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WORLD**

Packaging for the Planet

How can food companies come up with a blueprint to integrate sustainability into product and material choices, and drive systems-level change?

By Kim Overstreet

On day two of the New Hope Network's virtual Spark Brand Success event, a panel of sustainable packaging experts (from start-up to emerging brand to large corporation) discussed their company's journey with sustainable packaging — with both successful, and not-so-successful results. Read part of the conversation below (edited for length) that includes topics such as plant-based materials, compostable packaging, infrastructure, using less packaging material, and top considerations when making sustainable packaging choices.

Plant Based Materials

Paloma Lopez (CEO at Future Fit Foods):

Future Fit Foods is a food startup out of Boulder, Colorado, and we're going to bring in a new generation of real plant-based foods that are convenient, affordable, and nutrient packed to people. And we want to do that in a

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way that is plastic-free, as well. We spent all of 2020 searching for different packaging solutions. We spoke to startups that are working on breakthrough packaging; seaweed, and other types of new materials, primarily plant based.

Our stand is that we need to really think about what the packaging is that is really going to nurture our planet and people into the future, which really means thinking about regenerative for more circular systems. Which to us, are primarily plant-based packaging, or reusable packaging.

Compostable Packaging

Kate Flynn:

I'm the co-founder and CEO of Sun and Swell. At Sun and Swell, our goal is to make healthy and sustainable eating more accessible for everybody. And we do that through our line of organic, plant-based healthy foods and plastic repackaging. So, I think our stance on plastic has evolved throughout our journey. I'll just quickly walk you through our history with it, and how my perspective as a founder, and our business, has been shaped based on packaging.

When we started the company several years ago, we were really just focused on bringing healthier food to people. I wasn't even thinking about sustainable packaging, honestly, when we first launched. We launched our product, we had it on shelves, and we realized we were solving the problem of health, but then contributing to the problem of single-use plastic. I got really obsessed with trying to figure out a better solution. I discovered compostable packaging exists. I realized nobody was selling their products in compostable

packaging, even though the technology exists. And I just assumed nobody wanted to sell it in compostable because of cost. I didn't think that there might be other reasons. And I just made a quick decision; we're making the switch to compostable, and I dove right into it. We tried to transition our entire product line over to compostable packaging.

At the time we did this, this was back in 2019, we were primarily a wholesale business, and got our products in compostable packaging on shelves and pretty much failed. We had a lot of challenges. The appearance of the packaging itself, the way it was holding up, it just didn't look good next to plastic packaging, which means consumers thought it was old. They didn't know it was eco-friendly. And we just had a lot of issues with it in wholesale. And I felt like I had to make the decision as a founder of an emerging business.

So, I decided I either need to stay out of plastic-free packaging for now, focus on everything else, and then try to integrate plastic-free once the technology improves a little bit. Or we need to shift our business model to accommodate plastic-free packaging if that's our number one thing; to really help transition the industry away from plastic. And we ended up going with the latter. So, over the past year, we spent our entire year basically transitioning our business model to accommodate compostable packaging where it is right now. That means shifting from a wholesale to direct to consumer (DTC) brand, and some other things as well.

For us, it's literally one of the number one things we're focused on. But I had to make a really, really, strategic decision to do it that way. And I always

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encourage brands to think about ‘where does compostable plastic-free packaging fall along your value prop?’ And if it’s not number one or number two, it’s not just a check the box thing that we can quickly do. So that’s a little bit about our journey.

Alyssa Harding:

I am the Packaging Collaborative Lead at OSC2, and our work focuses on scaling compostable packaging solutions for the food industry.

One thing I always think about with compostable packaging is 6% of our global greenhouse gas emissions are associated with food waste. And it’s closer to 25% of our greenhouse gas emissions within the food system supply chain. So not only can compostable packaging help you as a climate solution, but it also supports the reduction of plastic proliferation in the environment.

Infrastructure

Eric Klingenberg (Lead Material Science for Mars Advanced Research Institute):

An example of compostable packaging
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We focus in three areas: healthy planet, thriving people, and nourishing wellbeing. And our plastic packaging sits under healthy planet. And so, if you haven't seen it in the news, we just went 100% renewable energy in Australia as of this year.

We're really focused on reducing greenhouse gas where we get our power from. Our goal is to have 100% reusable, recyclable, or compostable packaging. But we realized, the answer is not the same everywhere in the world because we have different infrastructure. We have different supply chain needs. And my role really sits at how do we leverage new materials and accelerate the development of new materials so that our packaging can be reusable, recyclable, or compostable in these regions? And what fits best? And so, in packaging, I think we've learned to take a more holistic approach than we have in the past.

And so how do we advocate for infrastructure so that we have the right infrastructure in place, and it fits with the local economies and the systems? And then designing our package to fit within that infrastructure. And probably lastly, we, each and every one of us, plays a crucial role in this. Are we putting our plastic packaging in the right place? We're the first line of defense, really. Are we sorting properly, even if they're recyclable? And so how do we do that? And how do we focus on education and clear labeling and guidance so that it makes it into the right spot?

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Alyssa Harding:

To Eric's point, there's no silver bullet solution for your packaging. And when you're thinking about plastics, there are ways to use less plastics, use better plastics, incorporating post-consumer recycled content or bio plastics into the mix, and eventually no plastics. And making the transition to something that has a more renewable plant-based feedstock.

That being said, what do you see as the top considerations for companies as they choose their packaging materials and structures?

Top Considerations

Paloma Lopez:

There's a model that I really like, and I apply it often for a lot of decision-making, which is the ideal trifecta model. Essentially it looks at desirability, feasibility and viability. Desirability is really a human-centric approach to what people desire; what people need. When we look at packaging at Future Fit Foods, we thought about, 'let's pay attention to what the trends are, what people want to see in their packaging.' And what we're seeing is, people are still looking for convenience. So that hasn't gone away, but that does not mean single-use packaging. It doesn't mean plastic. It doesn't mean any of those things. It just means convenience. If you bring it to me, and I can reuse the packaging, that's great. So convenience is definitely still top of mind, and whatever packaging we choose, that needs to be there.

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There's an increasing obsession with waste in younger generations. They think now that we're all getting a lot more packages at home and we're starting to feel a little overwhelmed with packaging. So, in our research at Future Fit Foods, we learned that waste is really top of mind, packaging waste. People don't like when things get wrapped three times, or they come in a bag and then in a box and then in another box. And it's definitely been a consideration for us. Where can we remove packaging? How can we come across as being very mindful of the amount of packaging we use?

The second aspect of this idea model is feasibility. When we looked at our packaging, the things that we learned through the journey was the importance of the barrier properties of the material. So plastic and multi-layer films that exist in flexible packaging in food today, most of them have really good barrier properties. That's why they've been used for a long time. And so what that means is that oxygen is not going to spoil your food, and humidity, it's going to be protected. So we need to transfer those properties to plant-based materials, and other materials

Placeholder



that will be composed of, or be part of, nutrients to the system.

And so what we have found is that of all the options of plant-based, some perform better than others. So it's really important to become educated on the topic of barriers, as I have learned. Because that determines your shelf-stability, and, of course, in some cases, safety, but in other cases, it's just the quality of the experience, food experience, people are going to get.

And then under facility, there's also another aspect, which I've also had to learn the hard way, which is what packaging machinery does your co-manufacturer, or whomever you're working with, actually have available? If you're working with someone who's helping you make the food, you are limited by what packaging machinery they have. And so sometimes, some of these new plant-based materials require a lot of testing to make sure you don't stretch them too much, or that they don't shrink. So, there's a lot of learning that happens through prototyping as well.

And finally, the third aspect of this innovation model that I use is viability, which is economic viability. And so this is the cost aspect of 'is it possible to bring forward all their materials?' And I have to tell you that while it is for sure more expensive than plastic and a multi-layer material to go into plant-based, we're talking cents. We're not talking dollars. We're talking cents for the most part. So that is not the biggest issue of the shift to make. It's, like Kate was

saying, viability, or even desirability. So it's the two other aspects, actually, that are much more critical than, I think, cost-viability. So from that perspective, I think the top considerations for us at Future Fit Foods is really thinking through this lens of what's desirable, how do we eliminate use waste, what is the perception consumers have had? How can we change the narrative in the story to its feasibility? How do we think about shelf-stability? Becoming educated on the barrier properties of packaging. And three, viability, of course, needs to be baked into the PNL of the brand.

Alyssa Harding:

That was great, Paloma. And I think, too, Kate can speak to some of the challenges around the operationalizing of the sustainable packaging transition. We have our goals, we have ROI, we have buy-in from different stakeholders, but there are challenges when you're trying to make a systems-level shift. So, Kate, I'd love to hear your perspective on the question. And what do you see as those top considerations?

Kate Flynn:

Everything Paloma said is so important, especially as my perspective is coming from a founder, and then from a small emerging brand. And I think we're so quick to just assume we can do everything. And sometimes, I wasn't as thoughtful when I launched my packaging in stores really quickly. And so that failed because I didn't take the time to think through all that.

But I think from an emotional standpoint, there's just a few other things - from an emerging brand perspective - that you really need to think about when you're thinking about sustainable packaging. You need to think about 'where does this fit in your strategy? And is it a non-negotiable?' It's easy to say, "Oh, I have six non-negotiables, and one of them is sustainable packaging." You really have to decide where it is on that hierarchy. And is it number one or two? Or is it number six? And I think that, for us, we came to a pivotal moment where we said, we either want to be known for plastic free, and we are transitioning to accommodate this, or that's not whatever we're trying to be known for. Or it's not within the top three things that we care about.

It doesn't mean if there was not an infrastructure today, that we can't be thinking about it, caring about it, and making progress towards it. But we need to be thinking about it, and I get questions from our customers all the time about the end of life of our bags, all the time. To the point where we actually have launched a send-back program, so customers can send their bags back to us. And we can compost for them. This works for us because we're a small brand. It would not work for Mars to do that overnight. We can do that because of the size of our company. But the educated customers, who actually care about that piece of your value proposition, are educated, are going to care. And so you need to be thinking through that entire piece of it yourself so you have the answers, and are thinking about how your business model is going to lie.

Alyssa Harding:

Infrastructure development, and the corresponding consumer education, are two essential pieces outside of the design and material due diligence. And at OSC, we just started a partnership with the Compost Manufacturing Alliance and the US Composting Council to bridge the gap in infrastructure expansion there. 4% of the country has access to an industrial composting facility, which can be a limiting factor when folks are considering a transition to compostables. But when you also have that other fact of 9% of plastics have actually been recycled, you know that the food system provides a very unique solution for helping to address the plastic crisis. I'll throw it to Eric for your top considerations and hear the more enterprise-level perspective on scale and development.

Eric Klingenberg:

As big companies, we can't do it ourselves either. I think Jenna's heard me say this; it's a team sport in innovation, and how do we do this? Because we all need to come together, in reality, to help push things forward. We need to look at the materials' platforms and then pull them in together as well as the infrastructure and education that would be consistent across, no matter our size.

When we look at it, we think of things that are not one or the other, and they're not above each other. They're equal. And so, food safety and quality come in there. And if we're not delivering safe, high quality food, it doesn't make sense to switch.

Secondly, the consumer experience. And that consumer experience for me

includes not only 'what is your experience with our products and our packaging, but will it get to the recycling facility? Will you do the right thing with it?' But lastly, it's not 'plant-based,' and it's not 'anti-plastic.' It's 'are we sustainable?' And so there are a lot of technologies out there that I would say are being touted as things that are really good. These are plant-based. And if they're not sustainable and healthy for the environment, then we shouldn't be moving to them, or we should figure out a way to make that move.

