

23-Apr-2015

Dr. Pepper Snapple Group, Inc. (DPS)

Q1 2015 Earnings Call

CORPORATE PARTICIPANTS

Heather Catelotti
Vice President-Investor Relations

Marty Ellen
Chief Financial Officer

Larry D. Young
President, Chief Executive Officer & Director

OTHER PARTICIPANTS

Mark D. Swartzberg
Stifel, Nicolaus & Co., Inc.

Kevin M. Grundy
Jefferies LLC

William G. Schmitz
Deutsche Bank Securities, Inc.

Ali Dibadj
Sanford C. Bernstein & Co. LLC

Amit Sharma
BMO Capital Markets (United States)

Judy E. Hong
Goldman Sachs & Co.

John A. Faucher
JPMorgan Securities LLC

Steve R. Powers
UBS Securities LLC

Bonnie L. Herzog
Wells Fargo Securities LLC

Robert E. Ottenstein
Evercore ISI

MANAGEMENT DISCUSSION SECTION

Operator: Good morning, and welcome to Dr Pepper Snapple Group's First Quarter 2015 Earnings Conference Call. Your lines have been placed on listen-only, until the question-and-answer session.

Today's call is being recorded and includes a slide presentation, which can be accessed at www.drpeppersnapple.com. The call and slides will also be available for replay and download after the call has ended. [Operator Instructions] We respectfully request a limit of one question per person.

It is now my pleasure to introduce Heather Catelotti, Vice President, Investor Relations. Heather, you may begin.

Heather Catelotti
Vice President-Investor Relations

Thank you, Maria, and good morning, everyone. Before we begin, I would like to direct your attention to the Safe Harbor statement and remind you that this conference call contains forward-looking statements, including statements concerning our future financial operational performance. These forward-looking statements should also be considered in connection with cautionary statements and disclaimers contained in the Safe Harbor statement in this morning's earnings press release and our SEC filing. Our actual performance could differ materially from these statements, and we undertake no duty to update these forward-looking statements.

During this call, we may reference certain non-GAAP financial measures that reflect the way we evaluate the business and which we believe provide useful information for investors. Reconciliations of those non-GAAP measures to GAAP can be found in our earnings press release and on the Investor's page at www.drpeppersnapple.com.

This morning's prepared remarks will be made by Larry Young, President and CEO; and Marty Ellen, our CFO. Following our prepared remarks, we will open the call for your questions.

With that, let me turn the call over to Larry.

Larry D. Young

President, Chief Executive Officer & Director

Thanks, Heather, and good morning to everyone. We're off to a strong start in 2015, amidst continued challenges in the CSD category, particularly on Diets. We delivered against our key priorities of building our brands with relevant marketing programs and consumer driven innovation and executing with excellence at the point of sale. We grew both dollar and volume share in CSD's in Nielsen-measured markets and out-performed the category. We expanded distribution and availability across our tea and juice portfolios and RCI continues to gain traction across the organization and drive top-line and bottom-line growth.

For the quarter, bottler case sales increased 3%, with almost 1.5 points of positive mix and price. Bottler case sales of CSD's increased 3%, and non-carbs increased 5% in the quarter. We did have some volume upside as the Easter holiday shifted into the first quarter this year versus second quarter a year ago.

Brand Dr Pepper declined 1% in the quarter on continued declines in Diet. Our Core 4 brands grew 4% in the quarter, as a 13% increase in Canada Dry, was partially offset by low single-digit declines in Sunkist Soda and 7 UP. Schweppes increased 8% on growth in sparkling waters and ginger ale, and Squirt increased 15%. Peñafiel grew 20% on distribution gains, while Crush declined 3%. All other CSD brands were flat in the quarter.

In non-carbs, Snapple increased 5% with high single-digit growth in premium, partially offset by continued declines in value, as we have strategically de-emphasized this line. Hawaiian Punch increased 7%, with strong results on our recently-launched pouch and some promotional activity on our base business.

Mott's declined 1% in the quarter, while Clamato grew 20%. Our water category increased 9% on strong growth in Fiji, Bai 5 and Vita Coco. All other non-carb brands were flat in the quarter.

On a currency-neutral basis, net sales increased 5% in the quarter, on a 2% increase in shipment volumes and 3 percentage points of favorable segment mix and the favorable product mix I just mentioned. Segment operating profit grew 10% in the quarter on a currency-neutral basis.

Core operating income increased \$23 million or 9% on net sales growth, ongoing productivity improvements, and lower first quarter marketing investments given this year's phasing. Core DPS also increased 9% in the quarter.

As I shared on our last earnings call, we kicked off 2015 with an exciting marketing calendar. Our successful partnership with ESPN wrapped up in January with the first ever college football playoffs. We brought Peñafiel, Mexico's number one mineral water, to the U.S., and both 7UP and Snapple got new face lifts that speak directly to our target consumers. Our naturally sweetened CSD's have rolled out in three key markets, with only 60 calories per 12-ounce can, and sweetened with stevia and sugar. We're continuing to provide consumers with choices for their evolving needs. We'll continue to test how these products perform across the markets.

