

SPECIAL REPORT

THE 9 ESSENTIAL “FACTS OF LIFE” OF EFFECTIVE PACKAGE DESIGN

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A MUST-READ SPECIAL REPORT THAT WILL HELP YOU
WITH THE DIFFICULT PROCESS OF EFFECTIVE PACKAGE
DESIGN FOR YOUR PRODUCT

FACT OF LIFE

1. Great Looking Packages Sell Your Product!

In most cases what actually sells a product is a mix of good package or label design, competitive pricing, attractive marketing pieces, an effective advertising and marketing plan, and personal salesmanship.

However, it has been proven that package or label design alone can and does sell products without having the added benefit of advertising or personal salesmanship.

A successful label must be a graphic representation that resonates with the prospective buyer's state of mind. When this prospective buyer looks at the label he will see, on a psychological or subconscious level, something that he is or something that he wants or something that he wants to be. Psychologists have termed this phenomenon "empathy", which is defined as the projection of one's own personality or feelings into the personality of another in order to understand him better.

This also works with objects such as photos, or for our purposes, package and label design. If there is a visual promise that their desires will be fulfilled and if the price point is acceptable the customer will often give the product a chance and make the purchase.

However, good design can only get the customer to buy your product once. The bottom line is, if the customer does not like your product or if it does not fulfill its promise, they will not buy it again no matter how great the package design is or how good the pricing was. You must have a good product, period.

Remember your goal should be to attract buyers who will come back again and again, thus developing a loyal customer following and a customer base for your product.

2. First Time Customers "Taste" With Their Eyes

Potential first time customers who are not familiar with your product have no other reference or information other than the look of your package on the shelf next to your competitors. It is estimated that 80 percent of all impressions are received through the eyes. Thus, it is essential that your package design conveys the quality of your product. In order to persuade someone to buy your product it is the designers job to hit the "response chord" with this person. When a certain label or package design coincides with a need, desire, or condition that exists in someone else's mind, you hit a "response chord" and there is a good chance they will buy your product.

It has been said, and I think quite true, that you should never go food shopping when you are hungry. It is in this weakened physical and mental state that all the "response chords" are greatly magnified by the visual appeal and promise of the food products on the shelf. In this state, the brain through visual means, reacts from memory, need and desire.



We salivate and feel the taste of food before touching it. Of course in this exaggerated state people will buy food items they would usually never buy if they were not hungry. However, hungry or not, the visual appeal of the package cannot be denied. In the end, people believe more in what they see than in any of the other senses.

3. Perception Dictates Reality

How potential customers perceive your product will ultimately determine their purchase choice. In the customer's mind, the package design will create the brand personality and they will expect the product quality to be on par with how the product looks. This look must fulfill the perceptions of the customer by making clear the product benefits and promise. It is the designer's job to use, what is sometimes referred to in the design field as psychographic elements, in an effective way to evoke the necessary impulses that motivate people to buy. Some of the psychographic elements are color, shape, imagery through the use of illustration or photography, typography or type design, and well written copy or text. The proper use of these elements creates a certain mood, feel or environment that communicates to the brain a message that will trigger the "response chord" to buy.

Remember that perception dictates reality. How a person perceives your product will label or classify that product in their mind and this impression will become their personal reality. Let's take a moment and think about how your product is perceived by potential customers. Would they perceive it as being upscale or classy? Does it have a fun or exciting look? Is it too busy with too many visual elements screaming at the customer? Is it serious and stoic looking, showing no emotion? Does it have an ethnic look that appeals intentionally or unintentionally only to a certain group of people? Does the package tell a story or evoke pleasant memories from the customer's past? Does your package or label have a unique look or personality or does it blend in with all the other competition on the shelf? Are you happy with your package or label design or does it keep you awake at night because something about it just isn't right?

These and other important questions about your product's appearance need to be asked and answered in an unbiased and customer conscious manner.

4. Eating Isn't Optional

Eating isn't optional so when people go to the supermarket they will generally buy something, unlike a clothing store where they often go to browse and look around without making a purchase.