We have programs now, not just to consider 'is it recyclable, is it a compostable, but what are all the additives?' We're digging down into the package for every chemical component that's added. Is it recycling? Is it safe? And if it's compostable, making sure it doesn't contain P phosphate. What are the other types of materials we have to have in there? And then you said it with infrastructure. And I can say, it's been a wonderful conversation. And I've had a great opportunity to talk to many composters and tour sites.

We don't want to be a contaminant for them either. So just saying our plastic packaging is compostable, and we pass the standard, doesn't mean they operate that way. So how do we have the right level of conversation? And how do we design more towards where they operate? How do they operate towards what we can handle? It's an ongoing conversation that we're having across the value chain now that we haven't had maybe in recent past. Really, I think that's the bigger picture of great trust, is safety, quality, making sure that we're not just a recyclable, but we're sustainable in that. The last thing we want to do is to do harm for the environment, just to say we're recycling. That's not a good place to be in either.

Lenox Optimizes Wine Glass Packaging for Amazon Shipping

A packaging redesign for tableware brand Lenox for its red wine glasses hits the sweet spot, providing both enhanced sustainability and greater product protection for Amazon's Frustration-Free Packaging requirements.

By Anne Marie Mohan

In September 2018, Amazon launched a Vendor Incentive Program, also known as its Frustration-Free Packaging (FFP) Program, to encourage brand owners to package their products in easy-to-open, recyclable packaging that is ready to ship to customers without additional Amazon boxes.

Beyond the promise of reduced packaging materials and greater customer satisfaction, Amazon provided another tantalizing incentive: an early adopter credit of \$1 per newly certified unit received by the Aug. 1, 2019 deadline. Another less-inviting incentive was a \$1.99 chargeback per unit for those suppliers failing to meet FFP guidelines following the deadline.

Like many of Amazon's suppliers, when Bristol, Penn.-based Lenox went into e-commerce in early 2018, it lacked an e-commerce packaging strategy. Its products, comprising high-end tableware and giftware—most of it glass—were supplied to Amazon in the company's retail packaging, which was overboxed

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and packed with dunnage to protect the fragile products. When sending the product to a customer, Amazon would use another overbox with dunnage, resulting in a “virtual nesting doll of packaging.” Despite the overabundance of packaging, however, breakage was still occurring.

That’s according to Brent Lindberg, Principal and founder of Fuseneo, Inc., a packaging design company and member of APASS—the Amazon Packaging Support and Supplier network, a group of design agencies, test labs, and suppliers selected to help brand owners design their packaging for FFP certification.

In March 2020, at Amazon’s prompting and with a new Corporate Leader of Quality for Products & Innovative Packaging having joined the company, Lenox began working with Amazon and Fuseneo to redesign its e-commerce-bound packaging to meet FFP guidelines. The result is a highly engineered insert with a fit-to-size shipper for Lenox’s red wine stemware, designed to eliminate product breakage and enable the product to ship in its own container, without overboxing.

Overall, the new package, which will eventually also be used for retail, eliminates 2¼ lb of packaging material, is 83% lighter than the previous package, and has 78% less volume.

Amazon identifies opportunities for optimization According to Amazon’s Director, Amazon Advanced Technology – Customer Packaging Experience, Dr. Kim Houchens, since 2015, Amazon has reduced the weight of outbound packaging by more than 33% and has eliminated more than 1 million tons of packaging material as a result of its packaging sustainability initiatives. Also

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since 2015, it has sent more than 1.2 billion FFP shipments to its customers, and through its incentive programs, it has increased the number of products certified under FFP to 2 million.

Products that fall under Amazon's Vendor Incentive Program include those with packaging that measures 18 x 14 x 8 in. or larger and weighs 20 lb or more. To ferret out prospects for packaging optimization, the FFP team conducts portfolio assessments, looking at the size of the product, the size of the packaging Amazon puts the product in, and the number of products sold.

"We identify the most valuable opportunities for driving sustainability improvements based on packaging material weight and packaging volume reduction," Houchens says. "We also prioritize categories with the most potential for damage, which provides us with another opportunity to delight customers."

It was through this process that Amazon identified Lenox, as well as several other suppliers of stemware—a style of drinkware having a base, stem, and globe, used for wine and champagne—as ideal candidates for redesigning their packaging, as stemware is one of the most fragile product categories and one that had not seen much FFP packaging innovation. Explains Houchens, "We decided to innovate alongside several brands in this category to demonstrate how packaging that complies with Amazon's FFP standards protects the most fragile products from damage, even while reducing packaging."

When Lenox began offering its line of Tuscany-brand drinkware through Amazon four years ago, there were no specific packaging requirements; Lenox would ship product in its retail packaging, which was packed in an overbox with

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dunnage, to Amazon, and Amazon would add another overbox with dunnage. That's according to Amy Hughes, Lenox's aforementioned Corporate Leader of Quality for Products & Innovative Packaging, who joined the company in 2019 to focus on packaging engineering for the company and to develop its sustainability stance.

Hughes explains that when Lenox moved from shipping its products to brick-and-mortar stores on pallets to shipping products to the customer's home in a parcel shipment, it was a paradigm shift for the company. "The handling of palletized product versus parcel deliveries is extremely different," she says. "When you're on a pallet, you don't have as much drop and vibration as you would have in a single box that's on say a UPS truck and the potential for that box to get dropped as it gets to the customer. So because of that handling, it made it necessary for us to reevaluate how we're packaging our products and how we're protecting them from damage."

Fuseneo's Lindberg explains that Lenox's experience transitioning to e-commerce is pretty typical. "I think there are so many brands that sit in

Lenox's new red wine stemware package for Amazon comprises two inserts holding six glasses, covered with a paperboard sleeve, and shipped in a corrugated case.

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that space that don't have the packaging resources to isolate problems with their packaging and solve those challenges efficiently," he says.

Houchens agrees, saying she believes that what keeps more vendors from converting to FFP packaging is a lack of specific expertise related to designing for e-commerce. "Amazon's APASS network can bring expertise in designing FFP packaging, especially through the lens of sustainability," she explains. "Additionally, some vendors may need to achieve a certain volume of online sales in order to justify the investment of creating different packaging for e-commerce. Brands that have the opportunity to create omnichannel FFP packages, like Lenox, are able to combine the needs of shelf-ready packages with a great online delivery customer experience. Amazon FFP provides support and incentives to vendors to come up with these creative solutions."

When Amazon and Fuseneo approached a number of stemware brands early last year about redesigning their packaging for FFP, Lindberg says "Lenox was one of the brands that said, 'Absolutely, we are itching to design something better. We just don't know where to start.'"

Iterative process leads to new package direction To kick off the project, Lenox, Amazon Principal Product Manager Brent Nelson, and Fuseneo met to analyze Lenox's volume of sales through Amazon and to identify its highest-selling products as well as its most fragile ones. "In both areas, we saw our stemware was number one," says Hughes. Of Lenox's Tuscan stemware sold on Amazon, its red wine glasses had the highest sales and the largest globe, resulting in the most damage—so that's where they started.

Upon assessing Lenox's existing packaging for its 6-ct of red wine glasses, Lindberg says the team at Fuseneo didn't find it that excessive. "It just seemed like it had some protective elements that would allow it to survive," he says.

The package consisted of two corrugated inserts, each of which held three glasses in an upright position, inside a corrugated carton. "The inserts did use a fair amount of material," Lindberg adds. "The glasses were held in there okay. We thought maybe there was some room for optimization, but it wasn't all that bad."

The challenge, therefore, was to reduce the size of a package that didn't seem to use an unnecessary amount of material, while increasing protection of the fragile glass products within, to optimize the package for e-commerce.

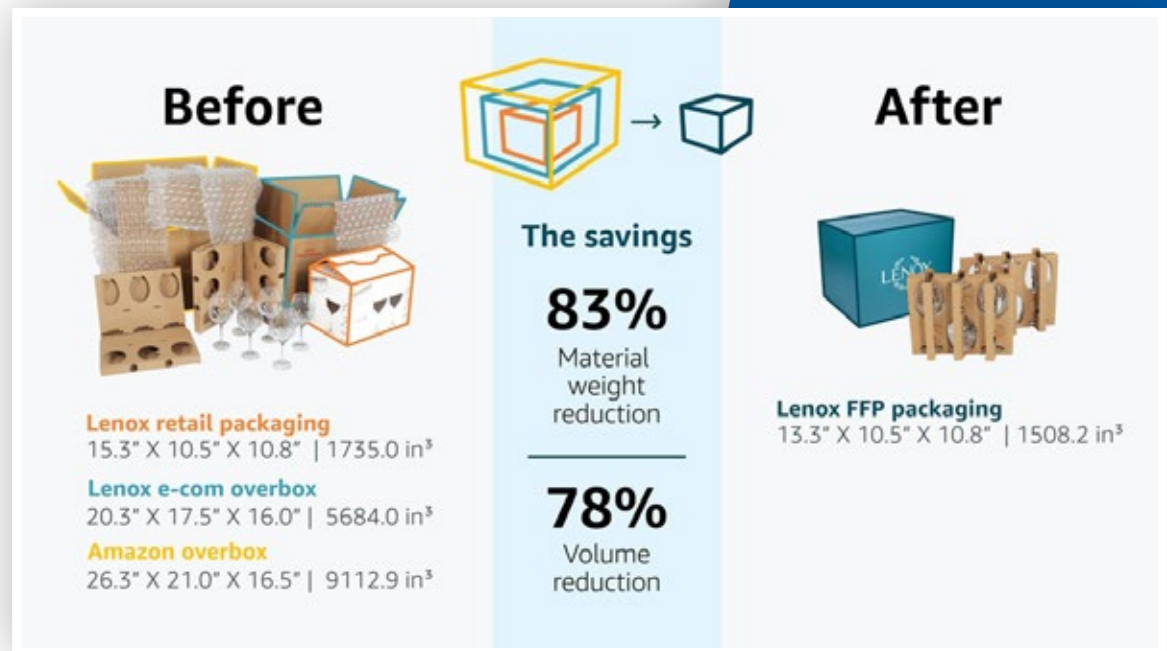
The first step, Lindberg says, was to get a baseline of the existing retail package through ISTA 6-Amazon.com SIOC (Ships in Own Container) testing, a test procedure within the ISTA 6 series that involves a transportation simulation cycle tailored for the Amazon distribution environment. Fuseneo provides in-house ISTA 6-Amazon.com SIOC testing and certification in addition to structural design.

The results of repeated drop tests were surprising: While Lindberg says Fuseneo expected to see broken glass, what they didn't expect was for the damage to occur with the drinkware's stem. "We thought that maybe in a typical shipment, the edge of the bowl would come in contact with a hard surface, right? Like break through its dunnage or whatever is holding it, and impact a surface, and that was what was going to shatter the glass at its most

delicate part,” he says. “In reality, that wasn’t what was happening at all. It was the weight of the glass of the bowl and the weight of the base that were causing a shock impact down into the stem.”

The process for redesigning the packaging was an iterative one, Lindberg explains: “We started with sketches, with ideas, with thoughts, and we flushed those out. Multiple designers pitched in with different ideas, building on that brainstorming. And then we started refining. We culled some of the bizarre ideas out or brought in components of them. Then we started honing in on fewer designs. We took those designs, we tested them, we prototyped them, we broke some more glasses, we refined, we consolidated, we tested, and each time we learned a little bit more about what was causing damage to the glasses and what was helping. And we repeated that process until we had a design that was really efficient and survived the test.”

