



## “The great thing is the personalisation, we really listen to customers: In the US we even tried barbeque flavour believe it or not”

we'll concentrate on making that. The great thing is the personalisation, we really listen to customers: In the US we even tried barbeque flavour believe it or not.” And how did that go down with customers? “Well, you either loved it or you hated,” admits Knowlton, keeping conspicuously silent on which side he himself fell on.

Flavours aside the food consumer market has had to adapt in the last decade to the public awareness of obesity and the trend towards low-fat products. Despite being seemingly on the front line of this setback Knowlton claims that Cold Stone has managed not to be affected by it: “Well, we do have a ‘sinless’ line that’s a non-sugar, non-fat ice cream that we created a couple of years ago, but by the time we’d brought it out people didn’t really seem that bothered by it any more,” he admits, “although bizarrely it is now one of our top three sellers in Korea, which no-one saw coming! But fortunately I think for us, people think of ice cream as an indulgence, a feel-good. So they don’t have this attitude of ‘I want low-fat this and that’, they want to treat themselves.”

This ability to meet the public desire to treat themselves is both what pushes the company’s growth and what underlines Knowlton’s pride in being with the group. “I want Cold Stone to grow,” he says. “In the next three to five years we see the international markets exceeding US growth. We’re looking at over 100 new stores this year and then for that to double each year for the next five years; we’re looking at Peru, Canada, England.”

“Personally I love to travel, see new cultures and I’m the type of person that needs to be proud of the company and what they represent; I can’t work for a company I’m not passionate about. Here it’s easy, especially

when part of your mission statement is ‘we want to make people happy around the world.’ I just have to make sure that I eat it in moderation and exercise regularly!”



**NAME:** Lee Knowlton

**TITLE:** President Kahala-Cold Stone

**LENGTH OF TIME IN POSITION:** 5 years

**CORE VALUES:** Honesty is very important. Doing the right thing too; and the right thing can be different things to different people but I try to balance it from all perspectives and try to do what I think is the right thing overall.

**BEST PIECE OF ADVICE:** Stay patient and pick the right partner. There were a couple of examples of different groups from different countries that came to Arizona with cheques but we held off. Picking the right partner is critical.

