

An open letter to Fifth Sense members

FlavorActiV Ltd are proud supporters of Fifth Sense.

In early 2014 we learnt of the Fifth Sense name and began investigating. We had meetings with Duncan, its founder, to learn more about the charity and its members, and the direction it was heading. From these early days we were hugely impressed and motivated by Duncan's campaign to raise awareness and develop understanding of taste and smell disorders. And so in late 2014 we agreed with Duncan and the Fifth Sense board to become official supporters.

Why did we get involved?

Firstly, we did this because our own success allowed us to invest the proper time and resources into supporting the charity effectively. This is crucial as in order to facilitate our 12-strong team of sensory managers and consultants to give their time, knowledge and experience, we must be in a strong position to do so. Thankfully we are.

But more importantly we did it because of the obvious parallels between our spheres of work. As a company dedicated to sensory training in the beverage and food industry, we are acutely aware of the challenges of improving tasting ability. We also appreciate, and to some extent understand, how demoralising and debilitating the loss of either sense can be to an individual, and so are motivated and well equipped to support.

And we also did it because we believe in the work Duncan, Carl and the team are carrying out. Taste and smell disorders affect huge numbers of people, but due to the lack of knowledge and understanding there can also be a lack of appreciation of the problems and suffering it causes. So we feel there is much we can do to support Fifth Sense and its members, and to help spread the message to the public, medical and industry communities.

How we hope to help

We aim to support Fifth Sense in the months and years by lending our considerable experience and expertise to support Fifth Sense surveys and research initiatives. We will also attend and present at Fifth Sense events (as we did last year at the annual conference, read Duncan's excellent piece [here, or with the #LongLostSmell campaign, read here](http://www.flavoractiv.com/2015/02/longlostsmell-anosmia-sensory/) <http://www.flavoractiv.com/2015/02/longlostsmell-anosmia-sensory/>).

Our links to beverage producers around the world will bring its own benefits. We will be able to utilise our close partnerships across the technical and sensory side of the industry for knowledge and data gathering. Furthermore

due to the 40,000+ sensory participants we've trained over the years, we have access to a huge wealth of sensory information and trained sensory tasters, and we will explore how existing and newly captured data can support Fifth Sense research activities.

Furthermore our training of sensory panels means that we have acquired a great deal of experience in tasting knowledge and techniques that can hopefully be adapted for Fifth Sense members. Our products (used to enhance positive and negative flavours in beverages) can also be utilised, as can our online validation scheme for capturing and analysing banks of sensory data.

In more immediate and practical terms we will work with Fifth Sense to develop a take-home Taste Kit, which will allow members to test their ability to identify the 4 basic tastes. Knowing the extent of taste loss, and then being positioned on a common scale, we hope will provide individuals with tangible knowledge of their limitations. But we also hope it will give reassurance that their condition is not as severe as previously imagined. We will then be able to work with individuals, tailoring workshops to target specific tastes and eventually flavours, with the ultimate aim of opening up a new range of sensory experiences. We do not presume it will always work, but we hope it can help members to try new things and experience more.

Looking ahead there will be numerous channels through which we can support Fifth Sense as the partnership evolves, and we look forward to working with you in the coming months and years. We will listen, we will learn, and we will offer you our support and skills in the sensory realm to get the most from your impaired senses.

What we want from Fifth Sense members

So we hope that you will support and contribute to this partnership – we will rely on your input and feedback for us to develop the tools and techniques to support your progress. We also hope that you will have the confidence to try new things, supported by an accurate and scalable understanding of the extent of your sensory limitations. Because we agree with Duncan that there is cautious hope, and that through targeted and sympathetic training and support you will be able to experience a richer variety of flavours than you previously imagined.

So please keep in touch, and send us your thoughts and suggestions. My name is Liam and I look forward to hearing from you.

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