



As retail evolves, packaging becomes a brand's best advocate.

Bill Hodges of Boutwell Owens challenges our assumptions about today's retail environment.

Everybody talks about the unboxing experience as it were the last word on consumer engagement. But there is more at play when we look at the entire landscape of modern day retail. There is in-store vs. online, legacy vs. challenger, omni-channel vs. multi-channel, and the biggest fear of all — commoditization. These are just some of the trends that impact how we now do business. With all the change going on, though, it's easy to lose focus on what we, as packagers, need to deliver...the giddy moment when the shopper opens the box and feels that special delight. You can package that feeling, but there's more to it than that.

Packaging meets the future — what started with Jobs evolves to AI.

Who set the standard that every brand owner wants to emulate? Two people come to mind, Steve Jobs and his designer, Jony Ive. These innovators set out to create a sensory experience for the Apple brand, starting with the packaging. In a media environment of blinking ads and shouting videos, this team offered an image of cool, subtle minimalism, underscored by the quiet "whoosh" you hear each time you open an Apple box. This experience elevated Apple products to the zenith of quality. How else could they charge such a premium price? In short, products you never knew you needed, delivered in the most artistic packaging, resulted in market dominance.

Others have had to rethink their "unboxing experience." Many DIY brands are taking the next step in consumer engagement. The idea was great—stylish home decorating at an affordable price and available to the masses. Just shop, ship and assemble. Easy right? Not so fast. How many have spent up to 9 hours trying to put together a bed or shelving, following an almost indecipherable instruction booklet, just to give up in frustration? Home decor brands have learned a lesson. Today, embedded QR codes enable consumers to open a how-to video just by pointing their smart phone at the package.

Boutwell Owens is one of the premier, independent North American designers and manufacturers of printed paperboard packaging solutions. As VP of sales and marketing, Bill Hodges is a leading voice on the evolution of packaging as a marketing channel.



Brand owners need to have an omni-channel strategy – not just for marketing – but to support the brand experience all the way from "I like it" to "I got it and assembled it without a hitch." That's how you maintain customer loyalty.

Putting a whole new spin on a legacy product

I recently bought a box of candy that I thought a child might like. Mars is a well-known brand that's been around since I was young. But now they're doing something with packaging that really engages

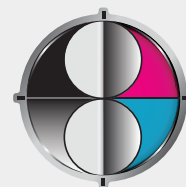
the consumer. The package turns into a tabletop game board where kids can play air hockey with the candy as puck and a couple of straws. What better way to appeal to a whole new generation? It's kind of like when you discover that your kid loves Earth, Wind & Fire and doesn't even know how long they've been around! That's the power of deliberate design thinking.

The importance of staying grounded

As most packaging ultimately ends up in a landfill, creating a secondary use can be a game changer. This is especially true for Millennials who demand that their brands take a responsible approach. In fact, there are a slew of brands today that are using eco-friendly, plantable packaging. Wildflower seeds are part of the inner coating so, as the package biodegrades in the ground, the earth is nurtured.

The whole is greater than the sum of the parts.

Packaging should engage multiple sensory centers in consumers as they interact with the product. Some of the ways package designers can contribute to this is through the use of tactile coatings such as: embossing, lenticular, holographic, olfactory, motion coat and, of course, color. As I mentioned earlier, embedded QR codes open a whole world of content possibilities just by pointing a smart phone at the packaging — something that wasn't possible only 5 years ago. Think about it; you buy a package of Fruit Loops, scan with your phone and presto, your child is now in the club. The best brand strategies leverage all of these new tools and integrate them like a symphony, so that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.



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