We also launched Snapple Straight Up Tea, an unflavored tea in a new 18.5 -ounce PET packaging and also launched Hawaiian Punch pouches. We'll continue the momentum through the Spring, as Dr Pepper teams up with one of a kind Super Heroes, The Avengers, to drive retail activation and incremental points of interruption. And we're sponsoring Spike's new Lip Sync Battle, one of the highest rated new shows on cable. We'll continue our new media campaign around Diet Dr Pepper, featuring rock star, Lil' Sweet and highlighting the sweet taste of Diet Dr Pepper.

And I hope you had a chance to see Texas-own centenarian Elizabeth Sullivan, who turned 104 in March and believes the only doctor she needs is Dr Pepper. Her story garnered over 177 million impressions in just a few days alone.

7 UP will step up its connection with EDM this summer, partnering with world renowned DJ's Tiësto and Martin Garrix to bring a unique music collaboration and limited edition 7UP cans to consumers. The music collaboration will air as part of our national TV campaign, and the artist designed cans are part of a sweepstakes where consumers can win a VIP weekend in Las Vegas to meet both the DJ's.

And knowing that soccer is a passion point for Hispanics, 7UP will be on air during the Gold Cup, offering consumers a once in a lifetime game experience with star athletes Tim Howard and Hector Herrera. Every day, people and celebrities from New York will share why they love Snapple, with the rest of America who are born in New York, #lovesnapple.

And to celebrate our American heritage this summer, we'll offer a seasonal tea called Lady LiberTea, a refreshing combination of black tea, raspberry, white peach and blueberry flavors. Mott's is partnering the upcoming Minions movie to connect with shopper mom and her kids, and will once again partner with Box Tops for Education as kids head back to school in the fall.

As you can see, we've got strong program plans in place to engage with our target consumers and shopper mom. And that our retail and bottling partners can get excited about and activate behind.

Now, let me turn the call over to Marty, to walk you through our financial results and our 2015 guidance.

Marty Ellen

Chief Financial Officer

Thanks, Larry, and good morning, everyone. For the quarter, reported net sales increased 4%. Sales volumes increased 2%. Having sold proportionately more finished goods cases than concentrate cases, which we define as segment mix, favorably impacted year-over-year net sales by 1.5%, while product mix increased net sales over 1%. And as we expected, this net sales growth was partially offset by 1 percentage point of unfavorable foreign currency. Reported gross margins declined 190 basis points in the quarter, decreasing from 60.4% last year to 58.5% this year.

Product mix, driven primarily by continued growth in our allied water brands, and the segment mix I just mentioned, collectively reduced gross margins by 120 basis points. Productivity benefits, including those from rapid continuous improvement increased gross margins by 50 basis points in the quarter. And positive net pricing increased gross margins by another 10 basis points.

Changes in certain commodity prices at the end of the quarter resulted in a \$1 million unrealized mark-to-market loss on commodity hedges with a \$2 million loss in cost of goods sold, and a \$1 million gain in SG&A. This

compares to a \$12 million unrealized mark-to-market gain a year ago, all recorded in cost of goods sold. The net effect of these mark-to-market comparisons decreased reported gross margins by approximately 100 basis points. And finally, foreign currency reduced gross margins in the quarter by 30 basis points.

Moving down the P&L, SG&A for the quarter, excluding depreciation, decreased by \$2 million on \$6 million of favorable foreign currency translation, a \$4 million planned reduction in marketing investments due to year-over-year phasing, and the unrealized mark-to-market gain I just mentioned. All other SG&A increased by just under 2%. Depreciation and amortization expense declined \$2 million in the quarter. Reported operating income was \$270 million, up 4%, compared to \$260 million last year. Core operating income of \$271 million, representing 18.7% of net sales, was up 100 basis points from 17.7% last year.

Below the operating line, net interest expense increased by \$2 million in the quarter, principally driven by our decision to transition our fleet from primarily operating leases to capital leases. Our effective tax rate for the quarter was 35.7%, compared to 34.3% last year. Last year's lower rate included a \$2 million deferred tax benefit as a result of a New York state tax law change.

Moving on to cash flow. Cash from operating activities was \$101 million, down \$28 million compared to last year, driven primarily by timing of customer incentive payments. Capital spending was \$20 million compared to \$37 million last year. Total distributions to our shareholders were \$214 million, with \$135 million in shares repurchased and \$79 million in dividends paid.

Before I update you on 2015 guidance, let me provide you with a quick update on RCI. Building on the success of our 2014 lean tracks, we've implemented five new tracks this year, led by a new set of senior and mid-level leaders as a way of further developing lean capabilities across the organization. The tracks will target waste elimination, in areas such as nonworking marketing spend. Ingredients, and the customer deductions collection process, as well as help drive growth across our Canada Dry brand and through our tell sell channel. These tracks are already achieving solid results, and let me provide a few examples.

We've improved yield on fruit juices and sauces in one of our manufacturing facilities by over \$1 million. We've eliminated rework and rush hours in one area of our marketing creative process, resulting in over a \$1 million reduction in agency spending. In Houston, we've closed 10% of Canada Dry two-liter voids following one Kaizen event. And in the Plains region, as a result of our tell sell track, we've increased distribution points on several allied brands by double digits.

These are just a few examples that should, again, help to re-enforce the breadth and scope of rapid continuous improvement at DPS, and while individually they may seem small in magnitude, we are experiencing wins like these across the organization, which collectively have and will drive a meaningful impact.

