

The design manual

arts

The modern designer's guide to everything

10 high-impact ways to...

Create eye-catching packaging

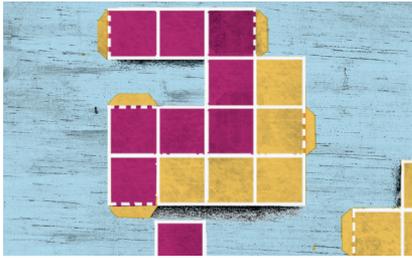
INDUSTRY SKILLS

Vital know-how for your daily design work



1 Learn the lingo

It's worth keeping an eye on what your competitors are doing. Yes, it's important to stand apart, but you also need to respect the accepted 'language' used on packaging to help you describe products in a way that consumers are already familiar with. Shopping from so many choices is mentally taxing, so make it as easy as you can on consumers' eyes. *Continued >*



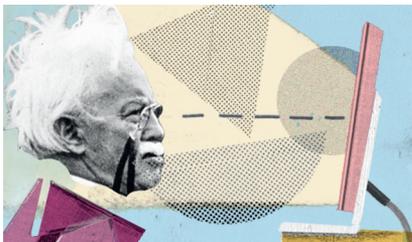
2 Get in shape

Unusual shapes are challenging, especially for small budgets. They can add a lot of time to the design process, and require trial and error to design. But, done well, they can be an enormous asset – for beauty and speciality products in particular. Too creative a format may prevent packaging from being stacked effectively on store shelves, though, which can kill a brand's chance to increase sales.



3 Look past the shelf

Consider how a package will be used in the consumer's home. For example, check that it isn't too hard to open. Similarly, if it's something that won't be eaten or consumed immediately, make sure it isn't completely destroyed when opened so that it can be reused. Think of how the consumer is likely to use the product and how fast they might consume it.



4 Think outside of the box

For inspiration, try Designspiration (www.designspiration.net), or look at Mr Cup (www.mr-cup.com), The Dieline (www.thedieline.com) or For Print Only (www.underconsideration.com/fpo). Look at your own environment for materials that aren't normally used for packaging: for example, velvet on a wine bottle. How about doing something interesting and unconventional by using Styrofoam, rubber bands, wood veneer or elastane?



5 Make it personal

As a rule of thumb, anything that looks hand-applied, written or tied will make packaging appear more expensive – although faking it is taking two steps backwards. Unusual materials also help, but make sure you can afford them and that the extra cost is worth pursuing.

All illustrations by
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www.arthurchiverton.com



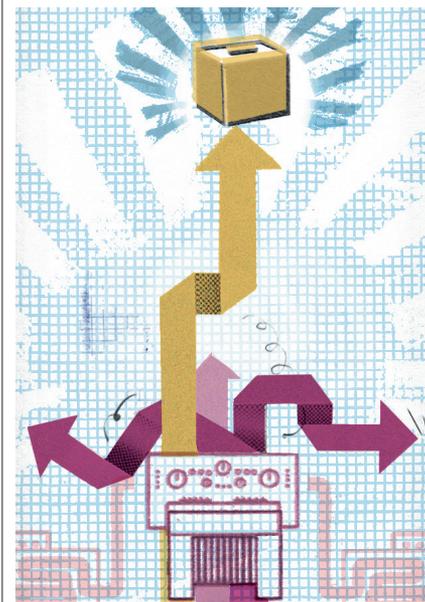
6 Design for Mother Nature

Sustainable materials are good for the environment, good for consumer perception of the necessary evil of packaging and a worthy goal for any packaging designer. Designers are at the forefront of making the greatest positive impact on packaging decisions and your idea could potentially be replicated thousands of times over – so design some sustainability into your work.



7 Add a few special touches

Have a wide range of suppliers that you can work with for special finishes. Embossing can be done by most printers. Hot foil stamping can add a great deal, even – or especially – when used sparingly. A real wax seal is lovely, but a simple letterpress seal in one colour can add a sense of luxury, like that on an expensive port or box of cigars.



8 Embrace colour

Pantone colours can add the extra 'pop' that your design needs without adding too much to the cost. If you have a certain number of plates available to you for printing a job, it may be beneficial to use a spot colour among those plates. The more risky you are in that colour choice, the more value you can derive from the spot colour.



9 Treat type well

Try to use high-quality fonts. Purchasing good fonts is a worthwhile investment, and make sure licence rights are available for commercial use if you're taking advantage of 'free' ones. It's okay to use the same fonts on different projects, but don't become reliant on your three favourites – it will make your portfolio too samey.



10 Use images imaginatively

Illustration lends an air of 'gourmet' or 'speciality', while photography is a lot easier to pull off successfully, so has been rather overused. However, doing unusual things with predictable techniques can yield great results: look out for social media-driven images on packaging becoming more common with the advent of higher-quality amateur photography on Instagram and Pinterest.

The designer's view Packaging that sells

Yael Miller, lead creative and designer at Miller Creative, shares her expertise on designing packaging that flies off the shelves



Yael Miller is a partner at New Jersey-based agency Miller Creative, a studio of branding and packaging designers who specialise in gourmet food, confectionery, and health and beauty products. When she's not perfecting work for her international list of clients, Miller also acts as a contributing editor at packaging design blog [The Dieline](http://TheDieline.com). www.wearemillerc.com

Computer Arts: What are the essential things to find out from your client before starting to design packaging?

Yael Miller: We ask a range of standard, demographic-themed questions, plus questions about the marketplace and some less obvious things like whether the product is going to be packaged by hand or in a co-packing facility. This helps us establish how we'll recommend packing the products. We also like to get some insight into the client's tastes, such as other brands they like. Why shouldn't the client love the look of the packaging?

CA: Is it useful to question your own and others' assumptions about the product?

YM: This can be useful, but a healthy dose of common sense is your best bet. Breaking a mould can sometimes lead to exciting results, but this is a potent weapon that should be wielded very

sparingly and with much strategic insight. An example is the branding we did for Olli Salumeria, a maker of artisan salami and cured meats. Based on our research, we learned that the market category for cured meats was very classic – read: boring – and stood to benefit from some disruption.

We put Olli in this position by providing it with a vibrant, fresh colour palette that was a complete departure from the staid Italian palette of golds, reds and greens dominating the market. We also needed to convey a very authentic and premium product, and achieved this with quality printing and a quality finish on the labels, but, more importantly, we had an artist create four beautiful illuminated 'O's for the logo. We also designed it to work in a dark, non-vibrant deli environment.

CA: How can designers show creativity if they have to design packaging within narrower brand guidelines, or to fit in with existing products?

YM: The most successful designs are those that respect the core brand by being as consistent as possible with the underlying brand 'message'. When trying to break free of this, brands – especially big established brands aiming to increase market share by appealing to a different segment – can easily lose sight of this.

CA: How important is the quantity of products being packaged in influencing the choice of materials?

YM: Quantity has an impact on the choices available to you. Higher quantities allow for some custom options in materials and structural design, while lower quantities sometimes offer the benefit of affording some special handmade touches. For example, lifestyle brand Are You produces luxury soy candles in tiny quantities and needed to differentiate the fragrance on the label, so we had the labels letterpress-printed, with an area to over-stamp the fragrance. The client stamped them with different coloured rubber stamps, for a lovely handcrafted touch.