

COSMETICS AND TOILETRIES - 2000 AND BEYOND
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Conference introduction

Welcome to this, the first conference by Soap, Perfumery and Cosmetics, which aims to look at the inter-relationships necessary to deliver successful brands for the next millennium.

I was delighted to be invited to chair this conference, because I am very good at sitting down and extremely proficient at telling the time, which are the main requirements for running a conference.

[Slide G25] It also takes little effort to sit back and enjoy the wealth of experience that is going to pass before your very eyes over the next two days.

It therefore came as a bit of a shock, when they asked me to speak for 30 minutes. It is not that I am new to the art of speaking at conferences, for I have spoken at conferences all over the world. What is worrying, is the knowledge that I have never addressed marketing people before in such large numbers - since, I normally speak on matters technical.

[Slide G7] So my theme today will be the interaction between people and I hope that in the next half an hour I will be able to set the scene for this conference to begin.

There are a number of players involved in the scenario leading to a new product development and eventual launch, namely marketing, technical (R&D), packaging, production, and financial.

I will now take you through the various perceptions of the different departments and their descriptions.

Marketing

[Slide G1] I will start with marketing. To the humble chemist, the marketer is a privileged individual. They inevitably have an office with at least one exotic pot plant installed, a very nice company car, and frequent shopping trips to exotic places. They talk incessantly about SKUs, RSPs, USPs and margins, and generally they come from a different planet to the technical team. Over the years we technical people have learnt this jargon and so the marketing department is continually trying to come up with new acronyms to keep us technical folk confused. I was surprised when one marketing girl asked me leave the BOM in her Director's office, though tempted, I took the trouble to find out that a BOM was in fact a Bill of Materials.

[Slide T39] Marketing generally smell very nice and if the Marketing Director buys a newly launched perfume, then everyone (down to the marketing secretary) tends to

wear it, which can be a little overpowering, even in the generous expanse of a marketing office.

[Slide T41] Marketing invitations are welcome around about 10.00 a.m. or 3.00 p.m., because this is the time when the Marketing secretary puts the kettle on. The air is filled with the aroma of Carte Noire (*un café nommé desire*), the best china is on the table and the tin of chocolate biscuits comes out.

New product briefs are inevitably accompanied by a large board, which consists of bits of magazines stuck on to it. Pictures of people, products and pieces of pot pourri pasted painstakingly onto a large collage. Emotive words in Gothic script, Italic, Times New Roman, Arial and Ventura stare out of you from a jungle of seemingly unrelated images. Fellow marketing colleagues immediately associate with the creation and know exactly what the desired product must convey. The poor old chemist sits with mouth ajar, his brain unable to make any connection between this cluttered jumble and the intended product.

The brief is always for a totally innovative product that costs less than the existing offering made by your company, out-performs it in every attribute, and can be ready for production in two weeks. The claims that have been pencilled in for this product would have your company in trouble with the Trading Standards Office, the Medicines Control Agency and the Advertising Standards Authority.

By and large, marketing do not like writing pack copy, which is a shame, because a scientist can gain a great deal of information from this type of information. Words like Cleansing Cream can conjure up a whole raft of useful information on formula composition and viscosity. A product called Super Moisture Boost or Revitalising Skin Miracle is generally less informative.

Technical

[Slide G10] But what do marketing think of technical people. Technical people are generally a bit dirty, they are always covered in muck, in fact, they are so dirty that they have to wear white coats to keep them clean. Their laboratory, which is such a pain to visit, because you have to wear a hair net and white coat, and take all your jewellery off, looks like a bad day in Fanny Craddock's kitchen.

[Slide G4] When important visitors come, you have to tell them to put away all of their experiments, because it looks such a mess. There is no doubt that technical people do not speak English, they have their own language, which they use when the marketing questions get too difficult for them to answer clearly. They have a great number of very long unpronounceable words, which they are very adept at saying at very high speed, and when translated into English tell you "we screwed up the basic formula".

