

THE SILENT SALESPERSON

Flexible packaging is changing the face of products throughout the consumer range. Dennis Calamusa, president of AlliedFlex, describes the power of visual appeal.

In today's marketplace a good package design must differentiate a product from the masses on the retail shelf, increase sales volume in flat market categories and provide the consumer with a positive experience. The packaging is the silent salesperson sitting next to the competition. As we know, your packaging must not only get busy consumers attention, but scream 'buy me' as they pass by.

Today's packaging designers and marketers are breaking away from tradition and designing new packaging for a world that is dramatically different from the past. Modern consumers are on the go and think in modern terms. Designers must not remain stuck in the past, but look to the future. Products and packaging that project a forward-looking image and philosophy will be successful.

New and exciting features and benefits are being integrated into modern flexible packaging designs to add consumer convenience, build brand identity and improve the dynamics of the product-package-consumer interface.

All packaging is changing and flexible packaging appears to be the right stuff at the right time. Why? Well, flexible packaging has come a long way in recent years. It is no longer just a simple pouch or bag, over-wrap or label, but

real packaging solutions worthy of serious consideration.

Flexible packaging materials can now be custom-constructed to provide the perfect properties for a multitude of product applications, from a basic surface-printed polyethylene film to a complex barrier lamination providing extended shelf life for oxygen-sensitive products.

ADVANTAGES OF SHAPE

Pouches can be configured in convenient single-serve sizes or dual compartments with

or without perforations. Each compartment can contain a different product, or even have one side dry and one side liquid. The options are limited only by creativity and imagination.

Shaped pouch formats can add a distinctive characteristic to the flexible package that can nicely partner or replace a rigid shaped bottle or canister. The technology to impose shapes on a flexible package using die cutting can now add unique character, personality and improved functionality to the package. These value-added design features, in combination with the use of spectacular graphics and custom-designed barrier properties, all add up to an innovative economical solution, not possible with many other packaging formats. >



Flexibles



The possibilities are endless

Bags and pouches can incorporate side or bottom gussets for added fill volume, shelf stability and display space. Various methods of resealing can be added to today's flexible packaging, including zippers, slider zippers, spouts and fitments. The ability to reseal a flexible package has revolutionised this packaging medium and has improved product quality through the entire life cycle of product consumption. These features can also add important design elements as well as improved

STAGNANT SHELF DISPLAYS AND EXPENSIVE SLOTTING FEES HAVE STIFLED PRODUCT INNOVATION

functionality to your packaging.

Spouted pouches can be used to improve the ability to dispense a difficult product or extend the freshness after opening, through the incorporation of a resealable mechanism. The ability to add convenience and functionality to the flexible packaging format through the use of enhanced features has created a wealth of possibilities for today's package designers and marketers.

Innovative flexible packaging is providing form and function benefits perfectly suited to today's range of new product introductions focused on consumer convenience and point of use. The ability of the package to add to the positive experience a consumer can have with a product is a valuable marketing benefit and can greatly enhance new product acceptance and continued brand loyalty.



The use of bright, bold colours, shapes and attractive graphics are being incorporated into today's innovative flexible packaging. We are seeing increasing use of brand images and a reduction in printed text, all in an effort to simplify the package billboard and get the attention of the busy, on-the-go consumer.

IN THE SHOPS

Today, packaging must perform in a wide variety of retail venues, including club stores, super centres, convenience stores and supermarkets. Many of these venues are looking for unique product and package presentations. As a result of this change in marketing strategy, retailers are demanding much more creativity in how the products they sell are packaged and presented to the consumer in their stores.

The traditional retail supermarket has become accustomed to a certain way of doing business and feels uncomfortable thinking outside the box. Stagnant shelf displays and expensive slotting fees have stifled product innovation and new product offerings.

This is changing, but it is a gradual change that is primarily being driven by increasing competition in the market. Merchandisers and consumer product companies are beginning to realise that innovation in both product and packaging can make a major difference in the velocity of how



products move through the retail sales cycle. This wake-up call has come from the success of the club store and other alternative retailing business models.

