

Pouch Packaging Design Trends & Technologies

In marketplace today a “good package design” must differentiate from the masses on the retail shelf, stimulate sales volume of flat or mature product growth categories and leave the consumer with a positive “use” experience. It has been said that “the package is the silent salesperson” sitting next to the competition and it must not only get the busy consumers attention, but shout



“buy me”! To be successful in the market today you must not only achieve this sort of reaction with your package design, but the package must also function well and provide a positive, memorable experience for the consumer.

Flexible Packaging is the new package format offering many of these benefits and many more. Financial benefits to the packager also include opportunities of material cost reduction as compared to some other more traditional methods, particularly in regards to rigid packaging. The logistical advantage of flexible packaging is also beginning to get attention as the cost of transportation has had a dramatic impact on total per package cost due to raising fuel charges, particularly when compared to more traditional methods of packaging including bottles, can, jars, composite or spiral cans.

Your new flexible package design must also be “achievable” in the reality of the production, distribution and in the retailing environment. When these challenging objectives can all be met the package designer and marketer has achieved “magic”.

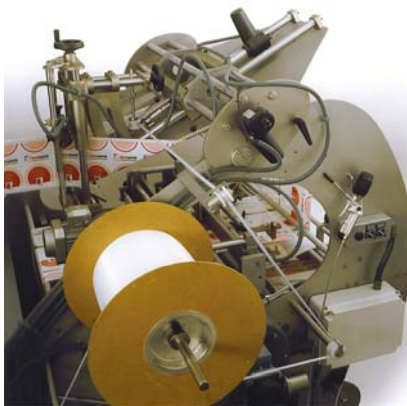
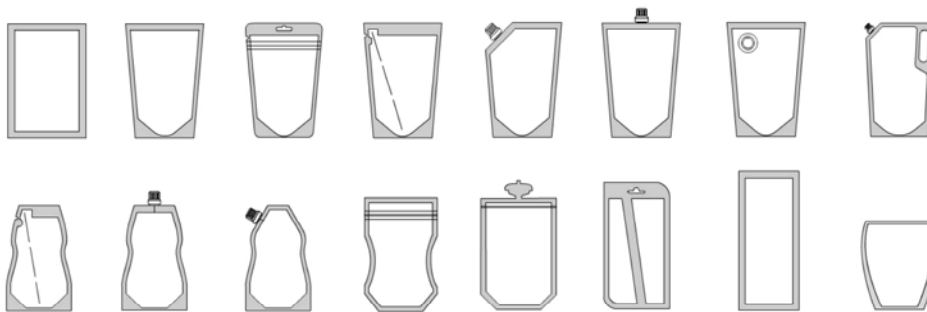
The days of following the leader are over. Today’s package designers and entrepreneurial marketers are breaking from tradition and designing packaging for a “new consumer”. The consumer of today lives in a



fast paced world that is dramatically different from even a decade ago. We are all “on the go” looking toward the future and products and packages that accommodate us and our lifestyles are gaining acceptance.

Exciting visual and functional features are being integrated in today’s exciting pouch packaging designs to add consumer convenience, build new brand identity and address the specific “product ► package ► consumer occasion of use” formula.

Today there are a multitude of flexible package formats and packaging machinery technology options available to the packager. These options include the ability to utilize pre-made pouches which can be filled and sealed or the preference may be to install machinery which can produce the flexible package on-line from pre-printed rollstock.



Form, fill and seal is typically the lower cost “per package” approach, however the capital investment and operator skill will be greater than “Fill - Seal”. A variety of factors will determine the best route to choose including capital budget, core competency



or skill level of personnel, production volume, fill volumes and frequency of package size changeovers.

RECLOSABILITY



Freshness of the product, as well as improved dispensing of the product may be enhanced after opening with the addition of a “press to close” zipper, “slider” zipper or spout. The ability to add convenience and functionality to the pouch or bag style package is having a dramatic impact on flexible packaging design today. Consumer’s appreciate the convenience and are exhibiting this appreciation through repeat sales and increased brand loyalty. Many new and improved recloseability features are continuing to add to a multitude of “design possibilities”.

SPOUT & FITMENTS



Handled as a pre-made – pre-spouted pouch and filled & capped or produced on - line as part of the form, fill and seal process the addition of spouts provides the designer and marketer the opportunity to custom create a “solution specific” approach to dispensing a liquid or semi-viscous product from a flexible pouch package. The flexible characteristics of the pouch may also be used to “squeeze dispense” a product. The spout is a familiar package feature to the consumer, as a result, they are showing a willingness to try this package innovation, which as we know is half the challenge of any new product – package introduction.



