basis about new green developments and educates us all on ingredient integrity, while providing us with viable greener alternatives that we can use in both our work and personal lives. Tommy is also involved with operations, which is a perfect marriage between our company's green objectives and how we facilitate them internally, as well as externally.

Mikea manages our education department. She has developed many successful professional industry teams, and we are very grateful to have her on our team. Lee and Greg both support our distributors and their sales teams in the field, as well as the overall strategic sales growth objectives with each distributor, traveling to each of them and supporting their sales teams in the field.

**BIR: What type of educational/product knowledge programs do you offer?**

**JO:** We have three levels of specially trained educators—design team, advisors and

**“Our formulas are about sustaining health, beauty and color.”**

associates. The design team trainings are twice a year, and regional advisor trainings take place quarterly. We also have localized Neuma associate trainings that support salons internally on ongoing basis. Having three levels of trained educators allows us to provide distributor educational support from in-salon workshops to special distributor events and shows. In addition, these educators support our corporate shows and provide in-field distributor sales support.

**BIR: How do you help your distributors and salons sell Neuma to their customers?**

**JO:** We have a veteran sales and education team that supports our distributors locally on a monthly basis. We communicate regularly and plan accordingly with our distributors with specific objectives to ensure their success with our brand. Our sales and education team members also provide field support, demonstrating and sampling Neuma products and providing feed back, which has been very valuable to our success. The salons and spas really value this additional support and embrace the opportunity to speak directly with a company representative.

**BIR: What are your launch plans for the first half of 2012?**

**JO:** We are scheduled to complete our U.S. distribution channel and start rolling out in Canada by the end of the second quarter. During this time, we will continue to ramp up for our international distribution in 2013.

**BIR: What are Neuma's major sales and marketing initiatives for 2012?**

**JO:** We will increase our show presence and

exhibit at the **International Salon & Spa Expo** in Long Beach, CA; **America's Beauty Show, Premiere Orlando** and the **ISPA** shows, as we grow our educational team. We also plan to increase our trade and consumer public relations and advertising commitments.

**BIR: Tell me about your online marketing, sales and education initiatives, including but not limited to your social media outreach?**

**JO:** We have a beautiful website ([neumabeauty.com](http://neumabeauty.com)) that tells the Neuma story. We use Facebook and Twitter to create consumer awareness through shared blogs, testimonials, shows, educational events and promotional offerings.

**BIR: What's new and/or hot in your line?**

**JO:** We launched our non-aerosol hair spray this month, and we kicked the New Year off with our **Incontrol** aerosol hair sprays last month. The Incontrol hairsprays have been a huge hit for us, and we feel really good about the performance and positioning of all three. They help complete our finishing offerings in our styling segment.

**BIR: What's your biggest challenge?**

**JO:** As with any fast-growing company, our biggest challenge is servicing the growth. We are fortunate to have a veteran team with a proven industry track record. Providing outstanding customer service is one of two things we do better.

**BIR: What is the second?**

**JO:** We make exceptionally good products that repeat and become almost addictive.

**BIR: What would BIR's readers be surprised to learn about Neuma?**

**JO:** In our professional beauty industry, it has always been about the story. Today, we are being challenged by consumers to provide them with what they now know is best for them and their environment. The surprise is not that it actually can be accomplished. Sure, it costs more to do; however, Neuma is living proof that it can be done. The surprise is that we really are transparent sans the smoke and mirrors.



*Jeff Orrell, senior vice president of sales and marketing*

To learn more about Neuma, reach Jeff Orrell at 310-900-4107 or [jeff@neumabeauty.com](mailto:jeff@neumabeauty.com), and visit [neumabeauty.com](http://neumabeauty.com).