The club store concept has reinvented the mass merchandising effort by selling larger sizes and multi-packs from pallet level to a variety of eager buyers. These range from the individual value-conscious consumer to a host of small businesses, including restaurants, bakers, caterers and offices amongst many others.

The club store marketing philosophy encourages its shopper to 'stock up', 'buy big', try new products and new brands, and save money along the way. The club environment thrives on being different in every aspect of its marketing approach as compared with the traditional supermarket.

Flexibles

This drive toward larger sizes is increasing the need for resealing – it is not a choice, but a requirement. Take a look and you will see hundreds of products packaged in big party sizes or large food service packages offering multiple servings with zipper resealing. Big package sizes represent a big opportunity for the flexible packaging industry. The process may start with a test market at a club store chain within a particular region, but if the product impresses the shopper the volume can be huge when rolled out on a national scale.

Pallet displays that accommodate pouches and bags are becoming popular throughout club stores as well as being used in freezer cases. Handling costs are reduced, as products do not need to be manually stocked on shelves.

It is becoming popular to introduce many commodity-based products, including rice, sugar, flour and baking mixes, in new

club store level. How else do you enhance and add value to a commodity price product? Club stores offer a unique opportunity to try something new without disrupting your traditional packaging and marketing approach.

VISUAL ZONES

Packaging as a marketing tool works best when it is designed around the visual zones within all retail environments. These can be defined by proximity to the product:

The recognition zone begins at 12 feet away. This is the initial zone in which to gain the consumer's attention, through the use of bright colours or familiar icons. This can be the initial entrance into a specific aisle or area of the supermarket. Getting the shopper's attention with bright bold colours and visual display is the objective here.

The buy zone begins at three feet away. This is the zone in which the consumer is getting closer to the product. Package shape and style combined with colour and unique graphics now come into play

The curiosity zone begins at one foot away. This is the zone in which, hopefully, the consumer is drawn to the product and is now holding it in their hands for closer inspection. This is also the time when the consumer is looking for specific information, including ingredient statements or more details regarding the product.

**12FT AWAY – THE RECOGNITION ZONE
3FT AWAY – THE BUY ZONE
1FT AWAY – THE CURIOSITY ZONE**

flexible packaging methods. For the most part this is not being done on the traditional retail shelf, but is becoming commonplace at



Converters – Flexibles

Each zone plays a critical role in getting your product into the hands of the consumer and ultimately into the shopping cart. More and more companies are designing their packaging to respond to the various visual zones.

The print quality that can be achieved with today's flexible packaging, using either flexographic or rotogravure reverse printing can add to the visual impact of your packaged product. The use of laminated materials, in which the print is trapped, not only protects the print from damage, but also adds an excellent reflective quality to the package on the retail shelf, particularly in today's modern supermarkets, which use both direct and indirect lighting.

The marketability of flexible packaging is also a key factor in positioning a product to accommodate your point of purchase strategy. As an example, pouches and bags can incorporate hang holes for peg displaying a product in remote locations of the retail store or in the checkout area of

the store, away from the competition and the crowded retail store shelf.

Multiples of flexible packages, bottles, cans and jars are being multi-packed or bundled with printed shrink or stretch film.

use of attention-grabbing printed shrink sleeve labels to add drama to even the most basic bottle. The ability of the shrink label to match the contour of virtually any shape has revolutionised the rigid container

USING EITHER FLEXOGRAPHIC OR ROTOGRAVURE REVERSE PRINTING CAN ADD TO THE VISUAL IMPACT OF YOUR PACKAGED PRODUCT

This is an ideal presentation for club or superstore marketing. Printed film bundles and multi-packs provide a practical and attractive presentation, as well as a means of achieving the higher price point needed for the typical club store.

Even rigid packaging has benefited from the evolution of flexible packaging. We have seen a dramatic growth globally in the

category. Expect to see continued growth and innovation in this area.

As a result of these benefits and many more, flexible packaging represents one of the fastest growing packaging developments in the world. The possibilities are vast, offering many ways in which to re-invent a brand and create some excitement, with your own silent salesperson. ■