Now, moving on to 2015 full year guidance. As you saw in this morning's press release, we continue to believe our 2015 net sales will be up approximately 1% net of a foreign currency headwind of now just about 1.5%. This foreign currency headwind has ticked up a bit from our prior guidance of about 1%. While our first quarter volume performance was very good, our full year expectations are still affected by existing and expected overall category trends. And while we are cautiously optimistic about the CSD category, Diets specifically still remain under pressure. Therefore, with 80% of our volume in CSDs, this causes us to believe that total company sales volume for the full year will be slightly up, with CSD declines offset by growth in our non-carb portfolio and allied brands.

On a total company basis, we continue to expect combined price and mix to be up about 2%. Our January 1 concentrate price increase will drive about 40 basis points of this increase, and the remainder will come from expected growth in our higher priced non-carb and allied brands.

Foreign currency is now expected to be just about a point and a half headwind on net sales and about a 3% headwind on operating income and EPS, which we previously guided to as a 2% headwind. To give you some further insight. And as I mentioned on last quarter's call, we went into the year planning the Mexican peso at Mex \$14.60 to dollar and we are now planning the peso at Mex \$15 for the balance of the year. We also went into the year planning the Canadian dollar at \$1.2 Canadian to the U.S. dollar, and we're now planning on \$1.25 Canadian for the balance of the year.

Moving on to cost of goods sold, we continue to expect packaging and ingredients deflation, primarily from lower PET and Apple juice concentrate. This is expected to reduce total cost of goods sold by approximately 1% on a constant volume mix basis.

For modeling purposes, remember that growth from our non-carb portfolio and allied brands, which are higher dollar revenue cases, will also increase the dollar value of cost of goods. Taken together, these factors should result in a slight increase in gross margins for the year.

Moving to SG&A. As I said last quarter, capacity shortages in the transportation industry are expected to result in about \$15 million of higher cost in 2015, even in light of lower fuel costs. We continue to expect an increase of approximately \$20 million in health and welfare and other insurance costs, compared to the more favorable trends we experienced in 2014. We also continue to expect general inflation in our field labor costs, which will also increase total operating expenses by approximately \$20 million.

That said, RCI productivity benefits will help to offset a portion of these increases. We continue to expect marketing spending to be approximately 7.6% of net sales in 2015, as we continue to hone our return on investment capabilities.

Now, moving below segment operating profit. Our net interest expense will be around 4.5% on our current debt structure of about \$2.5 billion. Our full-year core tax rate is expected to be approximately 35.5% and we continue to expect capital spending to be approximately 3% of net sales. We expect to repurchase approximately \$500 to \$550 million of our common stock in 2015, subject to market conditions. Considering all of these items, we continue to expect full year core earnings per share to be in the \$3.80 to \$3.88 range, inclusive of the 3% or \$0.12 per share foreign currency headwind I mentioned.

Before I turn the call back over to Larry, let me highlight a couple of phasing items that will help you update your models. First, as Larry already mentioned, the Easter holiday shifted into the first quarter this year versus second quarter last year. We estimate this drove approximately 1 point of volume in the first quarter. Second, the packaging and ingredients deflation will be more pronounced in the back half of the year. Third, the health and welfare and other insurance increases will be significantly weighted towards the back half, although second quarter will experience some increase. Fourth, marketing expenses are expected to increase by over \$6 million in the second quarter based on program timing.

With that all said, let me turn the call back over to Larry.

Larry D. Young

President, Chief Executive Officer & Director

Thanks, Marty. Before we open the line for questions, let me leave you with these thoughts. Our priorities for the year remain the same, and we will continue to drive awareness and relevance of our brands, innovate to meet consumers changing needs, and execute with excellence in the marketplace. Rapid continuous improvement continues to drive growth and productivity across the business and we've got a long runway ahead of us. And importantly, we remain committed to returning excess free cash to our shareholders over time.

Operator? We're ready for our first question.

QUESTION AND ANSWER SECTION

Operator: Thank you. [Operator Instructions] Our first question is coming from Mark Swartzberg of Stifel Financial.

Mark D. Swartzberg

Stifel, Nicolaus & Co., Inc.

Q

Yes. Thanks. Good morning, guys.

Larry D. Young

President, Chief Executive Officer & Director

A

Good morning, Mark.

Marty Ellen

Chief Financial Officer

A

Good morning, Mark.

Mark D. Swartzberg

Stifel, Nicolaus & Co., Inc.

Q

I just had two questions, Marty, on RCI. And one is some clarification, the Canada Dry comments you made seems to pertain not only to the opportunity for improved profitability there, but the opportunity for improved share there. So could you speak to that? And then also on RCI, DSD seems to be an opportunity for some savings over the longer term. So when you look at your DSD network today, can you speak to the opportunity there?

Marty Ellen

Chief Financial Officer

A

Mark, good morning. Well, first of all, we've always said that rapid continuous improvement extends to all aspects of the business and that includes sales and opportunities to find growth. And, you know, in past years we've done lots of activities in Mexico, for example, that has had some beneficial impact on their top-line growth over the years. Canada Dry closing void that's a project akin to what we did last year with closing voids with Snapple in a number of markets. And in those markets where we did that last year across the U.S., after we implemented the changes, which had a lot to do with just discipline around, you know, SKU management on the shelf, and understanding what was really moving and what wasn't, so a lot of blocking and tackling, we were growing double digits in every one of those markets.