We are beginning to see the emergence of beverages, condiments, health and beauty care and a multitude of other products. Designers and marketers are incorporating spouts as part of the design and functionality elements of their packaging to appeal to a broad cross section of consumers. Spouts are available in many different styles and configurations, along with



closure designs that can also offer tamper evidence and child resistance.

FLEXIBLE PACKAGING SHAPES



The technology to create “shape” into a flexible package design through the utilization of die cutting can now add character, personality and improved functionality to the package. Die-cutting may be done at converting level through the supply of pre-made pouches or performed on - line as an integral



part of the form, fill and seal process. Package shape in conjunction with the use of colorful graphics, custom designed barrier properties and presented in a myriad of sizes all add to the creative possibilities.

RETORT - SHELF STABLE

Many companies are beginning to look to “retort” pouch technology as a way to re-invent their products that have been traditionally marketed in a metal can or other form of rigid packaging. Shelf stable convenience products including cooked rice, sauces, seafood, meats and specialty prepared meals are showing up on the retail shelf. Mainly being driven by convenience, these new product introductions are being targeted to the busy consumer or family that just does not have the time to prepare a traditional meal. Pouches can be supplied in either foil or clear laminations. The

non foil varieties are particularly suitable for microwave preparation. After product filling the sealed pouches are typically batch retorted which is a thermal process that sterilizes the product and package enabling the package to be shelf stable, similarly to a traditional metal can or glass jar. Due to the flexible pouch being thinner and a



better heat conductor, process time is shorter and processing temperature lower, both leading to better tasting products. Tear notches and laser scoring offers safe and easy opening convenience to the retort pouch. Hanger holes may be punched in the header of the pouch for in store displays, creating exciting point of purchase options for the creative designer or retail merchandiser.

STICK-PACKS



Have you noticed that there is a new “slender” pouch format beginning to make dramatic inroads in the North American market? That new package is the exciting Stick Pack format which is being adopted by both small and large Consumer Product Companies as one more packaging innovation tool to provide convenience and better position new value added product introductions.

One of the most innovative Stick-Pack applications, that is literally “shaking up” the beverage industry has been the introduction of single serve powdered beverage concentrates. These products are being positioned as convenient “grab n’ go” packs that can transform any bottle of water into many of your favorite flavored drinks. The perfectly measured product is simply added to any 16-20 oz. bottle of water and like magic you have a refreshing convenient custom prepared beverage of your choice, anywhere, anytime.

The slender profile of the package and its easy open tear “notch” enables ease of dispensing the powder into the narrow neck of the bottle opening. These products are marketed to busy consumers who are infatuated with their water bottle, like everyone! This category is poised to explode as bottled water already represents one of the most popular beverage choices, 2nd in popularity only to carbonated beverages. Now that we can customize our water, any time, any place the possibilities are endless.

The packaging machinery technology is centered around a multi-lane VFFS platform with 4-20 lanes producing hundreds of Stick Packs per minute from a single roll of pre-printed rollstock. Material is slit into multiple lanes in registration, formed, filled and sealed. Packaging substrates include basic paper / poly, paper / poly / foil / poly, in addition to more complex barrier laminations. Fillers include volumetric cups, multi-head servo augers or pumping systems depending on specific product handling characteristics.



RESOURCES

Many Contract Packagers have stepped up and invested in new flexible machinery and systems that can offer you the opportunity to try one or more of these new flexible packaging formats through an initial test market, customer offering and then once successful, a national roll-out. The key is to “get started” and take one step at a time as you transition forward.



Your material supplier, converter or machinery supplier can also educate you and your company on “what’s new in flexible”. Just ask and before you know it you and your company will be off and running with a new innovative flexible packaging solution of your own.

We are sure to continue to see to broad spectrum of flexible packaging formats being introduced into the market. These new packages will penetrate a multitude of markets and product applications. The degree of continued growth will be determined by consumer acceptance, marketability and the ultimate cost of the implementation of the technology. This being said the future looks bright indeed.



The upcoming Pack Expo 2006, October 29 - November 2 offers the unique opportunity for all to experience first hand the global packaging machinery innovations and packaging developments available that will continue to set the tone for the coming decade. Hope to see you in Chicago!

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