

I Hate Packaging

By JoAnn R. Hines, Packaging Diva

It's that time again (the holidays) when packaging will be getting top media coverage by its detractors. Those would be the people looking to complain about product packaging because it's too difficult to open or there is too much of it or they think it doesn't do its job properly. I always read a slew of articles on how many people were injured or had to go to the hospital trying to open a package.

Bad raps on the packaging industry appear in the news all year but with the holiday and all the gifts giving its a natural topic to get additional publicity. Just check out my website www.PackagingUniversity.com to read a few of the most 'infamous cases.' I have been interviewed several times to explain the other side of the story too: The real role packaging has to play (the good side) and where would we be without it.

Consumer Reports just put its annual call out for the 'Oyster Awards' given to the worst packages out there. You can bet consumers are lining up to rant about various problems with packaging and how packaging is the bane of the public.

Yes, I know there are problems with packages that can't be easily opened. Specialised tools have been created to make this problem easier. I gets news releases on these all the time some of these tools are better than others (if you want my opinion drop me a line).

I had a recent experience with my husband's new electric razor which elicited a few choice words while I was trying to get it out of the plastic clamshell. But boy did it look pretty on the shelf. I could see the entire product and the nifty freebie gizmo that came along with it. I was very intrigued to finally get the product out (without mishap I might add). Even I was surprised when I finally got inside the package to see all the interworkings that went into packaging this product. It was really great package

design at its best.

It is amazing how much thought and innovation went into the design itself. It sat upright and was very well positioned on the shelf among its competitive offerings. The product was clearly visible had some great marketing graphics which caught my eye. The package was composed of numerous types of packaging materials that were well integrated into the complete unit.

Why did I buy it? The package made me do it, of course, and the fact that my husband broke his old razor so I got to play consumer for a product that I wouldn't normally purchase. It was a reason to experience the process. But the packaging did its job too. It persuaded me to buy that particular product knowing the heartache I would experience to get inside.

I didn't worry whether it was 'green' either. I simply didn't care I need this and now and the package called out 'buy me.'

Despite what all of the critics have to say, packaging is integral to the successful sale of a product. It has to get it to the shelf, but that's only the beginning. It has to protect, secure and display the product too. It has to persuade you to make the purchase while telling you all about what is inside. That would be the reason that you just can't live without this product.

I'm reading all these rants about excess packaging at the supermarket. Calls to strip away product packaging and leave it at the store. These are the first people that will be complaining if the fruit is bruised or the lettuce is not fresh and even scarier when there is some sort of health threat due to contamination. Have you seen how many food recalls there have been lately? Just think how much more there would be if packaging wasn't doing its job.



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Too few of us (especially consumers) really understand the role packaging has to play in modern society. Many problems that packaging resolves are taken for granted and only get exposed when it turns into a problem.

Look at Tylenol. That poisoning incident (happened 25 years ago in September) changed an industry forever and evolved an entire new packaging category of product security, integrity and tamper-evident. This could happen again anywhere in the world. The packaging of food products is 70% of the industry and it is sorely in need of scrutiny for product integrity and security. Several issues regarding food security have recently arisen especially food products coming from China. I have seen several posts on this lately and get asked questions about it every week. Some companies are even marketing 'China free' on the product packaging.

So this holiday season give some thought to why about why products are packaged the way they are. Be on the lookout for cynics and people who give a bad wrap to packaging without understanding what packaging really does. Be sure and take the time to explain to them the role packaging has to play. Don't let anyone get away with saying 'I hate packaging' without helping them to clearly understanding where would we be without it.

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