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**THE VEEV FEAR FACTOR**

Courtney Reum didn't start off in business thinking about rain forests. The thirty-two-year-old Columbia University grad, who'd double-majored in economics and philosophy, went straight to Wall Street, becoming an investment banker at Goldman Sachs with a subspecialty in consumer products.

But a few years later, after working with start-up brands including Under Armour and Vitaminwater, Courtney decided to leave Goldman to become an entrepreneur. Having worked peripherally on the ten-plus-billion-dollar merger of liquor companies Pernod Ricard and Allied Domecq, the former banker became interested in the spirits market, where there seemed to be a lack of innovation.

And so, in late 2007, Courtney and brother Carter started VeeV, a spirit with the tagline “A better way to drink.” The reason it’s better, says Courtney, is that it is infused with açai berries, which are loaded with vitamins C and E. Furthermore, for every bottle sold, VeeV donates one dollar to rain forest preservation through the Sustainable Açai Project, founded by fellow açai entrepreneurs at Sambazon (Sustainable Management of the Brazilian Amazon). VeeV also operates the only distillery to get its energy through renewable wind power. Finally, VeeV is the first spirits company ever to offset the carbon-dioxide emissions of its business activities and become certified carbon neutral.

The company’s sales have been excellent, increasing more than 250 percent year over year, and VeeV is on its way to becoming one of the bestselling new brands in the country.

Like nearly everyone who starts a company, Courtney was sometimes scared: “I would wake up from those three-in-the-morning nightmares. It became apparent pretty quickly that we didn’t know much about the spirits business, and we had much to learn. We also didn’t know if anyone else might have a copycat product in the works; we were, in a word, terrified.”