

J. White & Assoc. launches two strategic partnerships

As Rep firms go in the professional beauty business, **J. White & Associates** has always taken a bit of a different path. The husband and wife duo of **Jeffery** and **Kristel White**, the agency's founders, are drawn to the entrepreneurial spirit, taking a chance and helping to pioneer edgier and higher-end brands. When Jeff called **Beauty Industry Report** to share breaking news, we stopped the presses to share it with our readers.

BIR: Welcome, Jeff. I know that J. White & Associates is a different type of Rep firm. Let's start there.

Jeff White
(JW): Our story is fueled by passion and determination. Kristel and I have spent our entire professional lives in this industry by CHOICE; we love the business and its



Kristel and Jeffery White are the principals at J. White & Associates

people. We also respect the fact that it has given birth to the dreams and ambitions of many smart folks who are willing to work hard. J. White & Associates is born of that same great opportunity and spirit.

BIR: Tell me about your story.

JW: Kristel and I founded J. White & Associates in 2009. I had worked as a manufacturers' representative with another industry leading rep firm for 16 years prior to starting our company. Kristel had been national sales manager during that time for a prominent industry brand. The combination of our two skill sets offers a unique value proposition to our vendor partners. We not only perform sales functions, but we frequently serve as consultants to our manufacturers in areas such as promotional planning, inventory management, pricing and much more.

BIR: What is your big news?

JW: We are excited to announce that we have recently formed two separate strategic alliances with other beauty sales agencies—**The Freeman Group** and **Coleman Harrison**.

We work with The Freeman Group and their team of four sales reps in the Western U.S. territory, and we are aligned with Coleman Harrison's team of 15 sales agents in the Midwest, Southwest and Northeast. These alliances bring our collective sales agent total to 23, and they enable us to go much deeper into markets throughout the country than we were able to do consistently prior to forming them. As a result, we can now provide far more comprehensive coverage throughout the

United States for our brands.

BIR: How do you operate differently from traditional firms?

JW: When we began, Kristel and I looked at the market and determined that there was a different way to approach the business. Our approach was to focus primarily

on large national distribution, as well as prestige beauty retail. It worked quite well for many years. Then, we realized that we had evolved to a point where we needed to go deeper. We needed to cover more accounts than our existing manpower could support; hence, the strategic alliances referenced herein.

What is also different about us is that we have never shied away from pioneering a new line, item or idea. Many of the companies we've worked with over the years are owned by husband and wife teams or individuals with great ideas. We get tremendous reward out of watching these businesses take off after they are placed with the right distribution and/or retail partners. We are very much drawn to that entrepreneurial spirit!

BIR: What types of brands are a good match for your firm?

JW: Our biggest successes are with brands about whose products we are personally passionate. We are also drawn toward edgier and often higher-end brands. People are always interested in what's new and hip. That is

a universal truth. And when customers see the inherent value in an opportunity that they are attracted to, they don't automatically resist spending a bit more to acquire that item.

BIR: What does a brand need to do to be successful when working with a rep firm?

JW: I will credit Tom Harrison, one of our critical alliance partners, with this sentiment: "A brand needs to be willing to receive what they NEED to hear, not just what they WANT to hear." When Tom first said that to Kristel and me, it was a total light-bulb moment—and it is 100% true.

One of the first things we ask a prospective vendor partner is, "Where do you want to be?" That is a surefire way to determine whether or not the brand owners have a true sense of identity. They need to understand their product and show us how it is unique and/or superior for us to do our job effectively.

There are many places you can sell products. But, I always tell our brand partners "to whom you refuse to sell your products is just as important as to whom you aspire to sell them." That can be tough to accept if your immediate goal is to simply move product. After all, that's what you are in business to do, right?! However, control is extremely important, especially as you get into the more prestigious product lines. They must be handled with care.

BIR: Are you exhibiting at Cosmoprof?

JW: We will be participating at Cosmoprof again this year; however, we will not be taking a booth. We have numerous vendor partners with show booths, and we find that we spend the overwhelming majority of our time shuttling between their locations. As in years past, we will host two full days of vendor meetings prior to the show, and then we will all be meeting with customers on the show floor throughout the three-day event. We look forward to seeing your readers there!

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