

# 10 Innovative Packaging Ideas

It was Peter Drucker, the leading business thinker of the 20th century, who said that business has two functions – marketing and innovation. This article is going to merge both these ideas. Packaging is ultimately a marketing function, it is the final marketing message your customers will see before purchasing your product. If you are selling at a retail store your packaging can be a major factor in determining the success of your product.

Today, to break through the clutter of the hundreds of other competing products out there it pays to be different. Look at what your competition is doing, and make sure you have an innovative and unique look. Innovation in packaging will get your product noticed, it will help build your brand, and it will give your product some personality. Whether you like it or not your product is initially going to be judged by your packaging.

So, how do you create innovative packaging? You can pay a packaging design firm thousands of dollars to come up with some ideas or you can create the ideas yourself. Here are ten ideas that will hopefully stimulate some packaging innovations for your own products.

## 1. Create a Reusable Package

The boutique beverage market is mature and extremely competitive, so you might think there are few really new ideas when it comes to packaging. You would be wrong. POM Tea has created something truly different. For a start the product itself is different – it is tea infused with pomegranate juice. But it is the packaging that is remarkable; the drink is packaged in a regular tall drinking glass with a lid and a clear shrink wrap label. It says on the label: Remove the label, keep the glass. In our local Wild Oats it retails for \$2.79, not that expensive for a bottled tea, and you get a free glass. No need to worry about recycling here – you get to reuse the packaging.

## 2. Add a Little Extra to Your Packaging

Sometimes you can have very standard packaging, but stand out from the crowd by just adding a little twist to it. Amy's Kitchen has done just that with their line of pasta sauces. It is a standard size jar with a standard color label that really blends in with all the other pasta sauce offerings. What sets them apart is the paper and gold bow over the lid of the jar. It looks like the way your grandmother would package it, and you can't go down the aisle of pasta sauces without noticing it.

## 3. Make Design the Focus of Your Packaging

Most people think about the product first and the packaging second, but Method Products turned that equation around. They focused on packaging from the very beginning – they wanted to create packaging that was beautiful, that you didn't have to hide in the cupboard. They created a premium line of cleaning products with packaging that you could display in the kitchen or bathroom like a home accessory. Just stroll down the aisles of any Costco or Target and you will see this focus on design really makes Method Products stand out.

## 4. Create Fun Packaging

Fun packaging doesn't just have to be for kids, after all adults like to have fun, too. The bright colors and unusual shapes that dominate kids' products can work in adult products, but usually a more subtle approach is better. One industry that has started to embrace a little more fun in their packaging is the wine industry. Just take a trip to the local liquor store and look at all the fun animals on wine labels these days. We have penguins, kangaroos, frogs, horses, swans and many more critters appearing on wine labels. We may not be ready for a penguin shaped wine bottle, but a colorful penguin label can add an element of fun and really stand out from the more conservative wine labels.

## 5. Let Your True Colors Shine Through

Candle-Lite is the goliath of the candle industry with over 160 years of continuous candle making operations. Their packaging is nothing fancy, just a candle in a clear jar, but the colors they choose are striking. They use bright colors, often with multi-layered candles and they let these colors shine through with simple clear jars. And a simple label on a white background accentuates the colors in the jar. On my local supermarket shelf their candles really stood out from the dozens of other brands.

## **6. Extend Your Labels with Sandwich Printing**

If you are selling a clear liquid in a clear bottle then you have an option available to you that can give you more packaging space for very little extra cost. I am talking about printing on the back of your labels. You can't put regulatory information on the back of your labels, but you can run contests, tell a story about your company, or give ideas about how best to use your product. It is a simple way to give your customers more information and not detract from the presentation of your package.

## **7. Try the Metallic Look**

Most labels are printed on white or clear material, but there are many other options available to you. One look you can consider is using a metallic foil for your labels or packaging. With a good design the metallic look can be very striking when compared to the same design on white, and really isn't that much more expensive.

## **8. Focus Your Packaging on a Specific Target**

The Axe line of products from Unilever has a very specific target audience – young men aged between 18 and 35. So they built their packaging to appeal to that target. The package for the Axe Shower Gel looks like it could just as easily contain motor oil as shower gel. It is a thick molded black plastic container that has a rugged appearance that appeals directly to this demographic. Here is a product that has tailored not just the contents but also the packaging to their specific target market.

## **9. Merge Two Packaging Concepts**

Another very competitive industry is the beer business, with the big players there always looking for an edge on their competitors. Last year Anheuser Busch came out with a completely new concept in packaging that ended up winning several packaging awards. The concept was so simple it is amazing no one had done it before. We all know beer comes in glass bottles and aluminum cans. What Anheuser Busch decided to do was just combine these two concepts and they came up with the aluminum bottle. It was different, it looked classy and eye-catching, and it was 100% recyclable.

## **10. Look to Nature for Inspiration**

Nature has some amazing examples of "innovative packaging." Consider the banana, the pea-pod, the kangaroo pouch, the pine cone – these are all examples of nature creating efficient packaging. Nature's packaging is usually elegant and beautiful as well as efficient. There are shapes, colors and even packaging concepts that you can borrow from nature's example. So next time you go for a walk in the woods, take a look around you and marvel at the innovative packaging created by nature.

The idea for this article is really to get you to think more about your packaging. Take one or two of these ideas and think about how they can be adapted to your product. If you focus on your packaging and create something that is unique to your company you will be more successful. Remember, your packaging not only has to contain your product, it is your final marketing message to your customers. Look at what your competition is doing and make sure you deliver a strong message with your packaging.