Canada Dry is going to be the same. Which is our way of saying, you know, there's opportunities everywhere, and that includes opportunities to grow at the top line, sort of market-by-market, I think more than anything our

approach is, we don't fly at 50,000 feet, we can't see the ground from 50,000 feet, but when we get down there, market-by-market, store-by-store, we find these opportunities. And we have a process, a disciplined process, an analytic process through the tools of RCI to get after it.

Mark D. Swartzberg

Stifel, Nicolaus & Co., Inc.

Great. Great.

Q

Marty Ellen

Chief Financial Officer

Let me...

A

Mark D. Swartzberg

Stifel, Nicolaus & Co., Inc.

Helpful.

Q

Marty Ellen

Chief Financial Officer

Let me – on the second part, look, everybody knows that when you think about cost, of course most of the company's cost is within the DSD system, so of course there's opportunity. And I think you should take away from what we've been doing that we, you know, we're sort of working at it everywhere, but in a controlled manner. So there's lots of opportunity. I can't quantify, not because I don't want to, because I'm not sure I actually know how much opportunity there is, and so we just let it come to our results. I think important for all of you out there to determine whether we're being successful or not with RCI. So watch our cost and margin performance over time and make your own judgments.

A

Mark D. Swartzberg

Stifel, Nicolaus & Co., Inc.

Yep. Great. Okay. Thanks, Marty.

Q

Operator: Our next question comes from the line of Bill Schmitz of Deutsche Bank.

William G. Schmitz

Deutsche Bank Securities, Inc.

Hi. Good morning.

Q

Larry D. Young

President, Chief Executive Officer & Director

Good morning, Bill.

A

Marty Ellen

Chief Financial Officer

Good morning, Bill.

A

William G. Schmitz

Deutsche Bank Securities, Inc.

Q

Hey, a couple of questions. The first is, I think this is your record margin in the segment basis in the concentrate business. So, was that due to the Easter shift and more volume or is like, something fundamentally changed with the way that business is run that maybe sort of carries those elevated margins forward? And then I have a follow-up.

Larry D. Young

President, Chief Executive Officer & Director

A

Well, I mean as we said, we, like the rest of the industry, took our pricing increase in concentrate on January 1, like everybody did. There was nothing unusual about that. They had a little bit lower marketing in the quarter, so some of the lower marketing we referred to hit that segment, that's going to be timing. And we had some good fountain performance, both in terms of volume and some pricing in fountain. So between some nice top-line results in terms of pricing and revenue recognition and some good cost performance, margins were pretty good.

William G. Schmitz

Deutsche Bank Securities, Inc.

Q

Great. Thanks. And then how do you guys view M&A now? I know you took a small stake in Bai 5, which you typically do with some of the allied brands. But it sounds like litigation is getting resolved with one of the big tea companies. So I'd just love to hear your perspective on, maybe if anything has changed on the M&A front because you guys have kind of stepped aside for the last three years or four years?

Larry D. Young

President, Chief Executive Officer & Director

A

I don't think anything has really changed. It has not been within our focus to do any large M&A, transformative M&A. What you saw us do and buy is an extension of what we would do in other allied brand partnerships and it was really to solidify our partnership. We, obviously, think they have some good things going on in their brands and we like their innovation pipeline. And we're happy to be their largest distributor and really partner and be able to collaborate on things. And so we made a small investment, taking some equity, as we would like to have in all of these partnerships.

William G. Schmitz

Deutsche Bank Securities, Inc.

Q

Gotcha. Thanks very much. Appreciate the time.

Operator: Our next question comes from the line of Amit Sharma of BMO Capital Markets.

Amit Sharma

BMO Capital Markets (United States)

Q

Hi. Good morning, everyone.

Larry D. Young

President, Chief Executive Officer & Director

A

Good morning.

Amit Sharma

BMO Capital Markets (United States)

Q

Marty, just a follow-up to those question. The concentrate pricing, it looks like way ahead of where we see measured channel pricing is. Should we expect it to draw down as we move through the quarters?

Marty Ellen

Chief Financial Officer

A

No, on the concentrate pricing will stick all year, that's why we said, you know, 40 basis points of our overall 200 basis points of price mix [ph] should hold (25:42), which it has done last year, and it has done historically. So no real change in trend there over the year.

Amit Sharma

BMO Capital Markets (United States)

Q

Got it. And then overall pricing at the shelf continues to be really rational for the [ph] CSC (26:00) business, and the other two large companies talked about maintaining that. Are you seeing anything in the marketplace that makes you think that's going to change over time?

Larry D. Young

President, Chief Executive Officer & Director

A

Not at all. As you said, it's very rational, very disciplined. And the way we look at it, we've told you last call that, we don't really bake a lot of pricing into our DSD business, but we take pricing where we can opportunistically.

Amit Sharma

BMO Capital Markets (United States)

Q

And one last thing, smaller packages certainly one of the reasons or driver of mixed, favorable mix here. How are you positioning that segment? Do you need to spend some more capital to build capabilities there?

Larry D. Young

President, Chief Executive Officer & Director

A

No, we have the capability and, we play in a lot of those packages with our partners, especially with Dr Pepper, so we know which packages perform the best. But we have a broad line-up of different size packs, and the smaller pack does help in some format and some channels.