One major change was the positioning of the glasses in the insert. As Lindberg explains, there’s a certain sense of directionality to retail. When you put a package on a pallet, it’s upright. When the pallet moves to



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the store, the package is upright. And, when the package gets placed on the shelf, it's upright. With e-commerce, there's no guarantee a package will go through an entire fulfillment process in a certain direction. "So why are all the products placed in the same direction?" Fuseneo questioned.

That was a consideration that came up early on in the process, says Lindberg, leading to an insert design that alternates the direction of the glasses, with two upright, and the middle glass facing downward. Two inserts, made of 200# E-flute corrugated, are used in each package to hold six glasses and are engineered to support the glasses at eight points around the perimeter and provide side isolation and top and bottom protection.

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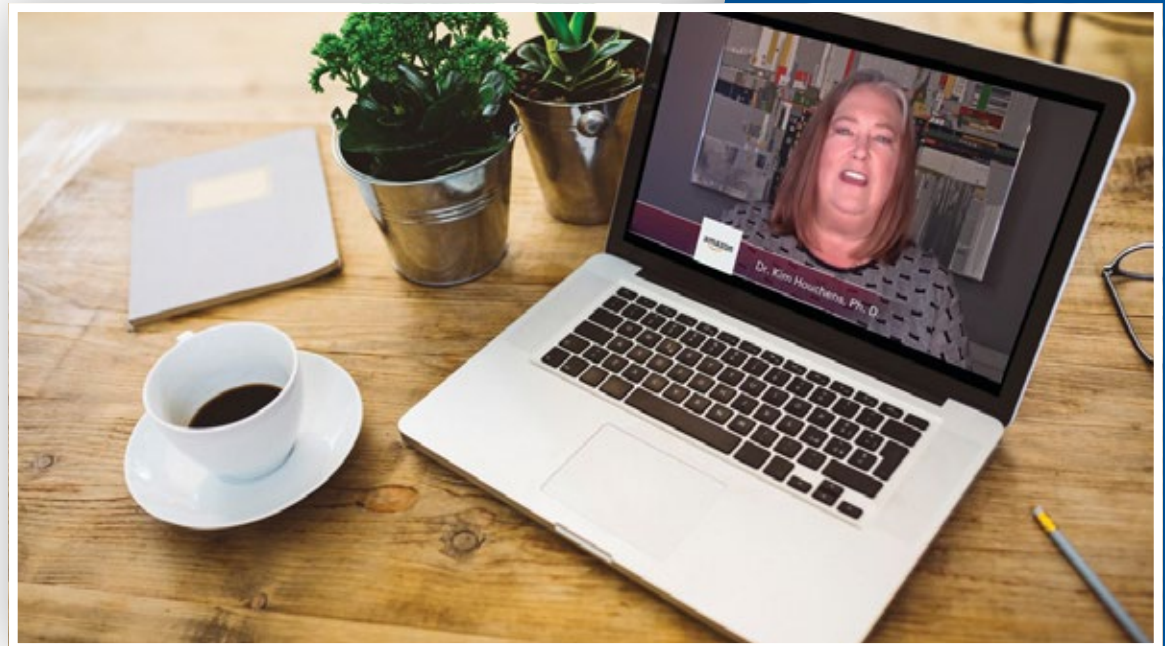
“The bowl and the stem are really isolated from one another, so the weight of the bowl is carried into the insert, rather than onto the stem,” explains Lindberg. “We’re also capturing the bowl and base in a way that uses less material than before and creates a much smaller footprint.”

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When designing packaging for e-commerce optimization, Lindberg says Fuseneo gets the package to the point where it can pass the ISTA 6-Amazon.com test—and then some—and then backtracks. “We had the Lenox package [a corrugated case with the inserts] to the point where we were chucking the package across the room, I mean, with everything we had, throwing it against the wall, slamming it on the ground,” he says. “If we can get a package to pass that, then we’ve probably overengineered it. So then we start backing down—we start using thinner material, we start using less spacing, and we start condensing everything until we get to the point where we feel like we have a comfortable margin, but we haven’t overengineered the package to require more packaging than is necessary.”

Addressing unboxing

While the goal of the Lenox project was to reduce the amount of packaging to meet FFP, Hughes says there were other considerations as well. “I was looking for something that was presentable in the instance where someone was ordering the product for a milestone event, for example, like a wedding present, to where you could deliver this to their



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home, and it still looked as good as if you were to hand-deliver it to them,” she shares.

To provide a premium unboxing experience, each insert is held in a paperboard sleeve, printed with Lenox’s trademark dark teal background and the Lenox and Tuscany logos, along with illustrations of the glasses within. Round die-cuts on the side of each sleeve make it easy to remove them from the outer box, adding a touch of convenience.

“Part of the presentation, when you open that box and you see that display and the Lenox logo, is the feeling that you’re getting something of high quality,” says Hughes.

The corrugated shipper is kraft colored, with a small Lenox Tuscany brand logo on the side panel. “So here you have a very simple design,” says Hughes. “It’s very basic. I think that’s helpful in the days of porch theft and packaging theft. It’s not flashing to your neighbors, ‘Hey, this is what I bought, this expensive stemware.’”

An all-around better package

The reduction in packaging material resulting from the redesign is quite significant. Before the redesign, the e-commerce package included Lenox’s retail packaging, measuring 15.3 x 10.5 x 10.8 in., or 1,735 in.³; the Lenox e-commerce overbox, at 20.3 x 17.5 x 16 in., or 5,684 in.³; the Amazon overbox, at 26.3 x 21 x 16.5 in., or 9,112.9 in.³; and dunnage for both the Lenox and the Amazon overboxes. The new design eliminates both overboxes as well as the dunnage and reduces the amount of material used for the inserts, resulting in a package that measures 13.3 x 10.5 x 10.8 in., or 1,508.2 in.³ overall. That’s a reduction of more than 15,000 in.³ of corrugated packaging.

“All around, we’ve reduced the size and the amount of material,” says Lindberg. “And this is one of those win-win stories where we were also able to improve the

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brand experience and create a better premium experience with graphics.

“In one direction, we’ve reduced the insert by around an inch and a half. And in another, we’ve gotten about a quarter-inch smaller, and we’re using less material. The packaging weighs less and it’s smaller, so it’s better optimized for trucks and warehouses—it’s just all around better.”

Hughes agrees: “From a transportation logistics standpoint, it’s a huge savings because our cubic efficiency is drastically improved.” Regarding the packaging material itself, however, Hughes says Lenox isn’t seeing a massive savings, because although they eliminated some materials, they also added the sleeve. What will have an impact though is no longer being charged \$1.99 per unit by Amazon for packaging that doesn’t meet its FFP requirements.

Cheers to a successful design

When the design for the red wine glass package was complete, Fuseneo certified it as meeting ISTA 6-Amazon.com SIOC requirements, which enabled Lenox to enroll the package on Amazon’s SIOC website. At presstime, Lenox was in the process of having the packaging produced by a proprietary supplier in Eastern Europe located near its stemware factories, with the goal of rolling it out on Amazon in March 2021. It’s also looking at using the new packaging system for retail as well, eliminating the need for two packaging SKUs for one product.

In the future, Lenox plans to utilize this style of packaging for other stemware products, based on product volume, demand, and the relative fragility of the glass type. Through the process of engineering the optimized

Lenox Optimizes Wine Glass Packaging for Amazon Shipping

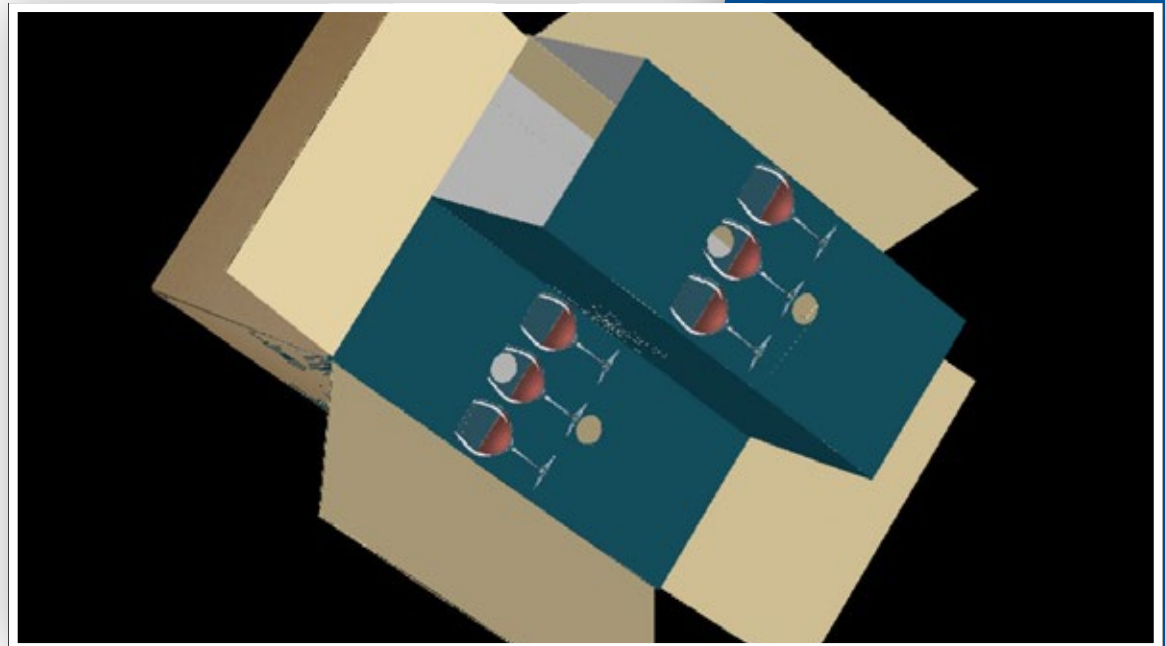
packaging for the red wine stemware, Fuseneo created a formula that can be applied to all of Lenox's stemware packaging, including white wine, champagne, and martini glasses, for example.

In the meantime, all parties involved in the redesign of the red wine package are eager to see the new e-commerce package launch. Says Houchens, "Lenox FFP will delight consumers, because it is easy to open, contains less plastic, reduces waste, and lowers the risk of damage with its internal structure."

Says Hughes, "Amazon seems to be very excited about this. I think they can't wait for us to get this out the door and into the customer's hands. I know they really want to see this come to fruition. We share that feeling. We can't wait, and we think it will be beneficial as well that we will start to see less breakage happening. I think for me, that's the most exciting part—ensuring the quality of our product to the point where it's received by the customer."

Hughes adds that, with Lenox under new management, there's been a lot of activity around the company's sustainability goals, so "there's more to come!"

The sleeves feature die-cuts that help consumers remove them from the shipping case.



Subscription D2C Supplement Brand Makes Sustainable Impression at Unboxing

A new-to-science fatty acid supplement promises to improve longevity. Seraphina Therapeutics created a sustainability-minded D2C packaging and unboxing experience to align with and amplify the discovery.

By Matt Reynolds

The founders of nutraceutical company Seraphina Therapeutics, producer of the new Fatty 15 essential fatty acid supplement, come with an origin story that's fit for a Bond movie. Dr. Stephanie Venn-Watson, the CEO, is a veterinary epidemiologist with a host of degrees and credentials across disciplines. Dr. Eric Venn-Watson, her husband and COO, is a Navy physician that spent years internationally deployed as a military orthopedic surgeon and aerospace medicine specialist before entering the private sector. Recently, the two have been featured in publications like Forbes, Authority, and Worth as examples of an entrepreneurial power couple.

