

Alison Watkins finalises team to return fizz to Coke

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[Eli Greenblat](#)

Coca-Cola Amatil chief executive Alison Watkins has finally assembled her senior management team that would aim to revitalise the bottler's fortunes this year — to be kicked off by the highly anticipated launch of Coke Life in two weeks — after poaching a senior executive from Woolworths to be her new chief financial officer.

Ms Watkins has told a technology conference in Melbourne that the beverage group would harness new technologies more than ever before, especially social media, to improve customer engagement and sales.

CC Amatil yesterday said it had appointed Martyn Roberts as the company's new CFO, attracting the 20-year finance veteran from Woolworths where he was finance director for its flagship supermarkets division. Ms Watkins is a former non-executive director of Woolworths.

Mr Martyn was also once a chief financial officer for fashion house Louis Vuitton where over nine years he gained international experience in Europe and Asia.

But he will have to wait until the third quarter and as late as August to sink his teeth into CC Amatil's accounts. He is replacing outgoing CFO Nessa O'Sullivan who, after five years in the role, leaves next month as part of a management reshuffle triggered by Ms Watkins when she came aboard last year.

When Ms Watkins took the CEO reins from long-serving boss Terry Davis she set about cleaning out most of the senior management. Peter Kelly, the managing director of its food cannery SPC, its Australasia boss Warwick White and one-time beer and spirits managing director John Murphy have left.

Ms Watkins pledged to resuscitate the bottler's sagging earnings after CC Amatil recently posted its lowest full-year profit in nearly a decade. Already she has promised to rip out \$100 million in costs while also focusing on innovation with the new low-calorie Coke Life to be launched in early April and other new drinks around iced-coffee and coffee capsules to follow.

Ms Watkins told the Creative Innovation 2015 conference in Melbourne yesterday that CC Amatil would capitalise on technological innovation at every stage of its business, from how it makes its beverages to its sale to retailers and ultimately customers.

The digital revolution facing all companies provided a huge opportunity for CC Amatil's marketing strategies.

“We are using technology to equip our sales force and add more value for our (retail) customers by virtue of having really targeted information for them that really helps drive their own business and that we couldn't do previously.”

She said the power of technology was especially evident in the transformation of its SPC business, highlighted by a social media campaign started by a consumer concerned about the prospect of SPC potentially closing down.

Ms Watkins said the social media platform helped put pressure on government, retailer and customers to recognise the importance of saving a great Australian brand.