For more movers & shakers news...
plus e-mail alerts, forums and other features
go to our new website www.thegrocer.co.uk

Carrefour replaces CEO Duran with Nestlé's Olofsson

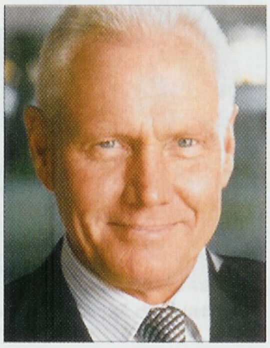
Julia Taylor

Carrefour has tasked its new chief executive with driving the group's own-label offer and shifting its focus from non-food back to food in the wake of José Luis Duran's dismissal.

Lars Olofsson, Nestlé's vice-president in charge of strategic business units, marketing and sales, had been tipped as a future CEO role at the manufacturer.

But after 32 years at the business, the Swede – a fluent French speaker – has jumped ship to help Carrefour accelerate its transformation programme and reverse a 45% share price slump.

One of his priorities would be the group's own label offer, said a spokes-



Olofsson: 32 years at Nestlé

woman. "We are creating our own products and need to work on our brand," she said. "This will be a real challenge for Carrefour, and Olofsson has those skills. He has a profound knowledge of the market in which Carrefour operates."

Olofsson's manufacturing background would be an asset, said analysts, citing Marc Bolland's appointment at Morrisons and Justin King's at Sainsbury's. "His personal qualities make him a great choice," added Amoroso director and consultant, James Amoroso. "He is extremely honest and open and not afraid to make tough decisions."

Olofsson will officially join Carrefour in January 2009. Nestlé's executive vice president and chief technology officer Werner Bauer will temporarily take on Olofsson's former responsibilities from this week, until a permanent appointment is made.

Olofsson's move comes two months after Paul Polman, Nestlé's US head, moved to Unilever as CEO.

Tendler made sales director at Miller Brands

Darren Tendler has been promoted to sales director at Miller Brands.

Tendler, who was previously director of sales for the off-trade, takes over from Nick Miller, who has stepped up to MD.

Miller said Tendler was the obvious choice for the role. "He and his team have developed great relationships with our off-trade customers and have achieved some fantastic results," he said.

Tendler's previous positions include director of sales, commercial operations director and key account and national account roles at Whitbread, InBev and ScotCo.

John West names Thorpe its new MD

John West has appointed as its new managing director the man said to have helped turn around the canned fruit sector.

Stephen Thorpe, previously MD of Mission Foods, replaces Ian Meadows, who has been transferred to work on group initiatives for John West parent company MW Brands.

Before his time at Mission Foods, Thorpe was MD of Del Monte Foods International. While there he helped to turn around the canned fruit sector, said Yoplait marketing director Gerry Roads, who worked closely with Thorpe at Del Monte.

"Canned fruit was a mature and declining sector that he helped to reinvigorate," said Roads. "For example, he oversaw the move into plastic pots."

He described Thorpe as "a very inciteful marketeer and a good strategist".

Thorpe is expected to prove key in developing new packaging formats and new products for John West.

The brand has shown a willingness to innovate recently, having just launched a new canned tuna steak that contains five times more omega-3 than a standard can. The company has also started using pouches in addition to cans.

CAREERS FILE
SIÂN HARRINGTON

Hidden risks and costs mean redundancies can be a false economy

Cadbury, McBride, Paramount Foods, Arla, PepsiCo, Bakkavör – the list of grocery companies making redundancies is growing longer.

Though not all such decisions are solely a response to the current economic downturn, in such times employers scrutinise people-related costs more closely than ever.

This is borne out by the unemployment figures and the quarterly CIPD/KPMG Labour Market Outlook, which indicates employers have a bleak view of the economy and that net job creation is at a virtual standstill.

"We are at the start of a period of contraction, with jobs being lost, new jobs hard to come by and unemployment on an ever sharper upward rise," said CIPD chief economist John Philpott.

But redundancy should be a last resort. As PricewaterhouseCoopers identifies, there are other people-cost areas that companies should be assessing in advance of the redundancy route, including pensions, use of contractors, pay and productivity, employee benefits and secondments.

One thing that may help is flexible working, which is in the spotlight following a review that recommended the right to request flexible working should be extended to parents of children up to 16. This was scheduled to come into effect in April next year but is looking shaky following comments from new BERR head Peter Mandelson.

Politics aside, flexible working can offer a sensible way of responding to the economic crisis.

Before you all jump in shouting "more cost, more red tape", just consider the arguments. Firstly, it is happening even before new legislation is implemented. Manufacturers – including Fairline yacht makers and JCB – are leading the way by offering reduced hours to save jobs. Perhaps grocery businesses could consider this?

Secondly, reducing headcount can be a costly exercise, both in terms of redundancy packages and recruiting staff again when the economy picks up.

Mid-market and premium brand companies are likely to have to think most creatively about their people strategies, believes Michael Rendell, partner and global head of HR services at PricewaterhouseCoopers.

"This may mean opening out flexible working, job-share or career break options to people who wouldn't normally qualify," he says. "Suppliers and retailers will be relying on customer loyalty to ride out the downturn, so it's critical any changes to people policy do not damage customer service – consultation with employees will be key here."

There must be a balance between cutting costs now and the risk of damaging business in the longer term.

Siân Harrington is editor of Human Resources