



Spotlight: Technology Packaging

Hewlett-Packard Uses New Bold Design and 'Purchase Motivators' to Market Directly to Consumers

More and more these days, technology consumers are called upon to make purchasing decisions without the help of an educated salesperson. Look down the aisle at your local WalMart, Best Buy or Staples and you may not find anyone to help you navigate the finer nuances of DPI and megapixels or megabytes versus gigabytes. This can make for a daunting shopping experience and, for the manufacturer, possibly a lost sale.

With products on the shelf in countries around the globe, and a consumer base with varying levels of expertise, Hewlett-Packard (HP) has a lot to gain by making it easier for customers to select the right product. After more than six months of strategy, development and research, HP's new packaging design system arrives in stores this summer with what might be a vision of the future—a future where an effective technology package sells itself.

Arriving at this outcome was not an easy task. To begin this enterprising process, HP formed a multi-



"Purchase motivators" and the "key product specifications" help HP consumers make their final decisions on the shelf—with or without a store employee.

disciplinary team consisting of sales, marketing, production and design representatives from around the globe to address four key objectives. The new packaging system would have to:

- Serve as a stand-alone sales tool, aiding customers in selecting the right product for their needs, even when no salesperson was available to guide them.
- Compete in a commodity-driven marketplace.
- Work around the globe, everywhere HP products are sold.
- Be cost-effective to create and produce.

As part of a new brand initiative already underway, HP sought an agency they could partner with to translate the emerging global brand strategy into effective brand packaging. Brand Engine, a branding and strategic packaging firm in Sausalito, Calif., was chosen to take on this design challenge.



Reevaluating how design communicates

"As a strategic partner, we wanted to create a packaging system that would uphold the core values of HP while forging a bold new image," said company co-founder and creative director, Will Burke. "Our goal was not just to create a new packaging look, but also to reevaluate how the design communicates to the consumer. It needs to provide both visual and emotional cues. Ideally, it should make technology shopping as easy as shopping for cereal in the supermarket."

Brand Engine realized that significant changes were needed in the existing package design system. The principal shortcomings they found in HP's existing system included a weak brand presence, no clear information hierarchy, and an overwhelming amount of technical information. In fact, Brand Engine determined that the existing packaging had so much information on it that consumers didn't bother reading it. "The packaging said too much, but in the end it said nothing because consumers ignored it," said Burke.

Thus the system-wide changes to HP's packaging focused on three key areas: 1) creating a stronger brand impression; 2) communicating a clear and consistent information hierarchy; and 3) introducing new, customer-friendly messaging tools.

Increasing brand presence involved placing the HP identity prominently and consistently on all packaging. The recognizable HP symbol was brought to the top of all package panels, enlarged for maximum impact and reversed out of the same vibrant blue color field on all products. Thus the familiar brand became the unifying presence on all packaging.

Having established the desired communication hierarchy, Brand Engine created a graphically bold layout that placed information in consistent locations across all packages and product lines. The result: a design that helps customers find the information they need, whether they are shopping for ink, cameras or desktop computers.

"Purchase motivator" messaging

The package hierarchy incorporated two new messaging tools—the "purchase motivator" and the "key product specifications"—designed to consolidate information and reduce wordy messaging.

Brand Engine introduced the innovative concept of the purchase motivator as a means of telling consumers why a particular product would fit their lifestyle and meet their needs. "The purchase motiva-

tor calls out the foremost attribute likely to persuade consumers to purchase the product," explains Burke. "It's what is unique about the product and differentiates it from other products both from HP and from competitors."

The key product specifications were designed to be simple, large and bold, appearing within a dedicated and consistent area on the front of every package. They highlight only the most important and meaningful product details, such as a printer's speed, a paper's finish, a digital camera's zoom capabilities, or a product's connectivity information (e.g., "USB compatible"). These attributes are intended to further contribute to the consumer's quick understanding of how the product compares with others like it.

Throughout the design process, Brand Engine focused on creating a system that would be universally functional in global marketplaces, a system that would meet local specifications such as language requirements and print production limitations without sacrificing its core design features. Brand Engine's prior experience with language localization and international production requirements was particularly useful in this area. Beginning the design process with such issues already in mind allowed them to more easily create a consistent package look and feel that works equally well whether it is implemented in one, three, or eight languages.

Packages prepared for the world

Brand Engine also created a comprehensive packaging standards document. This document explains in detail how to apply the design system, thus ensuring that packaging implemented by partner agencies meets design standards, further contributing to brand consistency.

Brand Engine builds successful brands for clients in the food, beverage and technology industries. With a team of 15, including strategists, designers, project managers and writers, the firm provides strategic direction and design solutions ranging from brand identity to packaging and collateral systems.

In the end, the new HP packaging system was validated by tests with consumers worldwide, in North America, Asia-Pacific, Europe and Latin America. The results were positive. The packaging was well received, the communication hierarchy was clear and, most importantly, shopping for technology was easier for the consumer. ■