Because people need food to live, supermarkets create a captive audience for your food product.

The average American supermarket is stocked with 45,000 products (SKUs) according to Food Marketing Industry Speaks, 2007. Strolling down the aisles shoppers may scan 300 items per minute or one product (hopefully your product) in two tenths of a second. Surprisingly, the average consumer having been brought up watching television, especially the MTV fast motion style of video editing is well equipped to make those 300 accept-or-reject purchase decisions per minute.

To your advantage and the shoppers advantage supermarket aisles are set up by product categories so that your product can be easily found. You won't find someone looking to purchase cookies in the laundry detergent aisle. The potential cookie purchaser will obviously make it to the cookie aisle and once in this aisle the cookie target audience will be captured by a "battle royal" of different brands slugging it out to gain the potential buyer's attention.

The upside for you is that your target audience is standing in front of your product. The downside is that all of your competition is now grouped alongside, above and below your product screaming “buy me”. In this short interval of time something in your visual presentation has to hit the “response chord“ that was discussed earlier. At this critical point of purchase moment in time, it is imperative that you put your best foot forward and get noticed with attractive and effective package design.

5. Know Your Target Audience

It is important to know exactly who you are aiming your product at. Trying to be all things to all people seldom works. By targeting a specific audience you have a better chance at selling your product because the prospects have an interest to begin with. You already have one foot in the door so now you can focus on appropriate and eye catching package design and a marketing strategy that plays to the needs of this target audience.

Another related issue you need to think about is where you plan to sell your product. The gap between gourmet/specialty food stores and mainline supermarkets appears to be getting smaller. Traditionally, gourmet/specialty stores carry products that their customers perceive to be of higher quality, harder to obtain, or intended for a select few. They usually expect to pay more and the packaging design reflects an upscale look and feel that hits a “response chord” with this crowd. Sometimes this upscale look is achieved with a “Less is More” or “A Whisper is Louder Than a Shout” uncluttered design approach. Of course, there are no hard and fast rules and each project must be handled on an individual basis with the attributes of the product coinciding with the needs and perceptions of the targeted customer.

Unlike gourmet/specialty stores, mainstream supermarkets must appeal to a wide range of the economic spectrum. The modern supermarket wants to be everything to everybody with the new trend toward one stop destination shopping. With this idea in mind many mainline supermarkets are going “upscale” and offering a large selection of gourmet food items that were formally only to be found in specialty food shops. With this new trend you can buy good old fashioned corn flakes or an upscale and more expensive gourmet organic cereal in the same aisle.

6. New Social Trends

It is important to take into account new social trends and the industry responses to those trends. As an example, changing lifestyles such as the universal concern with diet and health. Healthy, organic, all-natural, light, low-fat, no trans fats, low calorie, and vitamin enriched have become the catchwords of the day and constitute a permanent trend.

Changes to the basic family unit have caused brands to respond with single-serving packages or the opposite shift to the concept of Warehouse Clubs offering larger size bulk packages at cost savings to the consumer. Convenience has been a huge concern as people have less time in their busy lifestyles for food preparation and the industry has responded with a wide variety of heat-and-serve and ready-to-eat products.

These are just a few trends that have helped to shape the current industry. It is important for you to keep up and be aware of these new social trends as they can affect your product development in many different ways.

7. Recipes or Serving Suggestions are Popular

You should consider putting recipes or serving suggestions on your food label or package. It is surprising the popularity of these on-label jewels of information which get read, clipped, and filed away no matter how small the print size.

Studies have found that many women enjoy cooking but it is really the rewards of their efforts in the kitchen – the praise and accolades from family, friends and guests – that motivate them to try new taste approaches with their favorite food items. The smart food producer should play up on this “Fact of Life” and explore various ways to serve or work their product into exciting recipes, thus helping to reinforce customer loyalty ensuring repeat purchases. Consider using a professional chef to help you come up with tasty dishes to entice your customers. If space is a problem on your label or package, keep in mind many companies print their recipes on the inside of the box or on the back of their label. Of course, it is important to let your customer know very prominently where these recipes can be found!



