



Designed to jump off the shelf

If you're looking to drive sales and embed your brand in the minds of your customers, your product packaging is absolutely critical. In this issue of *Retail World*, **Jane McConnell** speaks to some of Australia's leading designers and manufacturers about why packaging is so important and how to ensure your packaging delivers great results for your brand.

In the FMCG industry, brands live and die by their product packaging. The right packaging will be instantly recognisable to customers, convey your brand essence, sell your product's features and provide protection for the product within. Perhaps most importantly, the right packaging will help ensure that when customers are making a final decision about which product to spend their money on, it's yours that ends up in the basket.

But for brand owners and manufacturers, making key decisions about packaging can be a complex and risky business. When is the right time for a refresh? How far should we go? What if our customers are turned off by the new approach? How do I get the right balance between visual impact and functional effectiveness? Fortunately, there are some great Australian packaging design agencies and manufacturers that can assist.

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Sara Salter, Saltmine Design Group.

pay TV and mobile devices improving, it's never been harder to really engage consumers through traditional advertising," said Sara Salter, Managing Director of Saltmine Design Group, a full-service, below-the-line agency working in branding, packaging and activation.

Australian consumers are also now more savvy, more sceptical, less loyal and have a greater choice of brands than ever. With this in mind, effective packaging is a crucial driver of a brand's success and much more than just a physical shell to contain and protect the product. With marketing budgets having to stretch further to engage target audiences, packaging is often the only guaranteed touch point a brand will have during the

consumer journey. Consumers can pick a package up, read the brand story, be educated about the product they're buying and understand the brand positioning.

"It's a well-quoted fact that packaging only has, on average, a four-to-six-second window to grab the consumer's attention and engage with them at-shelf," Ms Salter said. "In this short time, packaging must act as a silent salesperson, capturing the attention of busy consumers and screaming 'pick me up and take me home'. At the end of the day, great FMCG packaging design brings the brand essence to life in a motivating way that connects with consumers."

While Ms Salter's comments focus on packaging's design

aesthetics, another obvious key consideration is its functional performance. The best packaging features both elements – design and functionality working in concert to deliver to market a visually impactful and, equally, sturdy, durable and effective product. So how do you get the balance right?

"Good packaging needs to be easy to use, freight well, stand out on-shelf and be easy to replenish in stores," said Siobhan McCrory, General Manager Sales, Marketing and Innovation at Pact Group, Australasia's largest listed manufacturer of rigid plastics packaging.

"To achieve all this, it's important to first understand what the pack has to do throughout the entire supply chain – from the factory filling line through to the distribution centres, stores, customers' homes and recycling streams. Part of this is ensuring that the right materials are used so that the pack delivers the required functionality. Selecting the wrong

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materials can be catastrophic for a brand owner, as ultimately the wrong choice can lead to damage to a brand, or worse still, product recall.

“Next, the pack needs to be designed specifically with its end use in mind – by using real consumer insights to underpin the design approach.”

Ms McCrory believes brand owners considering the redesign of a product’s packaging should ensure they “take their customers with them on the journey”.

“It’s important not to underestimate the confusion that a rebrand can cause in stores,” she said. “If customers are unable to easily identify the product that they’re used to buying, it can result in them re-evaluating the category, which may give competitors a free kick.”

“Often brand owners invest heavily in creating the new pack and fail to invest in customer communications to signal that the pack they’ve loved buying for a long time is about to change, and how best to find the new version in-store. Therefore, gaining customer insights is an integral part of the first step in a successful packaging redesign.”

A crucial customer insight that has had and continues to have a huge impact on the FMCG industry, and society in general, is the increased focus on sustainable living. More than ever, consumers are looking for ‘greener’ and more environmentally friendly products as they peruse the store shelves.

As a huge producer of waste, both in Australia and around the world, the FMCG packaging industry simply can’t ignore this trend, as Sonoco Australia Business Development Manager Australia RPC (Rigid Paper Containers) Cherie Dorreen explains.

“Throughout the course of packaging history, owners, manufacturers and designers have developed packaging solutions based on the key cultural and political issues impacting society at the time,” she said, “whether that’s meant

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minimising consumption of raw materials and keeping costs low, as it has done during times of economic downturn, or as we’re seeing now via the focus on environmental impact and sustainability.

“In 2014, not only does packaging have to be sustainable, it also must be cost effective, but achieving both goals can be challenging: brand owners and manufacturers and their procurement teams sourcing packaging and packaging materials from overseas will often enjoy better prices but have less visibility of where the products they’re purchasing originated. So brand owners must evaluate the entire packaging lifecycle when making these decisions, and ask themselves, ‘Is my packaging meeting my sustainability goals?’”

So what’s around the corner for packaging in the FMCG industry? For Ms Dorreen, it’s all about innovation.

“We’ll continue to see innovation drive the development of amazing new packaging solutions,” she said.

“In particular, this will reflect our more consumer-driven modern society, which means quick, easy, one-time-use products and packaging. We’ll also see brand owners and manufacturers searching for the perfect balance between keeping costs low and ensuring they meet their social responsibility goals whatever the prevailing economic conditions at the time.” ♦

Case study

The Light Proof bottle



Manufacturer: Pact Group.

Client: Fonterra New Zealand.

Challenge

You wouldn’t leave milk in the sun, so why expose it to the light? Whether you realise it or not, light drains some of the goodness out of milk. It typically deteriorates vitamins A and B2, which are essential for healthy skin, bones and eyes and also play a role in boosting your immune system and cell reproduction.

Unfortunately, milk sees the light long before it soaks into a favourite cereal, completes a creamy coffee, or makes a homely meal. From the conveyor belt, to the truck, to the shelf, to your fridge, light gets in along the way.

Solution

In developing a light-proof milk bottle, research, prototypes and testing spanned many countries (South Africa, Italy, Spain, Portugal, the US, the UK, Australia and New Zealand) and involved numerous experts and taste tests. The key to the innovation was to apply triple-layer technology to fresh milk/cream, ensuring the HDPE bottle was still lightweight and recyclable.

After two years in the making, Pact Group, in conjunction with Fonterra in New Zealand released the first Light Proof bottle in its Anchor range, with the claim that it preserved both the nutritional value and freshness of the milk and was the only 100 per cent light-proof fresh milk packaging in New Zealand.

The engineering behind the Light Proof bottle is simple: the induction foil-sealed cap keeps light out at the bottleneck and three light-protective layers make up the body. A black layer is sandwiched between two white layers to ensure the contents of the bottle are completely shielded from light.

Results

Eighty per cent of customers reported that they prefer the taste of milk that hasn’t seen the light.

The new packaging helps both the consumer and supplier by delivering the freshest, best-tasting milk.