Amit Sharma

BMO Capital Markets (United States)

Q

Great. Thank you.

Operator: Our next question comes from the line of John Faucher of JPMorgan.

John A. Faucher

JPMorgan Securities LLC

Q

Thank you. Two good separate questions here. First off, you guys talked about some of the phasing of marketing spending. Is that a sales curve issue? And if so, you know, how did the Easter shift impact that? So if you could just give us maybe a little bit more detail on sort of the phasing of marketing spending over the course of the year. And then did want to ask a little bit about sort of the convenience and gas channel in terms of trends there and

also package mix within there. We've generally seen stronger scanner data. Are you seeing a combination of both take home and single serve improving in that channel? Or kind of what's happening there? Thanks.

Marty Ellen

Chief Financial Officer

A

Yeah. I'll handle the marketing question and Larry and I can decide, who wants to talk about C&G, we can both talk about it. To remind everybody, we do not account for marketing on a sales curve basis, okay. So, it's programmatically accounted for as incurred which means, when things happen, when ads run, costs get expensed. So it's really programmatic. So it's really about timing of programs, which is influenced then, therefore, timing is therefore influenced by when we're going to activate things, right. So, we make sure that we've got activation, distribution when it comes to advertising before we run it. So that's why we're always in this sort of situation of having to explain whether marketing is seemingly a lot higher or lower in any comparable period, because it's not really done on a sales curve basis.

Larry D. Young

President, Chief Executive Officer & Director

A

Yeah, and on the C&G, we're seeing – we're very optimistic what we're seeing in the C&G channel. I think when you look at it, John, I mean gas prices are basically, 40% lower than they were a year ago. That's, you know, kind of equates to about a thousand dollars a household. And the way we like to look at it, that's 620 ounces. So we want to get all those we can. But, you know, if you look at the measured channels, if you look at our totals, our total business in C&G is actually better than what we're showing in measured channel because of the amount we have out there. So we think, it's going to continue to grow and be an upside for us.

John A. Faucher

JPMorgan Securities LLC

Q

Got it. And if you look at it on a brand-by-brand basis, is there any sort of indication in terms of the brand SKU where you've seen the improvement in terms of, does it tend to be lower income consumers who have a little extra cash, or is it more general across the business?

Larry D. Young

President, Chief Executive Officer & Director

A

I think, it's general across the business. It may lean just a little more to the middle and middle lower.

John A. Faucher

JPMorgan Securities LLC

Q

Okay. Great. Thank you very much.

Marty Ellen

Chief Financial Officer

A

Thanks, John.

Operator: Our next question comes from the line of Bonnie Herzog of Wells Fargo.

Bonnie L. Herzog

Wells Fargo Securities LLC

Q

Good morning.

Larry D. Young

President, Chief Executive Officer & Director

A

Good morning, Bonnie.

Bonnie L. Herzog

Wells Fargo Securities LLC

Q

I have a question on your Dr Pepper brand. It continues to remain pretty weak in terms of volume and share, and there you did mention several initiatives, but realistically when do you anticipate these trends to reverse? And then should we view the strength of some of your other brands like Snapple, Peñafiel and, of course, your allied brands as a greater priority for you based on your increased promotional activity, and then package innovation behind some of them? I guess I'm trying to get a sense of your priorities as it relates to your allocation of resources and investments.

Larry D. Young

President, Chief Executive Officer & Director

A

Well, Dr Pepper will always be a priority for me. I mean, it's in the name, and we're pleased with the improvement we've seen in Dr Pepper. I mean, if you take the Diet out, our brand is okay. Diet is our challenge right now, but our Diet was actually down less than the category Diet. So, we've got a solve for that. And you've seen the programs, I mentioned in my prepared remarks that, we're doing a lot of things with a Lil' Sweet and the sweet taste of Dr Pepper and we're doing a lot of things more in the field on execution and getting the product out there. So we're very positive on it, we think we're going to be in great shape there. A lot of it was just some of the first quarter timing on that being down one, but all the down one was Diet.

And as far as the Core 4, we're thrilled with how our Core 4 has done. Again, a challenge on the Diets there, but we're getting great execution, we're getting more availability, and it is doing very well in all formats of the business.

Bonnie L. Herzog

Wells Fargo Securities LLC

Q

Okay. Thanks for that. And then, Larry, could you just quickly update us on the tests you've been running on naturally sweetened CSDs. Maybe share some of the key findings with us. And then what your long-term plans are for naturally sweetened CSDs? Thank you.

Larry D. Young

President, Chief Executive Officer & Director

A

Absolutely, we've just rolled it out. So it's still very early days for us to look at it out there. We're getting it, in some of the regional grocery chains. You can find it in some of the markets like in [ph] HGB Jewel HiV (32:02). They all have a little different time when they're going to be cutting, but right now it's still pretty early. We have four months of sampling set up, as I've mentioned earlier, we're going to do a lot of this together with not only our consumer, but our customer to make sure we're doing it the right way in the right place. And as we get those results in, we'll be sure and make sure we share it with everyone, but right now it's very, very early days.

Bonnie L. Herzog

Wells Fargo Securities LLC

Q

All right. Thank you.

