

MUSCLE BEHIND THE PROTEIN POWDER

Johnson, Brooks . Star Tribune ; Minneapolis, Minn. [Minneapolis, Minn]. 12 July 2022: D.1.

[ProQuest document link](#)

FULL TEXT

Pallet after pallet of protein powder was wheeled into a Plymouth warehouse Friday afternoon, putting Seeq Supply back in business.

The Minnesota company, still in its infancy, is coming off another unplanned spell without product after unexpectedly going viral on TikTok.

Like many new companies, Seeq's co-founders got a crash course in inventory management – made even more complicated by global supply-chain backlogs and unpredictable demand.

Seeq makes a different kind of whey protein powder that mixes clear and comes fruit-flavored, as opposed to the thick chocolate and vanilla milkshakes that dominate the market.

Ben Zaver started Seeq from his parents' basement during the pandemic. The company officially launched last fall and found fast success thanks to a lucky social media break: Zaver's TikTok video of a taste-test garnered more than 3 million views.

Not long after, Mark Cuban posted his own TikTok: "These guys should be on 'Shark Tank,'" the billionaire said in a video seen by more than 600,000 people. "Ten out of 10."

The unsolicited endorsement from the celebrity businessman could have led to a bounty of orders. Unfortunately, Seeq had only a few dozen bottles in stock at the time.

Short supply has been the problem ever since -- in part due to customer demand and in part due to late shipments caused by supply-chain issues. Seeq was seeing a four-month gap between when it placed a bulk order and when it was received.

"We've been in business about eight months and have been out of stock for six," Zaver, 25, said.

"At the start we had no clue if it was going to sell or not," he said. "But since our momentum on TikTok, our first few orders sold out before they showed up."

Hence the festive atmosphere Friday when 15,000 bottles arrived, making the warehouse feel suddenly -- and pleasantly -- crowded.

"I woke up this morning and said: 'It's launch day!'" co-founder Hannah Perez said. "We're back, baby."

After Friday's order, and a steady supply scheduled for the rest of the year, the newly minted co-founders hope their days of low inventory are over. The company aims to sell 100,000 bottles this year. At \$44.99 a bottle, that's nearly \$4.5 million in sales.

"I've got a good feeling we won't be out of stock again," said Perez, 24, who left a marketing agency she launched to join Seeq full time. "We're thinking now about how much to scale."

Protein powder is a \$5 billion market in the U.S., according to Grand View Research, and whey protein remains a big part of its anticipated yearly growth of 8% over the next decade.

Seeq mixes more like Gatorade than the typical chalky consistency most whey protein powders provide; it comes with 22 grams of protein and no sugar.

While Seeq is not the first protein powder to aim for a juicier consistency, it has had some lucky breaks thanks to the often unpredictable power of social media.

"The feedback is way more positive than I ever thought it was going to be," Zaver said.

Zaver initially came up with the business idea before graduating from Minnesota State University, Mankato in

2020. It took about a year to find a manufacturer, during which time he brought on fellow alum Perez and started building buzz.

The business recently moved from Zaver's parents' basement to an industrial park in Plymouth, where the pair are plotting the company's next phase.

Zaver and Perez are keeping their focus on online sales and social media marketing for now. All Star Nutrition in Mankato and a GNC in Minneapolis could be the first brick-and-mortar retailers for the brand later this year.

A new flavor is also due out this summer -- at least, the plan is that it arrives this summer. Between supply-chain issues, influencers and unexpectedly viral videos, Zaver and Perez are learning valuable business lessons about strategy and planning.

"When a video does well, that's when we do big sales," Zaver said. "We have to think about that four months in advance."

Brooks Johnson •218-491-6496

CREDIT: BROOKS JOHNSON; STAFF WRITER

DETAILS

Subject:	Inventory; Social networks; Proteins
Business indexing term:	Subject: Inventory Social networks
Location:	United States--US; Minnesota
Company / organization:	Name: TikTok Inc; NAICS: 518210
Publication title:	Star Tribune; Minneapolis, Minn.
First page:	D.1
Publication year:	2022
Publication date:	Jul 12, 2022
Section:	BUSINESS
Publisher:	Star Tribune Media Company LLC
Place of publication:	Minneapolis, Minn.
Country of publication:	United States, Minneapolis, Minn.
Publication subject:	General Interest Periodicals--United States
ISSN:	08952825
Source type:	Newspaper
Language of publication:	English
Document type:	News

ProQuest document ID: 2688235344

Document URL: <https://www.proquest.com/newspapers/muscle-behind-protein-powder/docview/2688235344/se-2?accountid=12259>

Copyright: Copyright Star Tribune Media Company LLC Jul 12, 2022

Last updated: 2022-07-13

Database: U.S. Newsstream

LINKS

[Check for Full Text](#)

Database copyright © 2022 ProQuest LLC. All rights reserved.

[Terms and Conditions](#) [Contact ProQuest](#)