How To Recession Proof Your Packaging

By JoAnn R. Hines, Packaging Diva

The news says everyone is worried about the economy and consumers are spending less. Is this causing your product sales to decline? Typically consumers cut back spending during hard economic times. So how can you counteract product doldrums when the economy is in a recession or a slowdown?

The first thing to understand is that consumer still 'buy' things. For example 70% of all packaging is food related and people still have to eat. They just buy in different ways. They may cut out fast food or restaurant purchases in favor of home prepared meals. But they still want to purchase the same conditions. In the case of fast food easy to prepare, reheat or ready to eat. Wal-Mart's fresh take home pizza is a good example of fulfilling a need. In my case in place of a restaurant trip its rotisserie chicken that is ready to go with dozens of applications for meal prep.But I still want convenience too and limited meal prep.

To understand how to recession proof your packaging you need to learn to recognise what buying signals will motivate your customer to purchase your products. They still want to spend money they just want to do it cost effectively and to reap some value for their purchases. Or they just may want to treat themselves to something special as a way of feeling better.

Here are a few ways you can influence the consumer purchasing decision though product packaging.

Even though overall purchasing might be down people are still willing to experiment. As a good example they might cancel a planned vacation. Can you products be used to simulate a 'vacation' at home? Products could be oriented toward having a lifestyle experience without ever leaving home. You could package that experience as an alternative to a vacation. Words like have a luxurious spa experience in your own home or vacation at home with our X. It's all in how you connect the experience with the desired outcome on your product packaging.

Despite the economy luxury product sales are increasing too. People are willing to spend money to treat themselves or to make a personal statement. What do you package that can be considered luxurious and a special treat for someone? Is your product packaging glitzy and unique? A good example is the number of companies incorporating Swavorksi crystals into their product packaging or using ultra sophisticated, elegant glass bottles instead of plastic. Other products include people purchasing something unique, different and expensive to make their own branding statement. In this case price is not an object its the 'feeling good' outcome that counts.

On the other side of the coin is the switch from branded products to private label usually with considerable cost savings. Almost every retailer now has its own private label line of products. Can you private label your product for an untapped market opportunity? Literally anything can be private labelled. It's one of the fastest growing market sectors.

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As consumers look for ways of saving money they are willing to experiment with new brands. Private label packaging is now as sophisticated an branded goods. The interesting fact is once they switch and are satisfied they are generally never go back to the branded counterpart. So what can you private label with your packaging?

Another way to capture the consumer is to provide more value. Numerous articles have recently been written about the 'shrinking package' on products yet selling at the same price. As I have said when asked, smart marketers would figure out how to offer more value not less. So in McDonald's lingo supersize me. Give me more for my money not less. Call this out on your packaging 10% more for the same price, value pack or even our packaging is NOT smaller. Your customer will be watching what you do and might be buying from someone who is.

I'd like to got back to rotisserie chicken again. This week I bought a chicken at Publix. I was shocked how much smaller it was as a usually much larger chicken but still selling at the same price (just like the packaging shrink). I was an unhappy customer for two reasons. I like the chicken from Kroger much better (the store is equally close). Krogers' chicken comes in a resealable ziplock bag that makes it incredibly easy to store while Publics chicken comes in a paper bag which tears easily and isn't airtight making me take an extra step to repackage. Even better Kroger runs the member special with rotisserie chicken at a lower price frequently. That's what I mean about connecting with your core customer: On the same packaged product Kroger is offering value and convenience Publix is not.

Lastly think about repurposing your packaging. This is somewhat similar to 'value' in packaging but in this case people will retain your packaging, refill it or use it for something else. Think about how you can give double the reasons for purchasing something by letting your consumer know. You get twice the bang for your buck as you can capture the environmental movement too. Words like our product is reusable, refillable or collectible, or even don't throw it away.

To recession proof your product packaging its all about listing to the consumer. They WILL buy, if you package the right message at the right price with the right value, recession or not.

Keeping updated on the latest packaging issues and trends is easy. That's what I do keep abreast of packaging trends technology and innovation so you don't have too. Its all in my weekly newsletter Packaging News You Can Use. You may get a complimentary subscription to Packaging News You Can Use at PackagingDiva.com

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