

BEAUTY / BEAUTY FEATURES

# CEW Top Talent Awards: Personalization, Customization Drive Accelerated Pace in R&D

Procter & Gamble's Rukeyser S. Thompson and Johnson & Johnson's Barbara Green are driving fast innovation within their organizations.

By [Ellen Thomas](#) on April 11, 2018




📷 Barbara Green and Rukeyser Thompson

Technology and consumer demand for personalization have quickened the pace of product innovation.

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Injecting elements of customization into product and accelerating timelines are two things that Barbara Green, head of research and development for specialty beauty at Johnson & Johnson-owned NeoStrata, and Rukeyser Thompson, global hair care section head of research and development at Procter & Gamble, are tackling head-on at their respective organizations.

“When I started doing product research, we’d go to a consumer’s home or they’d meet us in the research facility. Now we interact with them online — there are interfaces that allow us to see into her bathroom and shower and see what products she’s using and how she’s interacting with them,” Thompson said. “She can take us on shop-alongs on her phone. That was unheard of before. The way that information is transferred so quickly and consumers have everything at their fingertips — we’ve had to change our pace of innovation and how we deliver to her.”

At P&G, that means making teams smaller and “not sitting on” things.

“The teams are set up smaller with very specific objectives and that’s how we get these things delivered faster,” said Thompson, who noted that the January 2017 launch of the Herbal Essences Bio Renew line was a key example of P&G’s heightened pace. “The formula contains an active antioxidant — a histamine — and that was not something we chose to sit on. In 14 to 15 months we brought innovation that historically would have taken 36 months.”

At Johnson & Johnson, Green is attuned to the shifts happening in today’s skin-care market, especially the demand for natural ingredients. “There’s a growing demand for naturals — it represents a big opportunity for products and brands,” Green said. “I have focused on a combination approach of taking ingredients that are proven to deliver benefits and combining them with active naturals or active compounds that can provide a supplemental effect for the skin.”



### COLLECTIONS



Consumers are increasingly demanding personalization when it comes to skin care. Green takes a regimen approach to skin care, offering “different mix-and-match opportunities to meet the needs of various skin types, and increasingly new types of vehicles that allow individuals to choose what works best for their skin.” The Neutrogena Skin360 SkinScanner, for instance, is a device Johnson & Johnson created to allow consumers to diagnose their own skin issues.

Thompson is focused on personalization as well — one of P&G’s first steps in addressing the concept was with the Pantene Gold Series, a line for textured hair that Thompson helped to launch.

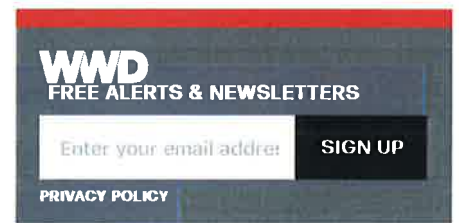
“We first saw personalization in cocktailing — when you get consumers who are mixing products together, that’s a clear sign they’re communicating, ‘Hey, I have a hair need and you haven’t figured out how to deliver a product for it.’ The teams that I’ve led, we’ve been open to having [the consumer] teach us [her needs] and we put a science spin on it and figure out how to make an innovative product.”

Thompson noted that customization doesn’t always have to involve technology — it can be as simple as providing tips and tricks for customers on how to mix products.

“If you look at the Gold Series lineup, we have stylist tips [on the bottle] that’s the first time we’ve ever done that. We talked to consumers and said, ‘Who do you think are hair experts that you would listen to?’ This target group of African-American consumers — the image they had of P&G was that we’re a white company with no diversity. One way to help break down that barrier was [asking them], ‘If you’re getting information about a hair product, who do you go to?’ They’d believe a scientist, a cosmetologist and a dermatologist, so we brought those people together [to create] tips for mixing the products.”

Looking ahead, Green is focused on the skin’s microbiome.

“I think we’ll see more personalization around encouraging skin’s natural health [and] claims around the microbiome,” said Green, who noted recent studies connecting the skin’s unique



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microbiome with certain skin conditions. “The skin’s microflora can change with different conditions on the skin, so the concept is, ‘How do you optimize what would be found normally on the skin so that it delivers an overall benefit depending on your needs? You might have sensitive skin or are acne-prone or you’re more susceptible to certain aging signs. There are certain conditions associated with the microflora and small changes in skin’s pH. Johnson & Johnson has spent a lot of time looking at the influence of the microbiome.”

*Rukeyser S. Thompson leads the global hair-care research and development programs for Herbal Essences at Procter & Gamble, as well as the Consumers of African Ancestry Connect and Development program and the Hair Food brand in North America. She has worked at Procter & Gamble for 13 years, in research and development positions with brands such as Vidal Sassoon, Fekkai, Olay, Secret and Gain.*

*Barbara Green is the head of specialty **beauty** research and development for Johnson & Johnson’s dermo-cosmetic business, including the NeoStrata and Exuviance brands. She began her career with Unilever and has been with NeoStrata for more than 20 years.*



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arket for us, and San Francisco – in a lot of  
rnia we have a lot of demand,” Glossier  
ounder and chief executive officer  
wells told WWD. The monthlong pop-up  
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