Also, your web site is a great place to display in full detail a special section showing a large recipe collection that highlights your products. Be sure to indicate on your package or label your web site address and the great information that your interested customer can find there.

8. Even Great Package Design Needs the Support of Collateral Sales Material

You could have the greatest product in the world with a fantastic eye catching package design yet if the right people don't know about it you run the risk of having your product sitting in your warehouse gathering dust. Don't let this happen to you.

Let the world know about your product with effective support from sell sheets, brochures, advertisements, catalogs, web sites, and other collateral material.



It is important to first target what stores you want your product to appear in and then contact the store buyers who will ultimately decide if your product will be accepted. This may be your only chance so you must be well armed with effective sell sheets, brochures, etc. which lend support to your presentation.

Trade shows offer another important venue to display your product to store buyers who are on the lookout for fresh new ideas and products to stock. Once again sales support materials such as sell sheets and brochures are essential “take aways” so your product will not be forgotten.

Trade ads in industry food magazines also alert store buyers to your product and show you as a compelling player in the industry. Ads in consumer magazines make the general public aware and they will look for your product when shopping.

Today, web sites have become an essential part of marketing as they offer more detailed information than what is possible to put on the package or in an ad. By putting the web site address on the package, consumers can gain more information not only about that particular product but your company in general and the other products you also sell.

9. Use a Graphic Design Firm *(Instead of Pulling Your Hair Out and Losing Sleep)*

O.K., I know what you are thinking - here's where this guy plugs his business and tells me what a great job he will do for me.

Well, honestly I would be honored if you did give me a call to discuss your design needs but seriously there are really some very important reasons to consider using a graphic design firm as opposed to a do-it-yourself or in-house art department approach. Even using a freelance artist can have problems.

First, it must be understood that there is a difference between making art and solving problems. Today, Graphic Design should really be termed Graphic Communications because more than ever the client has a message that they want to get across to the consumer and it is up to the graphic designer to solve these critical communication issues. It is not enough anymore to slap a pretty picture on a package and hope for the best.

When a company decides to do their own packaging design they are often too close to the project and the issues at hand. There is a tendency to have too many people or associates wanting to get involved, with each throwing in their opinion. Although this is done with good intentions, the end result is usually confusion and anxiety with no definite clear direction.

An in-house art department that is good with day-to-day tasks, is often not the best choice for an important package design project. Sometimes a situation arises where the in-house designers don't want to disagree with the boss or the boss doesn't want to hurt their feelings if he isn't happy with their layouts. Personality conflicts can sour a project and bring it to a standstill.

Using a freelance artist or designer can also be problematic when their schedule does not coincide with yours. Being a "one man show" means they cannot be two places at once and your job may not be given full priority when they finally do find the time to work on it. Also, what happens when they get a full time job and have no time for you anymore or they move away to another state?

Stop pulling your hair out and losing sleep.

The answer to all of these problems is to use an objective, knowledgeable, and experienced professional graphic design firm who will view your project as a customer or store buyer would with no preconceptions or personality entanglements. If you feel price is an issue, you might be surprised to find that great package design does not have to cost a fortune and most legitimate firms offer no obligation estimates.

ABOUT US

Comp Design is a graphic design studio that has been in business since 1981. We have become a trusted creative design source whose real world experience has helped many companies bring products to the North American food marketplace. Our areas of expertise include retail and price club package design, promotional point of sale, brochures, catalogs, print ads, FSIs, website design and more. We work hand-in-hand with marketing firms, photographers, printers, color separators, specialized illustrators, and data programmers to insure that our clients' work is treated correctly. Comp Design's philosophy is to give the client personal service while providing real world problem-solving experience with creative designers

who utilize the latest in digital technology. We are proud to say that we maintain long-term relationships with our clients that often can be measured in decades. Over the years our clients have ranged from Fortune 500 companies to smaller businesses. Yet, they both have come to us with the same common need whose fulfillment is often missing in today's equation, that is, solid experience coupled with a sense of partnership and loyalty.



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