

Messages from Modern Inventors to the Next Generation

Season 2

7. 'Fit's' –Chewing Gum Created through the Winning Combination of Product Strategy and Invention

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Various outstanding technologies and inventions are used in a large number of best selling products that we find all around us. However, just because some people invented something good does not necessarily mean that they can produce excellent products or best selling products. To create a best selling product, it is necessary to consider various things such what kinds of customers you will sell your product to, how the invention will be used in the product, and how the finished product will be advertized. After all these factors have been decided, it then becomes possible to develop a hit product.

The product featured in this article, Fit's, was created by combining these strategies along with the new invention.

About the Product and Technology

Fit's, a chewing gum, has all of the following features: a soft texture, a size that easily fit in one's mouth, a long-lasting taste, and an adequate size to satisfy gum chewers. As a result, it has been in

great demand since it went on sale.

Conventional chewing gum is mainly classified into either stick gum or tablet gum. Stick gum has been enjoyed for a long time and continues to be liked by consumers due to its satisfying size and other factors. Tablet gum, which more closely fits our lifestyle today, expanded the chewing-gum market because it is more convenient.

Fit's, which was developed as a completely different type of gum, is based on the knowledge and technology gained from developing and manufacturing stick gum and tablet gum.



Image of newly developed chewing gum Fit's LINK

What inspired you to invent and develop the product and technology?

Chewing gum was developed in the United States in 1860 and was first imported to Japan in 1916. Since then, it has been popular throughout Japan. However, since the peak in 2004 when bottled gum (which is a bottle filled with tablet gum that has not been individually wrapped in paper) became a hit, the chewing gum market has gradually shrunk. Young people in particular were said to be “moving away from gum.” This phenomenon was extremely disappointing for chewing gum manufacturers and developers like us. Therefore, we started developing a new type of gum with the hopes of conveying the benefits and enjoyment of chewing gum to people who do not chew gum and to those who have stopped chewing gum.

What specific ideas and difficulties did you face in inventing and developing Fit's?

Conventional chewing gum has always had a tough, chewy texture. And surveys conducted on young people's eating habits revealed that many young people dislike hard food, with many of them stating, "My mouth and jaw get tired when I chew gum."

Based on the survey results, we developed Fit's as a new type of chewing gum targeted to men and women in their early 20s, designing it to be more enjoyable especially to them.

To achieve this, a soft gum base completely different from that used in conventional gum was used in Fit's to produce a 'pleasant softness' the instant you take a bite. Furthermore, by adding a flavor chip, a type of microcapsule that keeps flavor inside it, we were able to create a product that features both a soft texture and a longer lasting taste. New packaging for the gum was also developed. Fit's, which is similar in shape to stick gum, is packaged in a way so that it can be slipped into one's mouth without needing to be unwrapped.

In this way, Fit's itself is very different from conventional chewing gum, and also comes with its own, new type of packaging too. Therefore, all of us involved in its development exerted our ingenuity not only in the development stage but also during the manufacturing process as well.



New style packaging: "Pick" (pick one); "Get" (take it in your hand)"; and "Pull" (pull it out). (Note: this is a photo of Fit's when it was first released.)

What is fun and enjoyable for you as an inventor, researcher, and developer?

The development, manufacture, and sales activities of products cannot be performed as separate actions on their own.

From the outset, we believed that Fit's in particular should be a product that would change the concept of conventional chewing gum. Therefore, the process of developing Fit's was based on a wide cross-section of cooperation from many people. So, not only development people but also the people from the product planning department, the manufacturing department, and the sales department got involved. Fit's included creating a product concept based on thorough marketing research, developing a product that made use of newly developed technology and inventions, designing promotions such as those based on a new style of TV commercial, and conducting aggressive PR activities in convenience stores and supermarkets. I feel that all of these things coming together led to Fit's being well received by the customers, beyond our expectations.

It gives me great pleasure, as a person engaged in the development of the product, that we were able to fulfill our hopes beyond what we had envisioned in the beginning. Furthermore, I feel honored and privileged as a researcher and developer that we are able to develop new technology and products owing to the expansion in consumption of the first Fit's we developed.



Lotte's Central Laboratory where Fit's and other products are developed.