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THE POWER OF PACKAGING

There's much more to packaging than meets the eye.

Melanie Henson
 Associate Editor

Creating a product that can compete with its counterparts on-shelf is hard. Getting people to buy it is even harder.

That's where packaging comes in.

Today's buyer is smart-she's done the research, she knows her budget and she enters the store ready to select the personal care product that's right for her. Once in the hectic atmosphere of the store, however, and faced with an army of like products on the shelf, she is likely to reach for the one that seems to visually, and sometimes tactically, suit her needs.

Even packaging industry veterans are not immune to the so-called "emotional" purchasing response. "I don't shop by name-I shop by color," quipped Joseph Dollens, president of Dollens and Associates and keynote speaker at the recent Innovative Packaging Symposium, held in New York on May 4 and 5.

Mr. Dollens recalled a recent business trip, when he arrived in town late at night and searched for something to eat on the run. He pulled into a BP/Amoco and asked for orange juice. "What kind?" the clerk asked.

"I had no idea," Mr. Dollens recalled. "The clerk thumped three cartons onto the counter, and I pointed and said, 'That one.'" He and the clerk went through a similar exchange when Mr. Dollens requested ice cream.

This very simple experience was, for Mr. Dollens, food for thought. "I realized that consumers around the world shop with their eyes. We seek out the colors and shapes that have meaning for us," he said. "We use a plethora of elements to make a purchasing decision," not all of which rely on the actual efficacy of the product, he stressed.

In order to develop packaging that really works, the packaging professional must adopt a consumer's eye view, according to Mr. Dollens. "Experts in packaging are just that: experts," he said. "(When developing packaging for your customer's product), you need to take a step back and just react like a human being."



Emsar's EcoFoam Squeeze foamer is ideal for applying product directly where it needs to go, company executives said.

Behind the Scenes

Even the most efficacious product in the world needs packaging that will draw purchasers to it. The consumer relies on an emotional/visual and immediate response; the packaging professional doesn't have that luxury.

When wrapping up a product, much needs to be considered in advance. Is the product sensitive to light, necessitating an opaque jar, bottle or tube? Will it erode a standard plastic and therefore do better in glass or metal (both of which are more expensive than most plastics)? What about the shape-is it easy to hold in the hand? Should it be? How about the delivery system-is it a viscous product that would clog a standard sprayer?

The list gets trickier as packaging professionals juggle consumer perception and emotional response, with more practical concerns. For example, as new regulations develop, labelling requirements change. Verbiage must be expanded upon in some cases, especially when a cosmetic-type ingredient crosses over to the "drug" category.

In addition, exported products must be labeled clearly in both U.S. requirements, and the country of import's requirements. All this takes up quite a bit of space on the container, prompting marketers to wonder where the actual logo can be squeezed in.

Another issue is counterfeiting, which is on the rise and requires innovative solutions, according to Luc Van Gestel, vice president of design and print management, M-Real USA. "Counterfeiting accounted for about 7-8% of world trade in 2002," Mr. Van Gestel said. "That adds up to \$600 billion in counterfeited products globally."

M-Real USA utilizes such anti-counterfeiting weapons as the machine readable Track and Trace, as well as the traditional watermarks and fluorescent pigments. Nonetheless, "The general shelf life of protective 'armor' on any packaging is only about six to eight months," he said. "So you have to constantly make modifications; you have to stay ahead all the time."

Also hot in labeling is radio-frequency identification (RFID), which involves a chip that tracks products once outside of the store. RFID is used for an amazing range of tracking applications: the U.S. Army is reportedly conducting tests using RFID chips attached to bees in order to help find land mines, for instance. But the technology can also act as an effective anti-counterfeiting and anti-theft measure, such as embedding the chip in pharmaceutical packaging to prevent counterfeited goods from entering legitimate supply chains.

The Wal-Mart chain announced it is requiring its top 100 suppliers to begin RFID at the case and pallet level by next January, according to reports. It will be rolled out incrementally; by the end of 2005 it is expected to be in all categories, all distribution centers and all stores, according to executives.

