Packaging Resolutions You Can Keep

By JoAnn R. Hines, Packaging Diva

Take a moment to reflect on the past year from a packaging perspective. There were lots of stories in the news about the role packaging plays in our society -- from less packaging to 'wrap rage.'

Let's think about how we can positively promote our industry and your products in the minds of the consumer for 08. Set your sights on a few resolutions to create a more lasting impression with the ultimate market for your products: the consumer.

First, learn to think like the customer. At one time or another, we all shop. Think critically from that side of the aisle. What annoys you in product packaging? 'Wrap rage' dominates the news during the holidays, but what if all the products came damaged and broken? Would those same consumers decry the lack of or improper packaging? You bet!

You may not think 'less' packaging is good but what about the consumer? Do they really want less or has this 'green' issue been created by the media? I know a lot of companies are jumping on the green bandwagon but are consumers willing to pay the price and do they truly care? It's something to consider before making a wholesale leap into the 'green' space.

Step back and think about what product packaging attributes you like and why. Recently, I was interviewed about why marketers insist on changing well-defined and successful product packaging. Consumers don't like when trusted brands have a new look in packaging. So don't get caught up in change for change's sake. Listen to what the customer says about what they want changed in the package or work to fulfill a need.

Try to more clearly understand your target market. Whether it's women, men, boomers or a younger generation it's important to understand what the consumer expects from your product packaging. We always hear about packaging that doesn't work, but what about the packaging that does? How can you take successful packaging innovation and integrate that into your brand?

Does your packaging connect with the consumer in a meaningful way? Here is an example of what I mean by connecting. We all know Elizabeth Taylor and the upscale image she portrays. Remember her White Diamonds campaign? Well, someone persuaded her to endorse a new cologne, Daytona 500. Duh! She went from Diamonds to NASCAR. No consumer can make that leap regardless how well the product is packaged.

Learn from bad packaging examples. There are a plenty of good ideas that went bad for a number of reasons. It could be something totally unexpected. What looks like a good marketing angle turns out to have negative consumer repercussions. Look out for watch dog groups that might be on the attack against your latest marketing concept. You think it's creative.

Learn from good packaging examples. There are so many good examples it's hard to select just a few so I decided to use some from a 'hot' packaging category. Liquor. Liquor packaging has undergone a transformation along with the new product offerings. It's not uncommon to find designer packaging along with designer prices. I'll mention two. Diva Vodka complimented with Swarvoski Crystals and Gold Flakes Vodka care to guess what's inside? The point is they have created a distinct point of differentiation through their product packaging. That is the message you need to consider for your products.

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Create brand extensions through innovation not simply by adding a so-called new and improved packaged product. Here are examples of two packaging innovations that have crossed over through innovation. Wishbone Salad Dressing typically marketed in a pourable bottle. It has moved into a spray pump application. Spritz a little dressing on your salad. The product fulfills a consumer need to have an easier way for calorie control. Another example is Laughing Cow Cheese in the traditional foil wrapped wedges has moved into a squeeze bottle application to make it easier for portion control and also easier to spread.

Stay on top of industry trends. Every January I predict packaging trends for the coming year so your work is done for you. Review these and incorporate them into your marketing strategy.

Think big picture. One of the most surprising things I read this week was about the most popular web searches on the Internet. Despite the obvious media 'superstars' that are popular some of the other 'hottest' inquires for name brands are not American. Yes, I know we are brainwashed into thinking that the US is the center of the universe, but this is changing and your packaging better keep up.

The bottom line is whatever the resolution you make for your product packaging remember the consumer is king or queen. Their packaging concerns should resonate with your brand. If they demand things as to your product packaging, resolve to listen to them.

Good packaging resolutions are easy to keep and will reinforce your brand in the eyes of the consumer.

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