

Going for the Korean Gold

Attending the Olympic Games is a fantasy for many people. For the top manufacturer's representatives—"field brokers"—for Union Foods' Smack Ramen Noodles, the dream will come true this summer in Seoul.

The 1987 incentive campaign kicked off with a letter in October 1986. Fifty-four companies employing more than 2,500 salespeople vied for one of five regional slots. To qualify, each company had to top last year's sales by at least 25 percent. Union Foods held a meeting with each company manager to review the program rules.

Participating brokers received a monthly statement of actual sales figures versus quota, including a regional ranking. Union Foods sent such promotional items as Korean dolls and books about Korea to the brokers' homes. "Because the award enabled winners to take their spouse, we wanted to enlist the spouses' support," said Jay Piz, marketing manager for the Costa Mesa, Calif.-based food maker.

Simultaneous incentive programs for the largest retail accounts supported the brokers' efforts. Based on purchase volume, retailers could win individual trips to Hawaii, Bahamas, Las Vegas or Tokyo.

For the final push, representatives from Union Foods met with each broker at a convention in early December to review sales and determine the balance left to achieve quota. At that time, additional varieties of Smack Ramen Noodles were added to the original promoted products to provide

the brokers with more room for success, said Piz.

It was Union Foods' most successful annual promotion, according to Piz. The average performance of actual sales versus quota was 92 percent. The top broker exceeded quota by 265 percent, while the lowest scorer of the top five exceeded quota by 145 percent. In the long run, the promotion helped Smack Ramen Noodles increase its market share, Piz claimed—to 10.3 percent from 7.5 percent among six major competitors.

Piz attributes much of the promotion's success to the award. "A nine-day trip to the Summer Olympics in Seoul is very difficult to arrange on your own," he said. "It was also ideal for us because our company's top management is based in Korea."

During the promotional period, Korea's political climate was rocky. "Both management and participants expressed concern at various points, but worries were fleeting," said Piz. "It did not interfere with sales, and everyone had confidence that the rumblings would simmer down before the Olympics."

Winners and their spouses will receive tickets for at least one sporting event on each of the nine days.

Also included will be a tour of Seoul's highlights, a day trip to the resort area of Pusan and free time to meet with company executives.

The entire incentive campaign—not including the retailer portion—cost \$100,000. Union Foods reported \$22 million in gross sales for 1987, up 38 percent from the previous year. ■