A Tight Fit

With regulation amendments in the works or already in place in either the U.S. or abroad, space is getting tighter for personal care marketers. Many have built up a reputation largely dependent upon an easily-recognizable logo: for instance, Dove's serene bird and wavy underscore. And some have a color or pattern-such as Pantene Pro-V's soft, off-white, touchable container-that would be marred by white paste-on labels, or overshadowed by extensive verbiage.

Ampersand Label thinks it may have a solution. The Extended Text Labeling line attaches to the back of the product and has leaves that can be opened and re-sealed by the consumer. This provides additional text space, without taking up more surface area on the product itself.

Extended Text Labeling can be used for consumer education, cross promotions and instant redeemable coupons, but it also serves to satisfy regulatory requirements, multiple languages and health and safety warnings.

The labels are available in EasyTab, with a resealable upper layer and access to multiple pages; FlexVision, for conformable surfaces and pliable tubes; TwinView, a peel-away design and MultiFold, multiple panels that are neatly folded into a sealed packet.

In addition to providing information, a label should be aesthetically pleasing to draw the eye, according to suppliers contacted by Happi. Prestige Label prides itself on award-winning label creations. The company produced the Stacker Push-Pull two-sided label, for which it was a top winner in the Process Printing on Film category of the Flexographic Technical Association's 2004 Excellence in Flexography awards.

The company is also proud of the Marzine No-Rust label, "an intricately designed label using the most advanced techniques in high-definition flexographic printing," according to Elisha Tropper, president of Prestige Label. The company utilizes state-of-the-art graphics and prepress technology to convert customer-supplied artwork into vivid and exciting product packaging, company executives said.

Wrap It Up

In some instances, there's another option for adding more to a package and finding room for it all: an outer packaging of paperboard, clear plastic or both.

Rex Corp., Jacksonville, FL, works primarily with paperboard and metalized polyester. Not all paperboard is the same, according to Rex Corp. executives. "The color fidelity of the paperboard, and innovative packaging designs that help our customers' brands achieve differentiation on the shelf, make these materials attractive to marketers," said Jeff Nykerk, marketing manager. "These materials offer a considerable amount of flexibility at an economical price."

Rex Corp. has been busy during the past year. The company invested in a new \$3 million, seven-color press and offers inside carton printing in solid pastels or metallic colors; holographic/ iridescent foil; in-line UV coatings and other options.

"Many of the world's premier consumer product manufacturers depend on Rex Corp.'s innovation to enhance the image of their brands by developing new packaging concepts utilizing metallics, paperboard and coatings in an economical package," commented Mr. Nykerk.

The company continues to make strides in the shape, structure, printing, finishing and RFID tracking of its folding cartons. Rex has also recently entered into an alliance with European folding carton company Edelman to collaborate on innovative printing and finishing techniques. "The goal of our alliance is to advance print quality, exploit new finishing effects and realize greater productivity," Mr. Nykerk said. "It is our ongoing interest to find new approaches and ways to exceed quality packaging for our customers."

MeadWestvaco Packaging Resources Group, Stamford, CT, also takes its packaging seriously. Its Kraftpak unbleached folding carton board is a creative alternative to the smooth, white substrates that dominate the cosmetic, personal care and HBA arena, according to company executives.

"Although the substrate itself is not new, we have



The brown color of Kraftpak unbleached folding carton board is a versatile choice, according to MeadWestvaco executives.

recently introduced a new tool kit that discusses how Kraftpak is used in a variety of end-user markets, such as luxury, food, beverages and retail," said Stephen Pohlmann, director of marketing, packaging and specialty for MeadWestvaco.

The kit-called the MeadWestvaco Tool kit-includes a sheet that highlights how well bright colors reproduce on Kraftpack. The sampling shows nine colors on the unbleached board and stresses how its shade consistency helps bring out the best in a colorful brand package.