But here's a wrinkle that could be straight from a comic book: the Seraphina pair discovered their first product—a new-to-science variety of healthful fatty

Subscription D2C Supplement Brand Makes Sustainable Impression at Unboxing

acid—by working on a long-standing project studying Navy-raised and -trained dolphins. The discovery was corroborated with the aid of 60 years' worth of Navy-collected experimental dolphin data and cell samples. You read that correctly, military dolphins.

More specifically, the discovery is of a trace fatty acid called C15:0, eventually to be branded as Fatty 15, that Seraphina says has evidence of significantly promoting cellular resilience and general health. The company claims this fatty acid boosts human longevity by strengthening cell membranes, supporting mitochondria, and activating receptors in our bodies that regulate metabolism, immunity, mood, sleep, and appetite.

I'll have to take their word for it, but the discovery was impressive enough for lauded scientific journal Nature to publish Venn-Watson's findings. Packaging's World's coverage area is a little narrower than the publications listed above. Luckily, Fatty 15's packaging origin story is a good one as well.

Shift from academia to commercialization

The C15:0 ingredient itself spent more than a decade in research and development. But as promising as it appeared to science and academia, Seraphina knew that C15:0 wasn't going to sell itself to consumers.

"It's our intellectual property, we've published on it, and we now have 28 patents on this technology, nine of which are issued," says Eric Venn-Watson. "We finally had to ask ourselves how would we bring this discovery to the masses? How could we improve global health? More practically, we asked ourselves how we would

Subscription D2C Supplement Brand Makes Sustainable Impression at Unboxing

manufacture this. And what kind of packaging would we need?"

Upstream, the processing and manufacturing of C15:0 involves a whole lot of regulatory oversight and hoops through which to jump. Seraphina has to keep its whole supply chain FDA appropriate for a food facility, including manufacture of the ingredient itself. Considering its target market of health- and sustainability-minded Millennials and Gen Xers, Seraphina also must certify that the product is both vegan and sustainably sourced. Then, once the artificially synthesized product is manufactured, there are guidelines on safely getting the ingredient into a capsule and safely getting the capsules into a package to protect it.

More freedom in packaging

But once those capsules are safely sealed in a suitable pack, many of those regulatory burdens subside. Non-food-contact secondary packaging afforded the brand a lot more freedom for artistry and latitude for brand positioning.

At the time of the January 2021 launch, C15:0 was (and still is) a Direct to Consumer (D2C) distribution play using the Shopify D2C logistics software

An exploded view of the Fatty 15 starter kit demonstrates the use of corrugated inserts to safely handle a glass bottle through the many-touchpoint e-comm channel in a compact format without extra space or the need for dunnage.



Subscription D2C Supplement Brand Makes Sustainable Impression at Unboxing

platform. This e-comm-based go-to-market format meant consumers' first physical interaction with the brand would be by way of a shipper arriving on their doorstep. That would be the true zero-moment of truth.

To maximize its impact at this critical point, the company enlisted L.A.-based creative and brand design agency Phenomenon (which goes by phno) to work out brand positioning, naming, identity guidelines, and most importantly for our purposes, the sourcing and implementation of the packaging. Ali Filsoof, Design Director at phno, led this process.

He was involved in an early, tenor-setting brand decision to move away to the clinical-sounding C15:0 ingredient name to the more engaging Fatty 15. The name plays on the juxtaposition between consumers' historical vilification of fats and the fact that certain fats, like C15:0, are required for life (putting the "essential" in essential fatty acids). The name Fatty 15 is a bold attention getter and conversation starter to the brand's health-aware target market.

Another branded design element that would end up being reused across the packaging is a "pill pattern" graphic depicting alternately oriented horizontal and vertical capsules. One half of each capsule is represented by an unbroken "C" shaped line, the other half consists of 15 dots outlining the same, but inverse "C" shape. Taken together, this design is meant to recall consumers to the C15:0 chemical name.

As Filsoof's brand strategies and designs began to crystalize, he brought in Erin Moharita, CPP, principal of boutique packaging agency EKM, to make sure they were on point on the technical and procurement side of packaging.

Subscription D2C Supplement Brand Makes Sustainable Impression at Unboxing

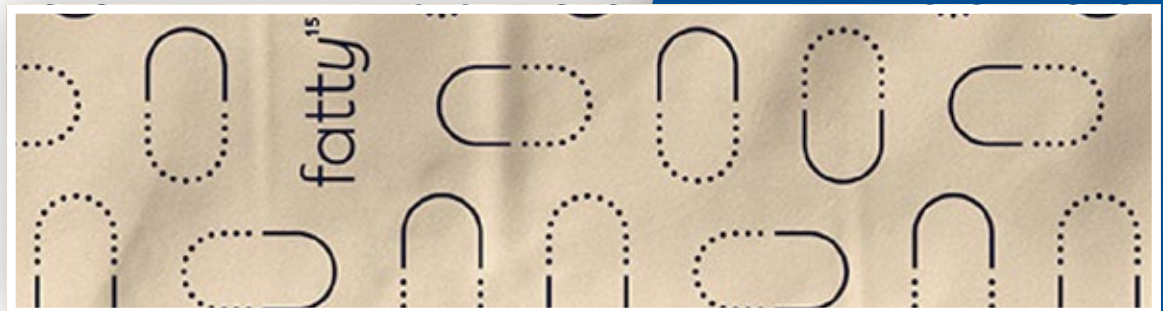
Moharita's specialty is connecting entrepreneurs—many of whom are unfamiliar with the packaging supply chain or lack enough volume to meet their MOQs—with her extensive network of larger or premium packaging suppliers that might not otherwise engage with smaller, emerging brands.

Balancing sustainability with product protection, shelf life

The set of health and wellness consumers that are likely to be drawn to Fatty 15 is of a piece with consumers who value sustainability and seek to protect the environment.

“That’s why one of Seraphina’s early directives on packaging was to be as environmentally friendly as possible. When I think about packaging in general—particularly in e-comm, D2C, and Amazon though they’re working to change things—I think of a box, in a box, in a box, in a box. There are multiple layers of packaging that come to you in the mail,” Filsoof says. “I challenged the team and myself to practice what I’m calling un-packaging. We’re not putting beautiful graphics on a box that’s bound to go into a plain shipper filled with unnecessary extra material like padding. We thought about what materials we could use that

The branded “pill pattern” is used on the tape and various decorative spots on the pack. the design is meant to recall the C15:0 chemical name for Fatty 15.



Subscription D2C Supplement Brand Makes Sustainable Impression at Unboxing

are unconventional but more sustainable. We researched for weeks on what those possibilities could be and then we started designing different packaging options for Seraphina's Fatty 15."

The team arrived at a dual-pronged packaging strategy that consists of a sustainability-minded starter kit shipper, designed to impart a carefully conceived aesthetic during unboxing. The centerpiece of the starter kit is a durable glass bottle designed to contain the product—eventually. The bottle is delivered empty. Also within the starter kit are three metallized film pouches that each contain a month's worth of Fatty 15 capsules (30).

"The pouch is a laminate foil—we needed that for shelf life, for the capsules to survive the warehouse setting prior to getting to a consumer, and then opening, and then being used," says Moharita. "We wanted to make sure it had the longest shelf life possible."

While multi-layer metallized films aren't recyclable themselves, they accomplish the essential logistical task of getting the product into homes safely, and carry necessary oxygen and moisture barriers. But the lightweight pouches have some sustainability bona fides of their own. In this case, the top layer of the lamination is made from post-consumer recycled paper that is 100% FSC-Certified. This paper layer is flexographically printed in three colors, white, green, and blue.

Consumers are meant to open the starter kit, open the first three pouches, and fill the durable bottle with the 90 capsules. Thereafter, a quarterly, subscription-based e-comm delivery of three of the same three metallized

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film pouches incrementally restocks consumers. After the initial starter kit, only a kraft-style flat mailer envelope is needed to deliver the refill pouches.

The stakeholders involved declined to name their packaging suppliers.

Durable glass bottle

If you've ever been to a GNC retail location, you know that nutraceuticals and supplement capsules are largely packed in white plastic bottles, often HDPE, adorned with shrink or p-s labels. While these formats can be recycled, they often are sold almost comically under-filled. This also is endemic to OTC pharma capsules. Consider that a 25-pack and a 100-pack of ibuprofen might use the same size of HDPE bottle—it may be simpler for a brand to limit pack formats, but it's perceived as wasteful. Also, though they tend to carry decoration, these bottles aren't exactly artisti.

Fatty 15 takes a different tack with an elegant, durable glass bottle meant to be displayed in full view on a bathroom counter instead of hiding in a medicine cabinet. The easily recyclable bottle is sprayed in the brand color specified by Phenomenon, similar to seafoam green, then decorated with simple messaging via silkscreen printing directly on the bottle, one color—dark blue, bordering on black.

“Considering that the bottle is meant to be used over and over again, to be refilled month after month with refill

This elegant, silkscreen-printed durable glass bottle with bamboo closure doesn't need to be hidden away in a medicine cabinet with your other white HDPE pill bottles. It's worthy of display.



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pouches, it was really important that we had very high-quality decoration on the bottle. We need it be able to be handled multiple times with no issue, with no deco coming off,” Moharita says. “Printed labels in a bathroom over months can become damaged and not look so nice. We really felt that direct deco to the bottle not only gave it a really nice premium feel, but it just would be a longer-standing product on your shelf that looks nice and clean.”

But wouldn't a nutraceutical bottle be required to contain lots of dosing, instructional, and ingredient information that would clutter up the bottle or even require a label on the back? Remember, the capsules are primarily packaged in metallized foil pouches. That means all regulatory information and instructions for use need only appear on the pouches. The durable show piece of a bottle is allowed to remain simple and uncluttered.

What really makes the bottle pop is its bamboo closure. A wood closure was originally specified in the design briefs, but there were some problems marrying the bottle threading to the closure. After expanding a closure search, bamboo's advantages quickly became evident. First, bamboo is a plentiful, fast-growing grass, so the material's renewability profile is strong.

“And from a shipping and environmental standpoint, bamboo is a lot lighter than the wood, so I think in the end it was a better choice,” Moharita says. “I think the wood cap still was a great avenue that we explored, but the end result with the bamboo cap, in my opinion, is better.”

The lone piece of decoration that isn't directly printed directly on the bottle and closure combination is a piece of recyclable pressure-sensitive tape. It

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provides tamper evidence, but also affords a narrow strip of billboard space to reinforce the “pill pattern” design.

“What’s really cool is that each and every bottle is unique because the grain pattern on bamboo is like a fingerprint,” Filsoof adds. “Essentially each consumer gets their own unique bottle. We wanted something that could really sit on your countertop and be really beautiful, something you’re proud of.”

The bamboo closure does have an inner polypropylene (PP) fitment to accept the bottle’s thread that is made out of 100% post-consumer recycled material.

“Anywhere we could, we were as environmentally friendly as possible in terms of the material we’re sourcing as well as the lifespan,” Moharita says. “Durability and lifespan of the piece was really important as well.”

Based on estimated sales, the company says that in 2021 alone, the use of a durable glass bottle instead of a typical HDPE pill bottle will save 9.24 tons of plastic.