Operator: Our next question comes from the line of Kevin Grundy of Jefferies.

Kevin M. Grundy

Jefferies LLC

Q

Thanks. Good morning, guys.

Larry D. Young

President, Chief Executive Officer & Director

A

Hi, Kevin.

Marty Ellen

Chief Financial Officer

A

Good morning, Kevin.

Kevin M. Grundy

Jefferies LLC

Q

Hey, Marty. So first on the EPS guidance you decided to maintain it, so FX a bit worse, commodity is probably better, maybe pricing elasticity, perhaps not as dire because now you're looking for volumes to be up slightly. I think it was flat previously and maybe a little bit better in fountain. Can you help us sort of frame some of the moving parts and sort of ascertain if there's any sort of conservatism in the guides at this point?

Marty Ellen

Chief Financial Officer

A

No, Kevin. So I think – so we did a little better than expected in the first quarter, as we said, there's a point of volume and probably a penny of EPS due to the holiday shift. Maybe there was a penny and a half of marketing in the first quarter, it's \$4 million, obviously that's all phasing, we're still going to stick – we're going to stick to our original marketing spend plan for the year which is about 7.6% of net sales. And as I said on the call, part of this is, look we can't ignore category trends long-term and expect our brands to be somewhat influenced by those trends. And so there's some of that in our forward thinking. And we have to look at Mexico and Peñafiel, which has just been exploding down there, and trying not to get ahead of ourselves in terms of expectations for that brand, particularly in Mexico. So the – yeah, a little uptick in FX, as I said in my prepared remarks.

COGS is the same. We went into the year with about a 1% favorability, and that's not a new factor for us. So the factors I mentioned I think are the primary factors for us. You know, being comfortable, very comfortable within the range that we've given you.

Kevin M. Grundy

Jefferies LLC

Q

Okay. That's helpful. And then a quick one, if I may, for Larry. Just an update on Diets, a credit to you and your team. You guys are clicking – hitting on all cylinders I should say, pretty much across the portfolio and geographies with the exception of Diets, which of course, is not unique to you guys. Any signs of improvement or encouragement that you're seeing there that would suggest you're going to see a turn in trends? That's it for me. Thank you.

Larry D. Young

President, Chief Executive Officer & Director

A

No. Not really, Kevin. It kind of goes back and forth. Like I said, our Diets for Dr Pepper were down five, it's a little better than what it was. But we're seeing some of our Core 4 greater than what they were. So it kind of moves back and forth. We think we have the right plans in place in marketing. But the biggest piece we are going to go after is making sure that we have the execution out there, the availability. We want with the marketing for those Diets to be top of mind and with our execution make sure [ph] they are close at hand (35:10).

Kevin M. Grundy

Jefferies LLC

Q

Great. Congrats on the quarters, guys.

Larry D. Young

President, Chief Executive Officer & Director

A

Thank you.

Marty Ellen

Chief Financial Officer

A

Thanks.

Operator: Our next question comes from the line of Ali Dibadj of Bernstein.

Ali Dibadj

Sanford C. Bernstein & Co. LLC

Q

Hey, guys. Just a few things. One is, get a little bit more detail on the working capital, [ph] I'm sure (35:27) the use of cash this quarter, a little bit outside, as Marty mentioned, customer incentive payments, love to know what that is, where that flows through, and how we should expect that going forward?

Marty Ellen

Chief Financial Officer

A

Well it's a – so the timing of customer payments and the size of the customer payments, that's the settling up of trade payments [ph] that we owe (35:45) customers based on 2014 activity. I didn't say in my remarks, I happened to look again this morning, just simply the payments of our incentive compensation in February [indiscernible] (35:59) based on 2014 results was probably a \$10 million increase cash outflow against versus year ago, I should say. So nothing unusual there whatsoever.

Ali Dibadj

Sanford C. Bernstein & Co. LLC

Q

Okay. Okay. And then it might be linked, it might not be, so I don't mean to make the link, but when you look at Packaged Beverages, obviously the really good growth in volumes there, 4%. And then you also say, part of that is driven by promotional activity as well. So how linked is that do you think going forward? Can you give some more detail about that driver for the Packaged Beverage business or whether you think that's sustainable without even promoting as heavily?

Marty Ellen

Chief Financial Officer

A

So, Ali, let me – so within Packaged Beverages, of course you have the combination of our traditional DSD business and our Warehouse Direct business and warehouse direct brands, and while we talked about Hawaiian

Punch being up, we did that with some promotional activity. The other thing I should mention, as Larry mentioned, we did, in our innovation, we think we've got a great new package there, the pouch, the single serve pouch package. Moms really like that. We lost money on that in the quarter, and I want to be clear with everybody that we made a choice. We don't have the manufacturing capability to make that package, we can put it in. We've chosen to build the market position first and make sure that we've not only got distribution but sustained distribution and velocity, and then we will spend our shareholder's capital to take the cost down. And that hurt them a little bit in the quarter. But that was a conscious decision we made to build the brand before making too much investment in that package, I should say.

So actually Warehouse Direct had a tough mix quarter because, like – unlike other quarters when I've talked about HP being down and it being good for the bottom line, they actually had a little bit of a reverse and so that was actually a little bit – notwithstanding their great results, it was actually a little bit of a drag for them.