Kraftpak's characteristic brown appearance and graphic-reproduction capabilities project unique brand images, make bold statements and help customers to differentiate their products, according to Mr. Pohlmann.

"This natural, brown look works well for products with a more organic, earthy or homemade image," he said. "End users appreciate how Kraftpak cartons get products noticed, while also protecting their merchandise from plant to shelf."

The Heart of the Matter

Of course, beyond stunning outer packaging lies the nuts-and-bolts of packaging: the actual container. Options abound for sprucing up a tube, bottle or jar to make a unique impression.

Airspray International, Pompano, FL, opened up a new category in delivery systems some years ago with its instant foamers. The idea caught on quickly, according to Robert Brands, managing director of the company. Now, it's a question of fine-tuning and finding new applications.

"We have basically expanded the assortment of foam pumps to more than 21 versions," Mr. Brands said. "That means new designs, different shapes and different engines. Customers can choose different cc outputs, as well as wetter or drier foam. You really can tailor the foam to reach the optimal container for the application you need."

Airspray will introduce yet another pump, Symplicity, later this year. Symplicity is a lotion pump operated by bellows on top of the spout. "The neat thing is that it looks unique, and the point of differentiation will help sell it. But it's also a very simply constructed pump, and we feel there are opportunities there," said Mr. Brands.

The company also introduced the Water Guard line for wet environments, as well as a dual-foamer, a 50/50 foam dispenser for advanced formulations. Applications can include sunless tanners, hair color and advanced acne or other skin cleansers. Schering-Plough showed an interest and launched EndlessSummer foam.

"Foam has a very high acceptance rate," Mr. Brands said. "I think the reason lies in the simplicity of it, and the 'magic' of going straight from liquid to foam." A foam also spreads and rinses more easily, he said.

Boynton Beach, FL-based Packaging Concepts also introduced a novel idea. The company introduced a unique child-resistant (CR) dispenser that uses a snap-on closure, making it virtually leak proof, company executives said. The patented closure does not require an overcap, thus avoiding problems often associated with overcaps.

The pump closure has a twist-lock and a small tab on the side to make it child-resistant. The tab is pushed, held in and twisted to unlock.

"This is the only snap-on child-resistant sprayer available on the market," said Lou Posner, director of marketing, Packaging Concepts. "It was designed to meet the most recent federal regulations on CR requirements for certain ingredients, but provides a closure that offers all the advantages of a snap-on." The Bayer Company chose the snap-on child-resistant closure for its Bactine spray bottle.

Many tried-and-true delivery systems were also highlighted during the past year. For example, Tubed Products LLC, Easthampton, MA, offers what it calls a "family" of tubes with a distinctive design, matching colors, coordinated caps and art treatments.

"There are so many times that we find ourselves producing special tubes for clients to match other packaging, we decided that it would be helpful to offer a series of tubes that maintain a consistent look throughout," said Jim Farley, vice president of sales and marketing, Tubed Products LLC.

The highly-flexible concept allows for a varied selection of tubes, decorating styles and treatments. "The customer determines (his) needs and 'family' look, and we help with the rest," Mr. Farley said.

As far as innovations go, Tubed Products isn't about to slow down. "We are constantly working on new product development," said Mr. Farley. "We will introduce several new tube designs within the next six to eight months."

Clearly Different

It's shatter-proof, it can be molded and stamped into virtually any shape, it can be colored brightly or made to look like clear, expensive glass. Can anyone improve upon the ease-and economy-of plastic?

Absolutely! 3C Inc., Hawthorne, NJ, works in SAN, ABE, PP, HDPE, PET, PETG, PS, PE and PVC for cosmetic packaging. The company has produced a perfume atomizer, Vapo-Nomade, which is the perfect travel sprayer, according to executives. What makes Vapo-Nomade unique among fragrance atomizers is that it is all plastic. And as any fragrance expert knows, it's difficult if not impossible for a standard plastic to house a fragrance without eroding the container.



Tubed Products offers coordinated colors, caps and art treatments for a unique look.