Secondary packaging’s strong sustainability profile

Fatty 15 uses a shipper made from 100% post-consumer recycled kraft corrugated, adding a circular quality to what already was recyclable. Instead

The inside of the corrugated shipper is laminated with a printed top sheet that conveys the upbeat, quippy brand messaging. Stacked shippers illustrate how little space is wasted in this packaging system.



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of printing directly on corrugated, the Fatty 15 team decided to print a top sheet and laminate it to one side, the inside-facing corrugated wall. The top sheet is also recyclable and is made out of FSC (Forest Stewardship Council)-certified paper.

“We didn’t print directly on the kraft since we just felt that the top sheet gave a little bit of a cleaner look. The color was a little more vibrant going down this route, and we just could get better quality. Also, I find that when you print on these top sheets, you’re getting less corrugated ‘dust’ coming from the shipper as it travels through the supply chain. That was really important since we feature a beautifully decorated glass bottle with no carton protecting it,” Moharita says.

A corrugated kraft insert is used to hold the glass bottle in place, and to orient it toward consumers as they unbox the product. This bottle-holding insert rests on a second corrugated insert, this one seamed and erected to be a 3D, shelf-like structure that forms a collar around the inside bottom of the shipper. This corrugated collar cradles three pouches-worth of capsules, three packs at 30 days each, the amount that arrives with the starter kit.

“This box was made completely custom for this project, and [Moharita] and her team engineered it to have the smallest footprint possible,” Filsoof adds. “There is no extra room—there’s only enough room to hold the corrugated inserts, which are holding the bottle and the pouch of capsules underneath, but that’s it. Everything was engineered so it could be handled and shipped across the country and remain intact. The insert that holds the bottle is perfectly laser cut to the bottle’s size, so we didn’t have to put any additional padding on top. We really just have an [instructional pamphlet] insert that sits on top. We went through a couple

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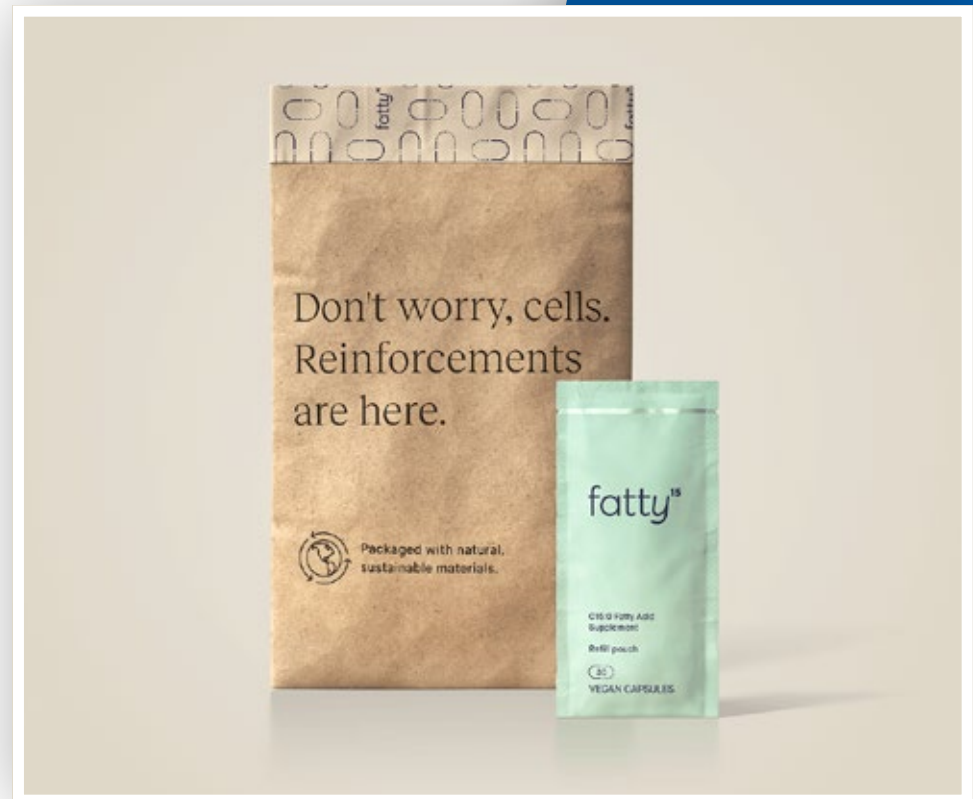
iterations of this to land here and we're really proud of it because there's not an inch of excess of corrugated; it's precisely what we needed to get this shipped properly."

With the secondary packaging format decided, it fell to Filsoof to design what would be printed on the internal top-sheet. As we've seen with other successful subscription based D2C personal care plays (see Grove and Truman's), text printed on the top sheet is punchy, upbeat, and implies a wink. The design uses infographic-style visual cues and the brand's "pill pattern" graphic, flexographically printed in two colors, the brand's green and blue. Of note, the inks used here are vegetable-based, thus more sustainable.

"We really wanted to get across the excitement around the brand and tell the consumer what's happening by them using this product. On the inside top cover, we added this beautiful headline, "Fatty acids to the rescue," explaining how this product is going to replenish a user's cells. We were trying to educate people at every touchpoint, even though they've previously researched it on the website, by reminding them what's going on with this product," Filsoof says.

The final top sheet-printed flourish appears on

Metallized pouches, with an FSC-certified, printed paper layer exterior, carry the capsules through the supply chain while providing a moisture and oxygen barrier. These pouches easily fit into a small kraft mailer for the subscription-based refills.



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the inside bottom flap, intended to be read as a consumer removes the last of the three pouches of capsules. There, dark blue text on sea green paper reads, “Okay, now you can recycle me,” serving both as a closing remark on the brand’s sustainability profile, and practical reminder to the consumer.

One final sustainability-related element of note on the shipper—the company is using a recycled kraft paper, water-activated tape that’s custom printed. What’s particularly interesting about it is that it is fully recyclable while still stuck to the corrugated shipper—no need to remove it. Tapes that are reinforced by fiber crosshatching technically should be removed before entering the recycling stream, but this variety of tape doesn’t require that. The custom printed tape features the brand name, Fatty 15, surrounded by the branded capsule pattern illustrating the C15:0 chemical.

“As much as you might not think about tape when you’re looking at the whole package, with the careful branding, beautiful packaging, and everything we designed in the brand, I think that the tape was a really huge win,” Moharita says. “Because of the weights, and how we designed everything in consideration of how these ship, we were able to use this type of unreinforced tape, which is really cool.”

Refill Packs

Since the starter kit contains 90 days-worth of capsules (three pouches at 30 capsules each), about three months pass before the next delivery from Fatty 15 arrives at consumers’ doorsteps. The brand calculated that it’d be favorable for

Subscription D2C Supplement Brand Makes Sustainable Impression at Unboxing

its customers to have enough time to really start feeling the positive effects of the supplement before they started the subscription portion of their account. The next delivery looks nothing like the dramatic starter kit, instead focusing on minimal design and limited packaging usage.

“We’re just using a mailer envelope that is fully recyclable. On top of the mailer envelope, all the printing on there is done with an algae-based ink which is really interesting, it’s kind of a newer product in the industry that’s highly renewable,” Filsoof says. “I started investigating it a little further and we found a vendor. We’re really proud of the mailer as well because it’s as small as it can be to hold the three pouches [90 capsules] and it’s fully recyclable, and the algae ink is unique.”

The post-consumer recycled padded kraft paper is FSC-certified and uses a fiber-based padding that’s also recyclable, unlike bubble mailers. The mail is printed with typically quippy text that reads, “Don’t worry, cells. Reinforcements are here.” The tape closure is the same water-based recycled and recyclable tape found on the starter kit’s shipper.

What’s next?

The first product produced by Seraphina Therapeutics, Fatty 15’s initial foray as a D2C play is likely to be exactly that—only its first. The brand is currently looking into other channels, retail and otherwise, that will be able to accommodate their current pack format, and also is considering new packaging formats tailored to the channel. All of this is top of mind for Eric and

Subscription D2C Supplement Brand Makes Sustainable Impression at Unboxing

Stephanie Venn-Watson.

Another next step, one that Eric Venn-Watson think might really blow the doors off of this discovery, is FDA recognition as GRAS (Generally Recognized as Safe) categorization for C15:0 as a food additive or food ingredient. This takes the fatty acid outside of the capsule and beyond the nutritional supplement category, and into the food ingredient category for healthful foods.

“And I think from the Seraphina Therapeutics and Fatty15 standpoint, and the ingredient FA15, our goal is to just really improve global health. This is important and we want to get this out to people and dolphins,” he says. Wait, dolphins? Bringing the story full circle, Eric adds that, “This supplement’s going to go back to the dolphins as well, to continue to improve their health, which is neat.” – PW

Spirits Bottle for Veteran-Owned Whiskey Brand Hits its Target

New whiskey brand launched to celebrate all branches of the military uses unique packaging touches throughout, including a canteen-style bottle, a spent cartridge-shaped cap, and a display case designed to look like an ammo crate.

By Anne Marie Mohan

Distilled and packaged in the U.S.A., but conceived of on a rooftop in Baghdad, Iraq, in 2007, Regimental Whiskey pays tribute to all branches of the military, past and present, with the brand's mission conveyed through a custom canteen-shaped bottle that "feels just right in the hand of a soldier, sailor, airman, or marine," says the company. But that's just the beginning of Regimental Whiskey's military-style attention to detail. From cap to case, the brand employs deliberate design elements throughout to emphasize its military origins.

As co-founders and veteran U.S. Infantrymen Eric DiNoto and Kyle Moore tell it, Regimental Spirits Company was born on the abandoned rooftop of the Ba'ath Party Headquarters in Baghdad, where the two shared "a cigar, a conversation, and a dream about creating a quality brand of whiskey that would represent the greatest men and women of their country—those who serve in the United States Military."

Spirits Bottle for Veteran-Owned Whiskey Brand Hits its Target

Shares now CEO DiNoto, "There are several military-themed spirits companies on the market. Just about all have tailored their brand to specific micro-groups within the military. These groups include the Marines, Special Forces, Navy Seals, and unit-specific groups. We launched the brand because we wanted to create a unique and quality brand of whiskey that represents all who served and all who continue to serve as well as our friends, families, and supporters."

In this vein, DiNoto adds, Regimental Spirits was founded with a commitment to create American-Made spirits that embody the same core values of all the military branches: duty, honor, respect, loyalty, courage, integrity, and selfless service.

To design a custom bottle that would convey these values while differentiating the brand from likewise-themed products, the company worked with Berlin Packaging's Studio One Eleven design division. Says DiNoto, "It was a perfect match."

A universally recognizable shape

The concept of using a canteen shape for the bottle originated with DiNoto, who says he scratched out the design in pencil at the dinner table one night. The canteen was chosen, he says, because



it's the one item that is universally issued to all services, and thus would resonate with all military members.

According to Keenan Marr, Senior Industrial Designer for Studio One Eleven, designing a spirits bottle that pays homage to the canteen was “a tricky wire to walk.” He adds, “We knew it would require careful design consideration to create something that was recognizable as a canteen without being gimmicky.

“To accomplish this, we analyzed the canteen and the different elements that make it so iconic. One of Regimental Spirits’ founders even mailed the design team his own canteen, which he used in Iraq, as a reference. We explored several concepts, ranging from direct representations of the canteen as a glass bottle to other architectures incorporating forms inspired by canteens. After some discussions with the customer and refinements, we eventually arrived at a more direct canteen architecture with some spirits bottle elements, like an inset label area and branded embossments.

“To stand out from the competition, we created a custom aluminum cap and neck finish, the form of which is a direct representation of the very unique spout on actual canteens.”