Ali Dibadj

Sanford C. Bernstein & Co. LLC

Q

Okay. That totally makes sense given the context from previous calls as well. And last thing, more broadly, clearly the pricing here is looking pretty rational. You guys have both commented on it being rational, and the volume elasticity I think to a lot of people's surprise isn't as bad, right, the pricing elasticity. So what are your observations, if you have any, about what is going on from an elasticity perspective, and is it sustainable going forward? I mean, I think everyone is saying the pricing is going to be sustainably rational, but do you think this elasticity level which is really almost meaningless is going to be sustainable as well?

Larry D. Young

President, Chief Executive Officer & Director

A

I think the big thing we're all seeing is that this pricing has been rational and stable for now three years, going on three years. People are becoming more accustomed to the pricing. I don't think it's as much of a shock than it was when everybody had to start moving with the commodities. So you know, is it sustainable? That's something we're all going to have to wait and see. I think that we've mentioned several times we're cautiously optimistic, and the big thing for us is that we've just got to continue to execute in the marketplace and make sure we have the availability.

Ali Dibadj

Sanford C. Bernstein & Co. LLC

Q

Okay. Thanks very much for the insight.

Marty Ellen

Chief Financial Officer

A

Thank you.

Operator: Our next question comes from the line of Judy Hong of Goldman Sachs.

Judy E. Hong

Goldman Sachs & Co.

Q

Thank you. Good morning.

Marty Ellen

Chief Financial Officer

Good morning, Judy.

A

Larry D. Young

President, Chief Executive Officer & Director

Good morning.

A

Judy E. Hong

Goldman Sachs & Co.

So, Larry, maybe just a follow-up to Ali's questions about sort of the price mix outlook in the context of what you're seeing from an industry perspective, I guess we hear you just in terms of the price mix – the pricing environment in CSD has been rational, your portfolio I guess is obviously less skewed to the colas where the promotional activity has come down and pricing has improved. So just wondering how that interaction kind of plays out when you see better pricing in colas, how does that impact your broader CSDs pricing decisions?

Q

And then when you think about your 2% price mix guidance, how much are you sort of embedding the potential risk of some of that volume elasticity potentially getting worse. You're hearing a little bit more from the retailers trying to increase promotions to drive traffic. Just wondering how much of an upside could there be as it relates to your price mix guidance.

Larry D. Young

President, Chief Executive Officer & Director

Yeah. I think what we have to look there, Judy, especially if you take Dr Pepper, almost 80% of it is displayed and sold with the colas. So the price is going to be the same there on display and on promotion. On flavors, we price our flavored CSDs with the market, and we've seen some activity in flavored CSDs, and we make sure that we stay competitive and have our pricing there with it. So we don't have that huge cola base that, you know, even though it's declined, it's still 40-plus percent. And so I think, our pricing is good. We're happy where it's at. We will stay competitive in flavors and most of our Dr Pepper goes through the cola system.

A

Judy E. Hong

Goldman Sachs & Co.

Okay. And so if you can sort of reconcile that with price mix outlook for this year at 2%, really driven mostly by the concentrate pricing as well as mix, so really limited kind of rate or promotional discounts on the broader Packaged Beverage business. Can you just help us reconcile those two comments?

Q

Marty Ellen

Chief Financial Officer

Judy, it's Marty. I think, Larry, touched on this earlier. So the concentrate price increase is worth 40 bps. That's pretty – we feel pretty solid about that. Everything else is for the most part mixed which is no different than we went into the year planning. As Larry said earlier, we will take price where we see the opportunities in the marketplace and to remain competitive, but we don't bank on it in our financial forecast. And the intersection of that pricing assumption and volume, as I said earlier, we've sort of taken a view of volumes as sort of category trend being an important factor in thinking about where these volumes might go. So we like that intersection.

A

Judy E. Hong

Goldman Sachs & Co.

Q

Got it. Okay. And then my last question is just on Peñafiel. Obviously, you're lapping some of the big growth on that brand, but the growth continues to be pretty impressive. So is there any way to kind of help us out in terms of how much runway is left in terms of distribution gains? What are you sort of expecting that brand to do for the next, you know, couple of years? Just remind us how big that business is within your [ph] LatAm (42:58) portfolio as well.

Larry D. Young

President, Chief Executive Officer & Director

A

So, Judy, it's obviously a very large brand for our portfolio down there. Two big wins for the brand, both last year, innovation in the brand, and then our securing distribution in the largest convenience store chain in Mexico. I think you all know who that is. And, of course, so really I think probably this is the last quarter of the strong double-digit gains in the brand, because we're going to be lapping a lot of that.

Judy E. Hong

Goldman Sachs & Co.

Q

Got it. Okay.

Larry D. Young

President, Chief Executive Officer & Director

A

Don't forget, Peñafiel, where, remember, we think about Mexico, we think about the sugar tax, we remind ourselves that we have a mineral water business down there in this brand, and so that positions our portfolio maybe differently than others and probably in a better place.

Judy E. Hong

Goldman Sachs & Co.

Q

Yep. Got it. Okay. Thank you.

Operator: Our next question comes from the line of Steve Powers of UBS.

Steve R. Powers

UBS Securities LLC

Q

Hey, guys. Good morning.

Marty Ellen

Chief Financial Officer

A

Good morning, Steve.

