

Skateboarding with Ocean Spray

CEO on board with social success

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Sometimes, a good vibe is all it takes.

That's what helped make [a video of a guy skateboarding](#) while drinking cran-raspberry juice and lip syncing a Fleetwood Mac song a social media sensation that garnered more than 61 million views in just about three weeks on TikTok.

If you're one of the few people who hasn't seen the video, the skateboarder is Nathan Apodaca of Idaho, who had to rely on his skateboard when his car broke down; the Cran-Raspberry is Ocean Spray, and the song is "Dreams."

In this time of negativity, divisiveness, worry and fear, the 23-second video provided a much-needed chill moment to millions. It also rocketed Apodaca, Fleetwood Mac and [Ocean Spray](#) into the social media spotlight.

That's been great news for the 90-year-old food and beverage company, and for its new CEO, Tom Hayes '87.

"I think the reason his video became so popular really was about Nathan's own explanation, and his whole vibe. His car broke down, but he wasn't going to let this get him down, he just left it where it was and jumped on his skateboard," says Hayes, adding that the relaxed feel of the brief video seemed to strike a chord with the stressed-out masses.

Hayes has been on the job for just over three months, and says when he saw the video and its growing popularity, he knew his company wanted to do something — not only to capitalize on the moment to highlight the Ocean Spray brand, but also to help Apodaca, who — lest we forget — was skating to work because his car died.

We showed Ocean Spray Cranberries President and CEO Tom Hayes [UNH's own version](#) of the #Cranberrydreams video featuring Wild E. Cat. His reaction? "Oh, that's cool ... hey, wait a minute... is he on a golf cart?"

To be fair, Wild E.'s feet don't quite fit on a skateboard as easily as his human counterparts' do.

"After we saw it, and we saw the juice featured so prominently and heard the backstory, we asked the question, 'what can we do to help and be involved?'"

The answer came in a second popular video, where Ocean Spray surprised Apodaca with a new pickup truck filled with Ocean Spray products. The truck's color? Cranberry red, of course.

The company is enjoying a brand-awareness boom with the social media attention it's receiving, with increased engagements across all its social media platforms, and its cran-raspberry juice reportedly flying off grocery store shelves. Hayes even joined TikTok so, like Mick Fleetwood and thousands of other fans, he could [share his own #DreamsChallenge #Cranberry Dreams video](#).

Prior to being named president and CEO of Ocean Spray Cranberries Inc., in July, Hayes was president and CEO of Tyson Foods. Before that, he was chief supply chain officer at Hillshire Brands and Sara Lee and held positions at such big-name corporations as US Foods, Kraft and ConAgra. Hayes is a member of the UNH Foundation Board.

Unlike his previous employers, Ocean Spray, founded in 1930, is a co-op owned by more than 700 cranberry growers in the United States, Canada and South America. So

while he's used to being beholden to shareholders, investors and a board of directors at publicly traded companies, Hayes says his new position is quite a bit different.

"This job is not like anything I've done before; because our owners are the farmers at Ocean Spray, our profits go back to funding the owners' way of life," he says. "The profits here in some cases determine whether those farmers are in the red or if they actually make a profit each year, so it's a big responsibility."

Hayes says one of the reasons he wanted to get in on the popularity of Apodaca's video was for those farmer-owners and their families. "We wanted to do this to have an impact on 700 family farms that own the co-op. We're trying to get them through these next five to 10 years in a way that's going to set up those generational businesses for the next 100 years."

Since joining Ocean Spray amid the height of the pandemic, Hayes has been holding virtual meetings and visiting growers and processing plants as part of his onboarding process. But did he ever think that skateboarding would be part of his new job responsibilities, too?

"No, I definitely didn't," he jokes. But it's led to much discussion among Ocean Spray leadership about using video content from the new CEO as a way to engage customers. "I haven't really been out there on social media on Ocean Spray's behalf, but now we're thinking we have a bit of a platform to have a meaningful voice for the right reasons on the right things," Hayes explains. "The brand has taken a definite turn, and that's a great opportunity for us to continue to propel that momentum."

Hayes says there have been a few online meetings scheduled for him and Apodaca to chat one-on-one, but scheduling conflicts keep pushing it off — for Apodaca.

"I'm dying to talk to him, but he's had some other interviews and press meetings," says Hayes of Apodaca's newfound fame. "He's a pretty busy guy."

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