The result is a distinctively-shaped 750-mL glass bottle, used for two whiskey varieties—American and Kentucky Bourbon—from a proprietary packaging supplier. The embossed logo referenced by Marr comprises a triangular-shaped icon that Regimental Spirits says is a standard graphic display on military maps. Within the symbol are the company’s initials, “RSC.” Underneath is the company name spelled out in all caps. Says Regimental Sprits, “The embossed RSC logo adds a premium feel to the bottle and draws attention to the brand.”

Another feature of the bottle is a notched insert where the wraparound label resides that allows for a better grip on the bottle for on-premise sales. Adds Regimental Spirits, the bottle spout was engineered to hold a standard bartenders' liquor pourer for measured pours.

Custom cap presents challenges

The aforementioned custom canteen-style bottle closure is made from a 0.35-mm-thick, deep-drawn aluminum with a polyethylene foam liner that Regimental Sprits says was designed after a spent military shell casing, replete with an imprint of a primer, and the letters "RSC" stamped on the top.

According to Studio One Eleven's Director of Engineering, Martin Rathgeber, its design was an even trickier wire to walk, requiring a lot of negotiation with the [proprietary] supplier as well as some experimentation and tool revisions.

"We needed a relatively close tolerance on the ID [inner diameter]



Spirits Bottle for Veteran-Owned Whiskey Brand Hits its Target

of the closure to allow it to sit straight on the neck without cocking—not only for the shelf appeal, but also to seal well,” Rathgeber explains. “We also required a deep enough thread profile so the threads would not get accidentally jumped during capping or by the consumer when reclosing. Both had to be negotiated with the supplier and required some testing and multiple tool revisions.”

Rathgeber adds that aluminum closures such as these are generally ROPP [roll-on pilfer-proof], where the thread profile of the closure gets rolled in after filling. “Because of the intended shape of the closure, the liner needed to be glued into the closure rather than using friction fit, as on other closures,” he says.

Because of the canteen design, Studio One Eleven anticipated that consumers might want to use the closure as a means of drinking a shot of the premium whiskey. Therefore, they needed to select an adhesive that would firmly seal the liner, would not disintegrate in the presence of alcohol, and would not impart any flavor to the alcohol. “And to make sure this high level of quality is kept up in the future, our quality team developed a specific inspection protocol with the supplier for the closure,” Rathgeber shares.

Decorative elements reinforce military theme

While the flawlessly-executed canteen-shaped bottle was a perfect vehicle to attract consumers from all branches of the military, Marr shares that it was not the first package to use this concept. “There are existing brands with similar military-centered marketing strategies using packaging intended to represent a canteen,” he says. “Therefore, Regimental Spirits was also interested in unique

.....

decoration elements that set them apart and paid homage to the military.”

Among these is the label, including the choice of material, colors, copy, and imagery. Made from a foil substrate converted by Wright Global Graphics, the wraparound label was designed by Studio One Eleven to be reminiscent of the texture of the canvas straps attached to a canteen, including the stitching.

Describing the label’s graphics, Amy Hawker, Senior Brand Design Director at Studio One Eleven, says the logo, which covers the majority of the front panel, uses bold, strong typography with patriotic stars to link back to each branch of the military, without singling out one over

the other. She adds, “Information about the product is contained in a campaign-streamer shape that is used throughout the military to recognize achievements or events, and in keeping with patriotism, the colors for the two varieties are blue [American] and red [Kentucky Bourbon], like the American flag.”

A fun touch that fits cleverly with the brand’s military theme is a battle map printed on the inside of the label, visible through the beverage, that outlines Regimental Spirits’



Spirits Bottle for Veteran-Owned Whiskey Brand Hits its Target

“battle plan.” Says the company, “The map and symbols illustrate the mission of the RSC to deploy, create a foothold, and establish an affinity for the brand in the Military Exchanges, or Class VI liquor stores, as well as an initial six-state rollout.”

With no element of the whiskey’s packaging overlooked, display cases for Regimental Spirits were modeled to mimic ammo and military equipment crates. According to the company, the cases were designed to be used to create “military-themed stacking displays, with accessories such as camo netting, sandbags, ammo crates, and vintage call-to-action displays, similar to WWII recruiting posters.”

The cases are printed in a standard military equipment-crate color scheme of olive drab green. Copy, in gold and white lettering, chosen to convey a premium feel, includes “Made with Integrity,” “Veteran Owned,” “American Made,” and “Welcome to the Regiment,” along with the RSC logo.

Disruptive design fuels brand’s success

Regimental Spirits Co. launched its whiskey products in March 2020, shortly before the COVID-19 shutdown, in the Navy Exchange and then through Connecticut wholesale liquor distributor Brescome Barton. Following overwhelmingly positive consumer response, in the first two months after the product launched, the Navy expanded distribution of the product from three to nine states, and after just three weeks with Brescome Barton, Regimental Whiskey found its way into 100 retail locations in that state.

DiNoto credits much of the brand’s success to its painstakingly designed packaging. “In the military, we call it ‘attention to detail,’” he says. “Every

nuance needs to be just right, and the package is everything. How the design got to where it is now could not be a better representation of who we are and what we represent. It immediately resonates with our target audience. There are so many different touchpoints, from the bottle shape to the cap to the embossments. The design is quality, premium, unique, and truly disruptive. The incredible consumer feedback and engagement has allowed us to accelerate our growth plans.”

As of presstime, Regimental Spirits was scheduled to launch in New York in January 2021 and was in talks with several distributors in New England, Florida, Texas, and Georgia, as well as with the Coast Guard Exchange and the Army and Air Force Exchange.

Regimental American Whiskey has a suggested retail price of \$24.99, while Regimental Kentucky Bourbon Whiskey has an SRP of \$29. A portion of the company’s proceeds are given to the United States Veteran’s Chamber of Commerce, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that supports transitioning military, veterans, and their families.



Which Trends Will Dominate Packaging Design in 2021?

Equator Design Senior Creative & Strategy Director Howard Wright explains those trends that will harness the groundswell of new product innovation and refocused messaging of 2020.

By Howard Wright

It always happens during the first few months of the year that trend predictions seem to come fast and furious. In truth, trends are constantly emerging and fading, and sometimes—as in the case of COVID-19—we see them accelerate and take on fresh prominence and relevance.

Currently however, a discussion of trends does seem particularly timely. Retailers and producers, and even a fair number of packaging designers, are working hard to pin down the trends that are likely to dominate the coming year.

They will be asking: “Which trends are likely to harness the groundswell of new product innovation and refocused messaging of 2020? Which are likely to help a retailer to lock in and build on the market share they earned as a result of shifting consumer loyalties?”

Following are just a few of the trends likely to deliver those sought-after outcomes for CPG players in 2021:

Sustainability

One of the positive aspects of 2020's locked-down lifestyles and working from home regimes was that it gave people a fresh perspective on how our normal patterns of commuting and travel impact our natural environment.

Climate change and the role of every individual in living more sustainably to make a positive difference has resurfaced as a key political priority and media theme—with many hoping to recover lost ground after the plastics binges (the countless masks, cleaning wipes, and plastic wrappers) seen during the pandemic.

A focus on sustainability can be seen across both national brands and retailers' own branded ranges with renewed energy into removal of avoidable plastics from packaging, such as in greeting cards and fresh fruit and vegetables.

We can expect to see continued rethinking of conventional substrates and a focus on recycled materials and recyclability, such as removing glitter and foils from products—a trend that is really taking hold in the U.K.—and simple changes to packaging elements to ease post-consumer recycling.

We will also see sustainability increasingly used as a differentiator for marketing purposes, such as key callouts about waste reduction and recyclability on-pack, and for sustainable packaging to take center stage in ad campaigns, as sustainable packaging becomes a central element of the product concept and brand development strategy.

Which Trends Will Dominate Packaging Design in 2021?

Materials

Alongside the influence of sustainability on the use of recycled and recyclable materials, we can expect the continuing growth in natural, healthy, and plant-based foods to be reflected in the materials used.

When it comes to luxury packaging for example, the go-to differentiators are changing. Foils, varnishes, and glitter are out. Interesting natural packaging formats and features such as ribbons, string, and swing tags, are in.

Here, the wholesomeness of the product will be reflected in the natural tones and textures of the packaging materials. While we can also expect to see the use of transparent materials to showcase the product and evidence its health benefits, recyclable and reusable packaging will remain a vehicle for delivering added benefit to the product—for example, jars that can be used for home storing and preserving.

With the financial and social impacts of the pandemic driving consumer appetites for a touch of “attainable” luxury, food and beverage packaging can provide a quick hit of indulgence and enable retailers to build differentiation as part of their tiering strategies.

Bold Patterns

Bold patterns will be one of the ways that product, category, and brand managers use to bring the fun back into food, shopping, and (hopefully) sharing in 2021. Appealing to consumers' sense of optimism while creating impact on shelf, geometric patterns will be featured in eye-popping colors and

Which Trends Will Dominate Packaging Design in 2021?

apparently random designs.

We can also expect to see plenty of color-blocking, with a palette that takes inspiration from the most recent raft of tech and automotive launches, and shapes that take their cues from nature, with abstract leaf, mountain, and river contours.

Earthy Palettes

The back-to-nature theme remains dominant, but here we specifically consider color choice. Paint manufacturer Dulux released its color of the year, Brave Ground, and this can best be described as an easy-to-complement pastel walnut.

As biophilia—the idea that humans possess an innate tendency to seek connections with nature and other forms of life—becomes an increasingly important design concept for homes and workplaces, the emphasis on tones inspired by nature will also be visible in our store cupboards and refrigerators. Greens, browns, and greys are all on-trend hues that bring the outdoors to the in-store and home environment and have strong associations with natural ingredients and wholesome recipes.

Modern Serifs

Vintage and nostalgia will bring comfort and a sense of belonging to packaging design in 2021 and modern serifs will play a central role in delivering packs that reference these trends without becoming affectedly quaint reproductions of antiquated design.

Typography will take inspiration from classic labels and packaging design, while updating it with modern serifs that bring clarity and complement both bold

Which Trends Will Dominate Packaging Design in 2021?

patterns and nature-inspired hues. Hand-drawn serifs will enable brands and retailers to bring an authentically original look to their packs that works with the contours of the packaging's shape and visual elements.

Tactile Print Effects

When it comes to print effects, 2021 will be all about depth and texture, creating a tactile connection with the product. 2020's social distancing regimes have resulted in a longing to touch and experience life with all the senses, so we can expect raised print effects, interesting substrates, and lustrous natural finishes to create packs that invite consumers to experience the products with both their eyes and their fingertips. Meanwhile, white-out designs within a solid color and repeating patterns will also create a sense of depth that stimulates the senses.

COVID Trickle-Down Tied to Potential Corrugated Shortage

The pandemic has pushed e-commerce into overdrive, boosting the demand for corrugated shipping boxes while also slowing down recycling efforts and supply chains, creating a potential problem (or a great opportunity) for the corrugated industry.

By Kim Overstreet

Many households have increased online shopping during the last year, boosted by stay-at-home orders and safety concerns related to brick-and-mortar shopping during the pandemic. This push has increased demand for corrugated shipping boxes – up 9% from March 2019 to March 2020, according to the Fibre Box Association, with increased year-over-year gains in June, July, September and October. The holidays expected to see even more e-commerce sales (eMarketer anticipated US retail e-commerce sales would jump 35.8% to \$190.47 billion over the holiday season), and a Smithers report states that the corrugated market will reach \$300 billion by 2023.