"This is an item I've never seen before," said Lou Della Pesca, president, 3C Inc. "It has tremendous potential. It's already been sold to several fragrance houses." Vapo-Nomade has an inner bottle that is blow molded polyethylene. It's compatible with most fragrances, according to Mr. Della Pesca.

During the past year, 3C has introduced a number of new packaging components, including mini-airless containers for sample and trial sizes; dual-purpose containers for mascara, lip gloss, eyeliner and lip products; flip top jars and the Bellini screw-on container in two sizes for a 36mm eyeshadow and a 59mm pressed powder.

"New decoration technology will enable us to offer our customers a custom look for their products, in addition to color and finish," Mr. Della Pesca said.

For a soft but strong effect, DieterBakicEnterprises (DBE), based in Munich, Germany, introduced the Josephine treatment packaging line. Josephine consists of plastic

bottles with pump dispensers including overcaps, a plastic bottle with a flip-top cap, a plastic bottle with a snap-on cap and plastic bottles with flip-top caps. The Josephine bottles' and bottles' rounded curves end in clean, straight lines to evoke both strength and softness, DieterBakic executives said.

"Maintaining the design and high-quality standards of DBE's packaging items, the new Josephine line allows dynamic retailers as well as selective brands to expand their product range at one time," said Dieter Bakic. "This is a very cost-effective way at an impressive speed-to-market."



Avon Products chose Crown Risdon for the new High Voltage mascara.

Other suppliers utilizing plastic include Crown Risdon, which created the complete primary component package for Avon Products' High Voltage mascara, and World Wide Packaging, Florham Park, NJ, with its Yin-Yang compact with rotating outer shell and product tray.

"We call it the CD pallet," said Jeffrey Schneider, president, World Wide Packaging. "It has six wells for product and blush and a place for an applicator." Mr. Schneider said on-trend packaging materials include SAN and PMMA, which are clear and thick but much less expensive than glass.

Small Size, Big Impact

Another hot trend is sample or promotional sized packaging. Emsar, Stratford, CT, launched two new package concepts during the past year addressing the trend for portable products.

The Emsar Portable Anti-Clog pump is a fine mist sprayer with an innovative door that re-locks the products. The re-locking door offers portability, while preventing clogging of the pump.

"It has a unique aesthetic which will help the product stand out on the shelf, and it can help highlight package graphics because the door can be made in a different color," said Des McEttrick, global marketing director for Emsar.

Emsar Minis also address the portability trend. Eight different bottles combine with either the Mini Mist Fine-Mist sprayer or the Mini Treat, a re-locking lotion pump.

"Emsar has launched both of these new products because we believe the trend toward portability is an important one, and will continue," said Mr. McEttrick. "These products offer added value to our customers and will help to differentiate their products and add consumer benefits."

Emsar's pumps are either plastic or metal, but "plastic is desirable because of the range of colors available and the ability to achieve transparency," Mr. McEttrick said. He added that metals definitely do have their place. "Metal can give a very upscale look or contemporary theming to a package," he said.

Emsar is also in the process of launching the EcoFoam Squeeze foamer, ideal for applying product directly onto skin, hair or wherever the consumer wants it to go, according to company executives.

Unit Pack is also making a big splash with small packages. The Cedar Grove, NJ-based company launched Facsimile Pack, using thermoform fill and seal.

With Facsimile, "a trade package can be perfectly duplicated in a miniature facsimile

format," said Ernest Loesser, president, Unit Pack. "(The customer can) duplicate a bottle, tube or jar, presenting a more upscale sample for promotional and amenity packaging."

Whatever the material, packaging can meet, and sometimes exceed, more customer specifications than ever before. Customization can be as simple as a distinctive logo or as high-tech as anti-counterfeiting chips. Delivery systems, too, are evolving at a rapid rate. With so much to choose from, marketers are free to get creative, and consumers, none the wiser, will continue to reap the benefits of advanced and economical packaging.

Looking for a supplier of packaging components? A list of them starts on p. 110 in the print version of Happi.

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