

Mizkan America, Inc.

Job Description

Job Title: R&D Director/ Senior Director

Based in Mount Prospect, IL, Mizkan America is a subsidiary of the Mizkan Group, a global, family-owned company that has been Bringing Flavor to Life™ for almost 220 years. As one of the leading makers of vinegars, condiments and sauces in the United States, Mizkan America maintains 12 manufacturing facilities that serve the retail, foodservice, specialty-Asian and food-ingredient trade channels. We are committed to following our two core principles: continuously challenging the status quo and delivering only the finest products for our customers. Our leadership seeks out, embraces and implements ideas for improvement from all of its employees. Transparency and accountability are two key factors that drive our company's overall management approach.

We are looking for people who are seeking to deliver their best so that we can deliver ours. Above all, we're dedicated to maximizing the potential of our greatest assets—our team members. That's reflected in our ongoing commitment to recruit, develop, reward and retain our talented, multicultural workforce. We hope to see you as part of our team's future success!

SUMMARY: The Director/ Senior Director, R&D provides leadership and partners cross functionally for the design, development and implementation of Meal Solutions and Flavor Enhancers initiatives to support and deliver Annual Operating Plan and strategic business goals and objectives. Oversee the management of all R&D projects. Lead and mentor the R&D team and foster a culture of innovation. Responsible for recruiting, training and managing the performance evaluation and career development process. The Director of R&D should lead the transformation of the organization into an efficient, engaged, resourceful, hungry, results driven, innovative organization. The new leader should unleash the capacity of the R&D team. This position will report to Vice President, Marketing. This job description reflects assignment of essential functions. It does not prescribe or restrict the tasks that may be assigned.

ESSENTIAL DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Strategic Leadership:

- Develop and implement a comprehensive R&D strategy aligned with Mizkan's overall objectives and goals.
- Identify emerging trends, technologies and market opportunities to guide research and product development initiatives.
- Collaborate with senior leadership to define the company's long term R&D roadmap and prioritize projects based on market demands and business objectives.

Team Management and Cross Functional Collaboration:

- Recruit, Lead and mentor a high performing team and foster a culture of innovation. The leader should drive a reinvention of the culture of innovation in Mizkan America. The new R&D organization will be an inspired, energetic, ambitious, results driven team. The team will display extreme ownership and a will to win.
- Provide guidance, coaching and professional development opportunities to team members to enhance their skills and capabilities.
- Set clear goals, establish performance metrics and regularly evaluate team members performance and progress.
- Collaborate with other departments such as Marketing, Sales, and Operations to align R&D activities with business needs and market requirements.
- Collaborate with QA and Operations to ensure that Quality and safety standards are met.
- Partner across Regions (Japan and Europe) to share best practices, identify opportunities to leverage new technologies across geographies, and craft future vision for Mizkan R&D.

Research and Development:

- Ensure compliance with applicable regulations, quality standards and intellectual property guidelines throughout the R&D process.
- Foster a culture of continuous improvement, encouraging the team to explore new approaches, methodologies, and tools to enhance efficiency and effectiveness.
- Manage the expenses associated with the R&D department as prescribed by the annual budget.
- In collaboration with Marketing and Consumer Insights, the R&D leader should lead the identification of the innovation dig sites that will inform the efforts of front end innovation teams and the support from Mizkan Holdings.

- The leader of R&D should engage with external partners to expand Mizkan's bandwidth to create new products and bring new capabilities.
- Directs the development of all projects from concept to commercialization for both internal and external manufacturing/co-packing scenarios.
- Develops projects strategies and timelines which maximizes the group's workload, while maintaining business priorities.
- Continuously improve products and processes for greater product quality and profitability.

EDUCATION, EXPERIENCE, AND QUALIFICATIONS:

- Proven experience in leading and managing R&D teams, preferably in a technology driven organization.
- A Master's degree in Food Science or a related field is desired.
- A minimum of ten (10) years of management experience in R&D roles is preferred.
- Condiment experience with a strong background in Pasta and Pizza Sauces along with a thorough knowledge of Low Acid Canned Foods, Acidified and Non-Acidified foods will be a plus.
- Strong understanding of product development, innovation management, food processing, and packaging technologies and capabilities.
- Strong leadership, collaboration, influencing, planning, business acumen and problem-solving skills.
- Demonstrated track record of successful development and commercialization of new products and technologies.
- Good interpersonal skills with the ability to work effectively with individuals and groups at all levels of the organization.
- Ability to effectively present information and to be responsive to technical inquiries from both internal and external customers.
- A good understanding of Food Processing and the Regulatory Agencies (FDA, USDA).
- Excellent leadership, team building and interpersonal skills.
- Strategic mindset with the ability to translate business objectives into actionable R&D strategies.
- Ability to be self-directed, forward thinking and to make complex decisions that drive business performance.
- Strong Computer Literacy skills.
- Ability to travel up to 30%.
- Willingness and flexibility to adapt to changing business needs and deadlines.
- High Energy and Passion.
- Ability to work in a scrappy, entrepreneurial environment.