On the downside, the pandemic has negatively affected the recycling industry, with organizations such as The Recycling Association and Cepi

warning that interruptions in recycling systems could cause a shortage of raw materials in the supply chain. In a letter to the EPA in June of 2020, the Solid Waste Association of North America (SWANA) laid out factors currently affecting the industry:

- 1) Chinese restrictions on the import of recyclable materials have forced the US to find new markets for recovered materials, often at a reduced value.
- 2) Emergency orders issued for COVID meant that recovered paper from closed schools, offices, and stores, was no longer available.
- 3) An increase in US waste due to more Americans working from home at the beginning of the pandemic caused some local governments to halt recycling collection to ensure all waste was collected, however most have been reinstated at this time.
- 4) Safety changes to recycling facilities, and worker concerns over the virus and PPE access, have caused delays as updates are made to accommodate COVID safety issues.

According to Resource Recycling, “In 2019, recovered fiber exports from the United States experienced their largest year-over-year decline on record,” a 3.1 million ton overall fiber export decrease.

Another pandemic-related issue in the supply chain is the lack of containers to ship recyclable material to countries who will accept it, such as India, or increased freight costs when containers are available. These and other supply chain issues have prompted increased costs for recycled paperboard.

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According to a recent article from the Washington Post, corrugated packaging manufacturers find themselves in a challenging situation – albeit one of growth:

- Georgia-Pacific, one of the world’s largest manufacturers of pulp and paper products, is said to be running its mills at full capacity and buying from smaller producers to keep up.
- International Paper, the nation’s largest forest products company, produced more than 2.7 million short tons of corrugated packaging, up 2 percent year over year.
- According to George Staphos, a senior analyst covering paper and packaging for Bank of America Securities, his research team’s most recent survey of box producers released Dec. 13 states that growth in production was still up — 5.1 percent in November and 4.5 percent mid-December.
- Most of the companies surveyed expect another price hike in the first half of 2021.
- WestRock Company, who produces 1 out of every 5 cardboard boxes in the US, invested \$2 million in an upgrade to its Marietta, Ga.



recycling facility in October. Said Kevin Hudson, WestRock's senior vice president of forestry and recycled fiber, "It's absolutely critical that the investments in single-stream sorting technology continues to occur so that the industry as a whole can match with the change in how recyclable material comes available."

- Amazon has invested \$10 million in the Closed Loop Infrastructure Fund to improve recycling for 3 million homes in the United States. It has also eliminated more than 915,000 tons of packaging material — the equivalent of 1.6 billion shipping boxes – with its best fit AI technology.

So, while the pandemic may be forcing an industry-wide change and bringing challenges along the way, it may also provide an opportunity for growth and improvement. Said the Fibre Box Association, "With an untouchable annual U.S. recovery rate hovering around 90 percent for the past nine years – making it the most recovered packaging material in use today – corrugated is a recycling success story."

5 Emerging Trends in E-commerce Package Design

The rise in e-commerce in 2020 forced brands to rethink their package design to connect with consumers outside the retail environment. Here are five design trends that resulted and advice on how to select the style that's best for your brand.

By Shayne Tilley

While e-commerce was already well established before the pandemic, 2020 certainly prompted wide-scale changes in online shopping behavior that appear permanent. As retailers fought to continue operating after closing their physical stores, we also saw unprecedented e-commerce adoption as both business owners and consumers worked to keep up with this new retail reality.

This was brave new territory for many small businesses that, among many other things, now had to consider how they could continue making meaningful connections with their customers in a socially distanced world. Suddenly, the box in the mail became the only chance for brands to have a physical interaction with buyers—and this has had an interesting effect on packaging design! When looking at the design trends shaping e-commerce

5 Emerging Trends in E-commerce Package Design

packaging this year, there is a clear theme. Thanks to the astronomical rise of online shopping, we've seen an increasing number of brands turning away from plain or stock packaging. Instead, boxes are now looking like works of art in their own right as brands aim to deliver a little piece of their personality straight to customers' doorsteps.

Let's take a look at five of these artful trends shaping packaging right now.

1. Solid, all-over color

Probably one of the most simple but effective trends in e-commerce packaging design right now, this style sees products packaged in single, solid colors.

Unlike other trends, which make use of intricate illustrations or bold typefaces, it's the use of bold, bright, and often unconventional shade choices that draw the buyer in. The correct color choices can both create a specific aesthetic for your products as well as give customers subtle clues about the ingredients.

For example, Los Angeles-based superfood smoothie maker TUSOL Wellness uses a range of shades directly representing the hero ingredient of each of its individual smoothie sachets, making each flavor easily recognizable. The color choices are also paired with a shiny, metallic material, giving each sachet a luxurious look and feel.

While this trend is a lot more understated, it is an incredibly powerful way to ensure products stand out against the competition.

5 Emerging Trends in E-commerce Package Design

2. Hyper-simplistic geometry

Another design trend shaping (literally) the packaging world right now is the use of simple yet striking geometric concepts. Here, designs incorporate straight and neat lines and tight angles paired with distinctive colors to make an unforgettable impression on customers.

While geometric patterns may look plain at first glance, the superpower of this design style is in its abstract simplicity. Instead of straight up showing or telling customers with illustrations or imagery, these clever geometric elements give them hints of what to expect when they open things up. For example, the grid-like design on California's Sincere Cider uses various elements and colors inspired by apples to evoke the crisp, clean flavors to be found within.

3. Product names front and center

It's time to let your product names do the talking with the use of striking typography that makes each word feel like a piece of artwork in itself. Rather than placing a logo, brand name, or illustration center stage, the names of the products themselves

Superfood smoothie maker TUSOL Wellness uses a range of shades directly representing the hero ingredient of each of its individual smoothie sachets.



5 Emerging Trends in E-commerce Package Design

are now the star of the show. Any additional design elements are simply used to make the name stand out.

As this style leaves no doubt as to what the product is called or does, it is the perfect trend for product-focused businesses that are looking to increase brand awareness. Through the use of creative and eye-catching lettering, this design style has the unique ability to give a product a distinctive personality all its own.

Unlike most traditional supplement companies, Minnesota's Crystal Star has leveraged this trend on its simple yet stylish packaging to appeal to customers seeking alternative wellness products. Pairing strong typefaces with clean, bright colors for the product names on its bottle labels, these products can entice older and younger generations alike.

4. Organically shaped color blocking

Undoubtedly one of the most popular design trends right now, this style beautifully merges the shift towards increasingly environmentally conscious consumer sentiment and the overarching art-inspired design trend seen right now in e-commerce.

Color blocking as a concept isn't exactly new. But doing so with softer and more natural colors, shapes and textures? That's very 2021. Rather than clear, straight, lined boxes of color, these are collages of unbalanced, unevenly weighted shapes overlaid with freckles, squiggles, and spirals.

Whether abstract or portraying scenes found in nature, these designs are a welcome breath of fresh air for so many of us who spent the majority of the

5 Emerging Trends in E-commerce Package Design

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past 12 months cooped up inside. A great example can be found with clean skincare brand ORPHEUS, which uses soft organic shapes and colors on its packaging to create the image of a stunning ethereal landscape that is a nod to the Resurrection Flower found in its products.

5. Picture-perfect symmetry

It's not uncommon for the top design trends each year to appear contradictory. In fact, it's almost expected! Not everyone likes the same pizza toppings, so to speak. While some designers and brands are experimenting with imperfect shapes and unusual patterns, we're also seeing packaging that swings in the complete opposite direction by playing with order and balance.

Whether incredibly complex and tight illustrations or looser, more disconnected patterns that leverage negative space, the visually satisfying nature of symmetry elicits a sense of calm, order, and grounding—starkly contrasting the chaos of the last year. A perfect example can be seen on the bold and almost hypnotic symmetrical patterns on the beer cans of Costa Rica's Numu Brewing.

The grid-like design on California's Sincere Cider uses various elements and colors inspired by apples to evoke the crisp, clean flavors to be found within.

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Now it's time to get started!

Whether you're an e-commerce business looking to level up your packaging game this year or a fresh, new brand just starting out, tapping into design trends can be an easy yet effective way to ensure your brand stands out and leaves a lasting impression on customers. But when the design trends all look so incredible, deciding which style is right for your brand can be a bit daunting. In this instance, it can be helpful to ask yourself a series of questions before you start the product packaging design process.

Supplement maker Crystal Star pairs strong typefaces with clean, bright colors for the product names on its bottle labels.

- What is the product? Of course, you need to know how big it is, what shape it is, and what it does to inform the logistical side of things. But by breaking it down even further, you can draw out inspiration for the type of design you're going to use. What ingredients is it made of? Does it have a particular scent or texture? As we saw with the above trends, often the design—whether it's a pattern, illustration, or clever use of colors—is so much more than



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simply an embellishment.

- Who's buying the product? Your packaging should appeal to your ideal customer, so it's important that you know who that customer is before designing your packaging. So next you need to ask yourself, who's your target audience? What do they value and need? Are they old or young? Are they environmentally conscious? Are they on a budget, or do they have a higher disposable income? By homing in on your ideal customer and what's important to them, you can narrow down your design choices to something that's truly going to catch their eye.
- Who are you as a brand? Finally, ensure you know who you are as a brand. It's all very well creating stunning packaging, but if it doesn't mirror your values, purpose, and personality, it's not going to create a seamless brand experience. This doesn't mean you can't experiment with quirky design, but it should fit within the parameters of your overarching brand narrative. Are you playful or serious? Are you luxurious or cost-effective? Energetic or stoic? And most importantly, what do you stand for?

Clean skincare brand ORPHEUS uses soft organic shapes and colors on its packaging to create the image of a stunning ethereal landscape.

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5 Emerging Trends in E-commerce Package Design

The answers to the above questions will help you form a blueprint that will guide every facet of your packaging design—from fronts, logos, copy, and colors right through to the materials and different layers you use.

With many consumers realizing that shopping online is beneficial for their daily lives, there's no doubt that e-commerce looks set to be the norm for many of us. And with the effects this has already had on e-commerce packaging design, it's likely we can expect to see plenty of beautifully designed packages arriving in our homes for the foreseeable future. PW

Shayne Tilley is Head of Marketing for 99designs, the global creative platform by Vistaprint.

Costa Rica's Numu Brewing uses bold, almost hypnotic symmetrical patterns on its beer packaging.



Loop Reusable/Returnable Packaging Platform Launches in Canada with Retail Partner Loblaw

Loop's global expansion continues, bringing waste-free shopping for a range of food and household products, including Loblaw own-brand items, in reusable packaging to Canada

By Anne Marie Mohan

Today, the global reusable packaging platform Loop officially launched in Canada with Loblaw Companies Limited, Canada's leading grocer as its retail partner. Initially rolling out to residents in most of Ontario, customers can shop for a wide variety of food and household products in refillable packaging, such as ice cream, sauces, snacks, pet food, and toothpaste from some of the country's most popular brands, including Loblaw's President's Choice. With the launch, Canada joins the U.S., the U.K., and France as the Loop platform continues to expand around the world.

"The fact is that there's too much plastic waste in our environment. We are part of the problem and must be part of the solution," says Galen Weston, Executive Chairman, Loblaw Companies Limited. "We are actively

Loop Reusable/Returnable Packaging Platform Launches in Canada with Retail Partner Loblaw

reducing plastic waste in hundreds of ways in our business today through better processes, new materials, and packaging design. Loop is one of the most innovative opportunities as we work with them to make it easier for consumers to be part of the solution”

“Loop is designed to be as convenient as the single-use shopping experience while creating a sustainable, circular model for consumption,” says Tom Szaky, founder and CEO of Loop and TerraCycle. “Collaboration is necessary to tackle the waste crisis head on. As Canada’s largest retailer, Loblaw’s operational scale and years of expertise will make Loop accessible to more shoppers and make meaningful progress toward our shared goal of reducing waste.”