Larry D. Young

President, Chief Executive Officer & Director

A

Good morning.

Steve R. Powers

UBS Securities LLC

Q

All right. Hey, so another few questions, if I could, on beverage concentrate pricing, just the underneath. You know, look, as was mentioned, it was very solid at 4%, which I think is about, Marty, two points ahead of the actual rate increases of January 1. So just the first question, just to clarify, when you say that that pricing should stick over the year, I'm assuming you're talking about the 2% rate and not the 4% all the number we saw in Q1, right?

Marty Ellen

Chief Financial Officer

A

Absolutely. The other part, the other part of those four points is timing on discounts and the way we accrue and fund trade to our bottlers.

Steve R. Powers

UBS Securities LLC

Q

Okay. Great. And then I guess stepping back, given that, could you just, I mean, maybe talk more about the general pricing strategy in that segment, just in terms of how it flows through quarter -to-quarter? Because as I look over the last, call it, four years, we've seen you take an average of about 2.5 points of price in beverage concentrates, average annual price increase, which is strong in itself, but the Q1 pricing trends was almost a full point stronger than that heading into this quarter. So I was surprised to see another 4% quarter, especially given that Dr Pepper seemed relatively weak which I think would drive negative mix. So I know there are counter discounting dynamics at play early in the year, but I think those would normalize over time. Just can you help me get underneath the drivers of Q1 and how do you expect that to trend not only over the balance of 2015 but then as we think longer term about the cadence as well. Thanks

Marty Ellen

Chief Financial Officer

A

Steve, in the first quarter you've got the underlying price increase of 2%, you've got the timing of discounts, which added some to get to the 4% plus in our fountain, had some reasonably good pricing as well, okay? We don't talk a lot about the fountain business, the volume was up a little bit, the pricing was good. So here's what I would tell you, I would tell you to take the timing impact out of Q1, think about an underlying 2%, underlying concentrate price increase and from your own point of view on how – what will happen with fountain over the balance of the year. We've done okay in fountain, we've had low single digit growth over many periods in the past. Like I said, we've got some pricing. Pricing in that business is subject to contracts and the way we contract with fountain customers around pricing and/or price protection and how pricing works, so it's a customer-by-customer negotiation but you are right, that the larger increase you saw in Q1, there's a timing component to that.

Steve R. Powers

UBS Securities LLC

Q

Okay. Any – I don't know would you be willing to offer up any just sort of rule of thumb in terms of the price premium per case on fountain versus a general case of concentrate?

Marty Ellen

Chief Financial Officer

A

No.

Steve R. Powers

UBS Securities LLC

Q

Okay. Try, I thought I'd try. Thank you.

Marty Ellen
Chief Financial Officer

A

You're welcome, Steve.

Operator: Our next question comes from the line of Robert Ottenstein of Evercore ISI.

Robert E. Ottenstein
Evercore ISI

Q

Hey, thank you very much. A couple of questions, one, could you give us an update on the TEN platform, where that stands, what kind of – what you're seeing in the market, and whether that's picking up momentum again? And then second, on the freight issue, if I remember, this is kind of the second year in a row that it's been a problem, and I'm wondering to what extent you can address it by reengineering some of the system one way or the other, so it stops being a drag. Thank you.

Larry D. Young
President, Chief Executive Officer & Director

A

Yeah, I'll answer the TEN, and I'll let Marty handle the transportation. We're still very supportive of our TEN platform in the trade and our execution. As I mentioned earlier, we've got our natural products out there, so we'll be watching what they do as they rollout, and what type of an impact they'll have on TEN, which one the consumer really wants, where they want to play, and then we'll make our decisions on that going forward. So we're probably looking at more of a better feel of that in the third trimester this year.

Marty Ellen
Chief Financial Officer

A

And, Rob, really your question on the physical footprint, we did a lot of work on this a number of years ago, closed some plants after the spin-off from Cadbury, set up our supply chain, our network of plants and warehouses, and including our warehouse – direct warehouses. At the time where we thought it was optimized. The issue right now in transportation is everything that's happening in the regulatory front as it relates to rules surrounding drivers, the hours they can drive, the actual some of the physical aspects of that can either qualify them or disqualify them to drive an over-the-road tractor. This is – some say some of this may abate with the lower activity in the oil patch maybe freeing up some drivers to service the industry, but that's been the factor. I don't know right now the solution for us would be necessarily to do any material changes or spend any material amounts of capital right now to somehow change the system.

Robert E. Ottenstein
Evercore ISI

Q

You said there's basically not that much you can do on that front? Is what I'm hearing?

Marty Ellen
Chief Financial Officer

A

Look, the higher cost is influencing how we think about our footprint as we march our way through rapid continuous improvement, we're obviously closing more facilities than we're opening and so when we think about eliminating a distribution site now we have to think about – one of the things that we have to think about is where is the product going to come from, is there going to be offsetting transportation costs at sort of current transportation rates and what are the implications to making that decision or not. So influence is everything we

think about as we make these decisions, but I don't think it's causing us to rethink any major change in our footprint.

Robert E. Ottenstein

Evercore ISI



Okay. Thank you very much.

Operator: Ladies and gentlemen, we have reached the allotted time for questions today. I would like to thank, everyone, for joining today's call. This concludes today's call and you may now disconnect.

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