

Success begins with trust and a people-centered focus at The Alternative Dairy Co

Building a brand by focusing on people, product, partnerships, and trust to drive innovation.



Background

In 2019, Sanitarium set themselves an ambitious goal. They launched The Alternative Dairy Co. from scratch, aimed at making non-dairy milks specially formulated for the café and barista industry. Being one of Australia's original manufacturers of non-dairy milks in Australia with So Good, and #1 in the breakfast aisle, they thought this would give them a head start to success.

Yet after working hard on their first product – a café Almond Milk – it was rejected outright. It was a Self-Actualising moment. The team had enough humility at that moment to realise that they did not have the expertise or understanding needed to be successful in the café channel. This was a pivotal moment whereby a change in approach was needed. The executive sponsor identified the need for a stand-alone business unit with dedicated focus and agility to respond to the needs of the channel. The team actively sought out experts in the industry to partner with, adopting a collaborative approach to co-creation with them. In addition to this, a revised approach to recruitment focusing on character combined with in-depth industry expertise was initiated.

What followed, in just four years and with a lot of hard work was The Alternative Dairy co. exceeding its growth goals, producing a world-class Oat Milk, and now ranking as 'the number one Oat barista milk in Australian cafes'*. An incredible result after a challenging start.

Challenge

If Sanitarium wanted ADC to succeed, they needed to do things differently.

1. Build the right team, differently.
2. Build the right partnerships.
3. Develop the best product.

For over 12 years Sanitarium has continued to invest in their culture with Human Synergistics. It is Sanitarium's constructive values and approach that gave The Alternative Dairy Co. the flexibility, trust, and empowerment they needed to build the right team and achieve their goals.

Solution

Although Sanitarium has a very strong constructive value system, and years of great systems and processes, the new brand demanded change and to properly support the launch of The Alternative Dairy Co. they blended their strengths with a forward thinking and innovative approach.

- 1 **Humility.** They accepted they did not have the right people, relationships or expertise required for the café channel, and they needed help.
- 2 **Dedicated Business Unit.** An empowered leadership team with a dedicated focus on the café industry and the flexibility to adapt internal processes to meet the needs of the new business.
- 3 **Hire for character and industry fit.** Recruitment focused on finding the right people for the channel. Starting with the right constructive character, and experience with the café channel was key. With the right amount of passion, they could learn the skills required on the job.
- 4 **Empathy for cafe partners.** This new channel uncovered a whole new way of selling and establishing partnerships. Building these relationships early was imperative and required the right people on board, who had lived the cafe and barista experience.
- 5 **Collaboration and co-creation.** To help The Alternative Dairy Co. understand what was needed in the market, they leaned on collaboration in their community of experts, bringing their scientists, the team in the field, and café partners together to ensure they achieved the ultimate in taste and performance for every cup.
- 6 **Strong internal communication.** The Alternative Dairy Co. was breaking and challenging some of Sanitarium's usual ways of working, so taking the wider support teams on the journey was vital. Engaging cross functional teams in progress updates and sharing the wins created a strong system of advocacy internally whereby whole of business became ambassadors for all things Alternative Dairy Co.



- 7 **Aligned KPIs.** KPIs for The Alternative Dairy Co. were aligned across the various teams, so they had a common goal. This further helped everyone feel like they understood what was to be achieved and unified the team.
- 8 **Celebrate Passion.** Supported by the constructive Sanitarium culture, The Alternative Dairy Co. field team were given trust and autonomy, and this combined with their passion and engagement for the brand and the industry means that they treated their respective territories like their own business.
- 9 **Culture focus is critical.** It is often challenging to maintain culture during rapid growth. The Alternative Dairy Co. and Sanitarium are very intentional in keeping the culture that 'got them here' with their continued strong focus on great people, great partnerships, and great products.



Outcomes

- New channel
- Exceeded initial financial goal by 60% and still growing
- #1 Oat Milk in AU
- #2 Almond & Soy in AU
- #1 Oat, Almond & Soy in NZ
- Expanding internationally
- Sanitarium on steroids - built on an already great culture. Growth has contributed to inspiring everyone at Sanitarium. They combined the best of what they already had and combined it with an innovative approach.

Cafe / FoodService AU & NZ

