

THE JOB POSTING

Brand Manager – Innovation – Jimmy Dean (Job ID #16657)

Job Summary:

This position is responsible for developing and launching new products that meet the needs of consumers and customers and achieve financial and strategic objectives. Key responsibilities include: contributing new product ideas to the pipeline based upon consumer insights, category landscape analyses, competitive assessments and operational capabilities; executing key operational elements for new product commercialization and launch on time with executional excellence; engaging and leading cross functional teams in order to achieve corporate- and brand-specific revenue, profit and market share objectives; and providing training, guidance and support to team members and peers.

Key Responsibilities & Duties:

- Developing and managing category/brand/product innovation strategies for assigned categories
- Presenting strategies to senior leaders to gain buy-in and secure cross-functional resources
- Managing P&L statements for assigned categories, to include development of marketing plans, pricing strategies, and trade programs in order to maximize financial value for the enterprise
- Analyzing data to identify and translate insights into business opportunities and/or initiatives
- Leveraging research (historical and secondary) and insights (consumer and supplier research and industry trends) to inform and drive innovation efforts
- Networking with stakeholders throughout the enterprise (R&D, Manufacturing, Sales, etc.) to both manage assigned projects and secure organizational buy-in/support
- Working hand-in-hand with Sales team to integrate customer strategies into innovation plans and sell new products/platforms in to key channels/customers
- Managing the end-to-end commercialization process (from concept to launch) for new product launches
- Leading diverse cross-functional teams to achieve organizational goals and timelines
- Selecting, training and managing career development of assigned direct reports

Qualifications:

- Bachelor's degree required; MBA preferred
- Minimum 3-6 years marketing experience in consumer package goods or equivalent
- Experience managing cross-functional teams through new product launch initiatives
- Experience leveraging qualitative and quantitative research methods and tools to uncover consumer insights
- Demonstrated ability to work with sales leaders and teams to support new item launches
- Strong communication and presentation skills
- Experience with Nielsen and/or IRI preferred

The Hillshire Brands Company (NYSE: HSH) is a leader in branded, convenient foods. The company generated approximately \$4 billion in annual sales in fiscal 2012, has more than 9,000 employees, and is based in Chicago. Hillshire Brands' portfolio includes iconic brands such as Jimmy Dean, Ball Park, Hillshire Farm, State Fair, Van's Natural Foods, Sara Lee frozen bakery and Chef Pierre pies as well as artisanal brands Aidells, Gallo Salame and Golden Island premium jerky. For more information on the company, please visit www.hillshirebrands.com.

Hillshire Brands is an Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer and maintains a Drug-Free Workplace.

Commented [SP1]: The most important element of a job description is the "qualifications" section; this is where they essentially tell you exactly what you need to demonstrate in order to get the job.

After reviewing the qualifications, I determined that these three bullets were the most important things to focus on in my cover letter (because these three things are absolutely *critical* to get right in an innovation role).

MY COVER LETTER

January 28, 2013

Dear Hiring Manager,

Please accept my résumé in consideration of the “Brand Manager - Innovation - Jimmy Dean” position posted to your company website on January 22, 2013 (Job ID #16657).

I am a former U.S. Air Force intelligence officer and classically-trained Brand Manager (Procter & Gamble and Kraft Foods) with 11 years of experience leading cross-functional teams, conducting strategic planning, and implementing major initiatives. I believe these skills will enable me to hit the ground running with Hillshire Brands and immediately contribute to your already successful team.

Some of my most relevant experiences include:

- I am currently leading a cross-functional team through the largest Candy innovation launch in over five years; this project is on track to start shipping in September 2013.
- I have significant experience with qualitative and quantitative research tools, to include product concept tests, packaging qualification tests, in-home ethnographies, and interactive focus groups.
- I’ve built winning relationships with a number of sales teams; in the process, I’ve created sell-in materials for new product launches, presented marketing plans at national sales meetings, participated in regional-, channel-, and customer-specific planning sessions, and supported customer-specific marketing programs.

In closing, I believe I would be a great fit for both Hillshire Brands and the Jimmy Dean Innovation Brand Manager position, and I would welcome a chance to speak with you in more detail about the role and my qualifications.

Sincerely,
Shawn Pulscher

Commented [SP2]: In retrospect, I should have said something about **why** I wanted to work for Hillshire to make it clear I wasn’t simply sending the same letter out to every company with an open role. Thankfully, I still caught the hiring manager’s eye and was asked to interview.

Commented [SP3]: This paragraph contains my basic “pitch”: a brief overview of my background, strengths, experiences, etc. By starting with this, I’ve checked off a couple of boxes in the “qualifications” section of the job description (years of experience, cross-functional leadership) without getting too far into the weeds.

Commented [SP4]: This is where I believe I “won” the interview. I provided examples of things I’d done that **directly aligned** with specific things the hiring manager was looking for (confirmed in the “qualifications” section of the job description).

Commented [SP5]: I got a call, went through a couple of rounds of phone and in-person interviews, and got the job.