Loop consumers shop for products in durable packaging that is reused until the end of its life. When ordering through www.loopstore.ca and maboutiqueloop.ca, consumers pay a deposit on each package that is fully refundable when the package is returned. Packages are shipped using Loop Canada’s exclusive logistics provider, FedEx, which uses route optimization to help ensure efficient customer deliveries. After

Ethical Bean coffee will be coming soon to the Loop platform in Canada.



Loop Reusable/Returnable Packaging Platform Launches in Canada with Retail Partner Loblaw

use, consumers simply place the empty containers back into the Loop Tote, and then return the tote by either scheduling a free pickup online or dropping it off at one of the more than 500 participating FedEx retail locations in Ontario. Loop sorts and professionally cleans the packaging and tote bag to stringent health and safety standards so products can then be replenished as needed, creating a convenient, zero waste shopping system.

Consumers in Ontario who want to order from Loop should visit www.loopstore.ca and maboutiqueloop.ca to shop for products delivered in reusable packaging.

Examples of brands participating in Loop Canada include the following:

Hershey Canada (Coming Soon):

Says Sam Chehabeddine, General Manager, "For more than 125 years, Hershey has been focusing on making more moments of goodness. Now, more than ever before, we are committed to shared goodness in the form of sustainability. As part of this commitment, we continue

**Hershey's Chipits
Chocolate Chips
will be coming to
the Loop Canada
platform soon.**



Loop Reusable/Returnable Packaging Platform Launches in Canada with Retail Partner Loblaw

to listen to our consumers and consider how their preferences are changing towards sustainable packaging alternatives. Our new consumer-first partnership with Loop provides us with an innovative opportunity to help reduce packaging waste, while bringing our beloved baking staple Hershey’s Chipits to families in an eco-friendly and convenient format. We are proud to be working with Loop to make the sweetest kitchen moments for Canadians even more sustainable.”

Kraft Heinz:

“Our iconic Heinz Ketchup glass bottle has always been available in a recyclable glass bottle, but now it’s reusable too, thanks to our partnership with Loop,” says Bruno Keller, President of Kraft Heinz Canada. “We know protecting our planet requires collective action, so we are proud to be taking this practical step to make sustainable options easier for Canadians. The Loop partnership is part of our broader sustainability goal to make 100 percent of our packaging recyclable, reusable, or compostable by 2025.”

**Kraft Heinz’s
Heinz Ketchup**
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Loop Reusable/Returnable Packaging Platform Launches in Canada with Retail Partner Loblaw

Meow Meow Tweet:

Says Meow Meow Tweet co-founder Tara Pelletier, “We are so excited to be a part of Loop’s mission to make zero waste an accessible option to so many people—both brands and consumers. For us, it’s a way to get our deodorant into our customers’ hands without wasting an ounce of packaging. Not a single bit of plastic in sight! In other words, a dream come true.”

Nature’s Path:

“We at Nature’s Path are always working to improve and reduce our packaging footprint,” says Jyoti Stephens, VP Mission and Strategy for Nature’s Path. “We really value the work Loop is doing to reduce global waste, and believe its circular shopping model represents the future of consumer goods. We were honored to be one of the first companies, and the first organic food producer, to join Loop on its journey. As a Canadian company, we are even more thrilled to expand our partnership with Loop as it takes its first step towards reducing waste in this country.”

Nature’s Path
granola



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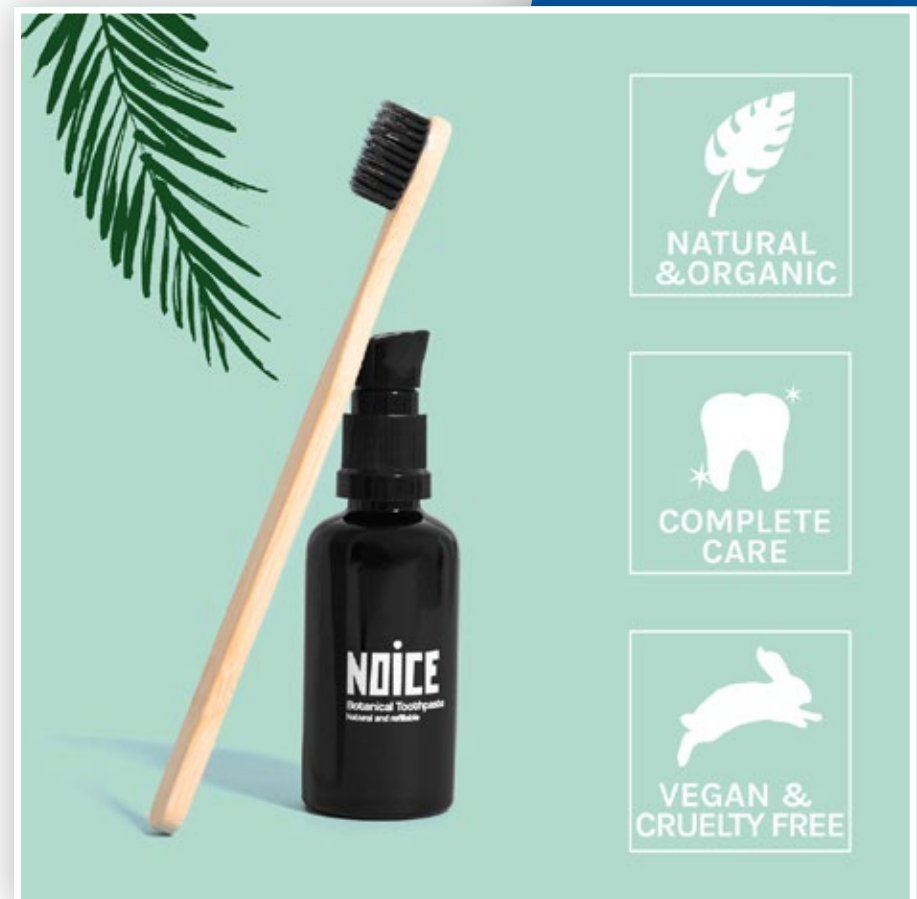
Nestlé Canada:

Says Jayne Payette, Nestlé Canada President Ice Cream Division, “At Nestlé Canada, we are committed to protecting our natural environment, and we have set an ambitious target to ensure than 100% of our packaging is recyclable or reusable by 2025. Our investment and founding partnership with Loop is just one example of how we are exploring innovative solutions and working with other leaders in the sustainability space. We are proud to bring a new way to shop waste-free with the Canadian debut of the Häagen-Dazs reusable container.”

NOICE:

“NOICE team is really excited to be partnering with Loop to enable even more accessibility to our zero-waste NOICE Dental Gel while keeping the experience zero-waste,” says Clement Hochart, CEO North America - NOICE. “We are also thrilled to see the enthusiasm and optimism which Loop is creating in this zero-waste movement by enabling more people shifting to a more conscious lifestyle. Together we can make zero-waste mainstream, let’s do it!”

Noice Botanical Toothpaste



Loop Reusable/Returnable Packaging Platform Launches in Canada with Retail Partner Loblaw

Organic Meadow:

“Loop has done a wonderful job at advancing the zero-waste movement globally,” says Nancy Korva, Senior Vice President, Organic Meadow. “As Canada’s original organic dairy, Organic Meadow’s history is rooted in sustainability, which is why we’re naturally excited to partner with Loop in our united efforts to create a more circular future.”

Organic Meadow
Kefir



10 Packaging Market Trends for 2021

The rigors of 2020 have spurred agile brands and packaging suppliers to quickly adapt. That is likely to prompt increased innovation, further automation, and workforce evolution in the coming year.

By Anne Marie Mohan

PTIS, along with partner Leading Futurists LLC, is known for gathering and synthesizing data from all sectors to form 10-year forecasts for its Future of Packaging program. While many of the projections from its most-recent 2019 study will stay on course, some will probably accelerate as companies find workarounds. Savvy packaging professionals should concentrate on the factors listed here to ensure a successful 2021.

- **Technical disruption:** Emerging technologies will have significant relevance in packaging, says PTIS co-founder and Partner Mike Richmond. He anticipates much greater use of artificial intelligence (AI), the Internet of Packaging (IoP), augmented reality (AR), and virtual reality (VR) in 2021.

- **Focus on productivity:** PTIS Partner Todd Bukowski foresees sharper attention to operational efficiency. To achieve this, many brands will reverse the long-term trend of SKU proliferation. Instead, they will reduce the number of SKUs to decrease the need for equipment changeovers. Many companies will also try to locate production closer to local markets to reduce transportation costs.
- **Growing use of automation:** All the PTIS partners agree that brands will accelerate the automation of their packaging lines. There are many factors driving automation, including labor shortages, manufacturing speed, and worker and food safety. Expect to see increased usage of robotics to handle case packing and kitting.
- **Real-time analytics:** More packaging lines will take advantage of numerous sensors to collect meaningful data that can be displayed in dashboards. Partner Tim Brown says this will allow operators, maintenance crews, and engineers to identify and repair variations more quickly. Brian Wagner, PTIS co-founder and Partner, says companies may not be able to use all that data today but will rely on AI to analyze vast quantities of data to hone productivity.

- **Remote service:** Key to productivity is keeping packaging lines up and running. With the pandemic and quarantine mandates, machine vendors may not be able to provide immediate technical service. Increasingly, service calls will be handled remotely, eliminating costly and time-consuming travel. Service reps will use technology such as smart glasses and AR to diagnose and help on-site personnel remove bottlenecks. These advances might allow multiple remote experts to visualize machinery and suggest repairs.
- **Changes in how we work:** Last year saw more people working from home—a trend that’s unlikely to change in 2021. Many packaging operations employees are considered essential personnel and are required to work on-site. However, managers, designers, engineers, and others may work remotely. These employees will increasingly rely on communications technology to improve collaboration. Automation will also enable activities such as line trials and remote diagnostics.
- **Ongoing sustainability emphasis:** In spite of the economic slowdown, consumer demand will continue to drive efforts to make packaging more sustainable. What might be different in 2021 is an emphasis on reusable packaging. Making packaging more durable for multiple reuses will increase costs. However, it is still questionable whether consumers will accept scuffing and dings on their packaging.

- **EPR coming to the U.S.:** Climate change is a major concern for the country, and packaging waste is seen as a contributing factor. Wagner points out the new administration is committed to new environmental protections, and extended producer responsibility rules are likely. Brands and packaging suppliers are showing increasing acceptance of the concept to promote sustainability. At least five states are likely to impose some type of scheme to extend control of packaging waste costs to producers in the near future, and federal measures are being discussed to ensure consistency across the country.
- **Packaging's role in branding:** Richmond says packaging will play a stronger role in branding. With an emphasis on building a circular economy, consumers expect packaging companies to “do the right thing” in material choices and package design. This will make packaging a key part of a brand's message.
- **Ultraconvenient packaging:** Convenience has been a major driver in the development of new packaging. Look for designers to find new ways to make packaging more convenient and to create a stronger experience for consumers by enhancing their sensory experience. Any developments that enhance ease of use, product freshness, and easy disposal will add appeal in this competitive market. Packaging also must be designed for ease of use across more retail channels—especially in the rapidly expanding e-commerce market.