

Packaging Design – Thinking outside the Box, 4th October 2016, Crumlin Road Gaol

Presentations Summary

Designing a Package to be Fit for Purpose (Stephen McGilloway)

Packaging can be the first customer touchpoint for any branded or manufactured product, yet in the rush and focus of getting a product to market, packaging is often the very last item to be considered in the design process.

Relaying the correct information, standing out on a crowded shelf and the emerging trend of providing the customer with an unboxing experience are now becoming vital parts of the purchase cycle and packaging interaction. However, all of these things must be firmly seated within the primary functions of packaging as customers' demand perfection when receiving shipped goods and the smallest imperfection can deter a sale.

Using local, national and international examples and case studies, this presentation discussed the essential elements of packaging so that is fit for purpose in containment and preservation of the product; in its consideration of the ease of use and relevant stakeholder handling; and finally in its presentation and disposal.

Packaging Trends (Kenney Hamill)

Packaging trends are changing and in an ever increasingly competitive world it is important that companies are aware of the latest trends and how they might incorporate some of these ideas into their own packaging.

This presentation highlighted some of the key elements to consider in current packaging trends, and used examples to show how various companies are applying these principles, such as:

- Keeping it Simple – maintain a clarity of purpose and realise the value of a simple message in today's crowded world.
- Geometry - extending the theme of simple communication expressing simplicity, approachability and honesty through patterns and shapes.
- Nostalgia – another trend is idealisation of the past, a longing for simpler times when things were made by hand and detail oriented, and how this can be expressed through packaging.
- Shelf Life – focussing on making products that can live on the shelf in your home more beautifully, giving a product longevity, designing objects which the customer keeps and is proud to share.

The presentation also described how the companies should consider their rules of engagement with the design process and with the designers involved.

Short Cross Gin Case Study (David Boyd-Armstrong)

Packaging is a key element to consider when launching a new product, making it appropriate to the product, expressing the brand story but still cost effective. David Boyd-Armstrong from Short Cross Gin gave a presentation highlighting the journey the company has been on over the past years in bringing their gin product to market.

Starting from their idea of distilling ultra-premium spirits from their Rademon Estate Distillery the company were trying to establish an innovative, recognisable and consumer connected brand that reflected great product quality and the passion behind the company. Starting with the Design Programme supported by Invest NI, the company were able to develop the brand and begin to review the design of their bottles, labels, packaging and merchandise to support the recognition, differentiation and sale of the product. The company faced many challenges along the way including a number in their packaging design but through perseverance, linking in with design professionals and understanding how best to meet their commercial objectives they now have a premium product available in leading retailers across the UK and beyond.

Great Packaging Tells a Story – What's yours? (Gillian Colhoun)

Humans have been telling stories for thousands of years and brands have as well, if not for nearly as long. In fact, every brand tells a story whether the brand owner strategically and carefully writes that story or not. In the absence of a clear story, we consumers fill in the blanks as we see it, not necessarily as a brand owner desires. So it's worth writing the story of your company, and paying close attention to how it's told and presented.

Packaging is one of the key touchpoints with potential customers and need to be part of the story, because stories are remembered. Studies demonstrate that any facts are much more likely to be remembered if they are part of a story. Narratives are inherently interesting to people – provide a better sense of connection with the audience, along with a means of organising information in a more memorable way.

This presentation and workshop challenged people to think about their story and how that might be expressed, especially through appropriate packaging. It asked questions such as; is your message intriguing, informative, authentic? Does it draw us in and transport us into the story? And very specifically does it have a strategic message that makes it different?

Packaging – Commercial Consideration (Liesa Johnson)

Buyers are busy and will push back to potential suppliers on space ("I don't have room for your products on my shelves") and own label ("I don't care about your brand"). In store the pack is everything so it must be designed to have an appropriate format, support on-pack and off-pack activity.

This presentation gave real examples of how different companies have used innovative and eye-catching packaging design to overcome the challenges set out by retail buyers and giving product strong shelf presence.

It considered how elements such as promotional offers, seasonal activities and range extensions need to be considered and expressed through packaging, which still stands out on the shelf. Also focussed on was how larger retailers look for shelf ready packaging design alongside great point of sale collateral.

One of the key ways to bridge the gap to having a large retailer listing is to have truly memorable packaging designs that fit with the retailers' requirements and ethos.