They have a standard list of responses to explain why the development is out of schedule with the critical path. It has failed stability, you only allowed two weeks instead of twelve for the tests to be completed on the critical path, it failed micro', marketing changed the brief, marketing changed the perfume, marketing changed the colour, marketing moved the goal posts, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera.

Technical people are obsessed with paperwork, they always want everything written down, which explains why they are always surrounded by a great mountain of lever arch files, manila folders and filing cabinets. They drone on incessantly about the 6th Amendment, PIPs (Product Information Packages), claim substantiation data, and specifications. They have computers on every work surface, usually with childish screen savers, which are continually "crashing" or "going down" - this means that they cannot tell you anything until the computers are repaired by IT and are up and running again.

[Slide G8] This is a computer man

Never have coffee with a technical person. They have to take their refreshment breaks in the canteen, because they are not allowed to eat or drink in the laboratory. This inevitably means dressing up in the protective overalls and spoiling a good coiffure with a hair net, but far worse, it means drinking some brown beverage dispensed from a vending machine that could be made of anything. It certainly is not coffee darling, and biscuits are not on the menu!

Packaging

[Slide G9] I feel a bit sorry for the packaging team, because no one really likes them or bothers to try and understand them. They wander about with callipers and vernier gauges, and whenever you visit them, they are always in the middle of measuring something. They also leave bottles filled with brightly coloured dyestuff lying around in every conceivable corner (most often in the marketing kitchenette) and usually standing upside down so they inevitably leak over the carefully prepared marketing sandwiches.

They have an uncanny knack of selecting bottles with ill-fitting caps that leak like sieves, made of a plastic that is about as much use as a chocolate teapot. It deforms under its own weight, because the walls are so thin, it is attacked by every product that you put in it (apart from water), and has flow lines reminiscent of the map of the Ganges delta.

They choose neck diameters that are so narrow, that the product has to be filled with a hypodermic syringe, and choose adhesives so strong that a label is permanently bonded to anything that it comes into contact with - for example, filling equipment, labelling machines, and personnel. The only thing that the label does not adhere to is the bottle.

They too have a stock of common excuses, which range from - you cannot buy a bottle of this quality for 3p a unit, you will have to originate a new tool, the minimum run is 50,000 units, they come from Italy (and nobody in their company speaks English) and so on.

They usually reside in a "protective clothing free" zone, so can be visited in relative comfort. However, despite having their own kettle, they tend to buy coffee like Maxwell House or Tesco own label, which is not much better than the canteen. One has to take one's own cup, because they tend to drink out of free mugs supplied by the

packaging suppliers. The packaging people seem to think that these vessels are self-cleaning, since the inner surface often resembles the inside of a British Rail toilet.

Financial

[Slide G11] The financial team are basically very easy to deal with, like all accountants they have their heads buried in spreadsheets most of the time and account for the largest expenditure of any department when it comes to paper consumption. They are always pleading that the company is doing badly and needs to economise, they always assume that nobody reads the papers and so does not know that the company in fact had just published record profits.

All they are interested in are profit and loss accounts, budgets, margins, and expenditure. The product, the development teams, the factory and the equipment it contains are all a source of overheads and expenditure, so we would be better off if we got rid of all of them. The ideal situation is to send out the invoices, but not to produce or send out any products.

All trips are seen as a waste of money, be it a conference or a comparative shopping expedition. They do not go anywhere, and since they do not see anybody from outside of the accounts department they do not understand why anybody else should step one foot outside of the factory, which as they keep telling us costs a lot of money to heat and furnish.

A great deal of time is spent each year forecasting how much money you will spend next year. The usual rule of thumb is to budget for a sum between five and ten times what you really require, in the certain knowledge that you will be beaten down to what you really wanted in the first place. Be prepared to be less than truthful in your project justifications.

This department is also worth a visit at coffee time, because they purchase a reasonable quality, and have excellent biscuits, but be careful not to have it deducted off your refreshment budget. Sign nothing!

Production

[Slide G5] Production can be dismissed with great rapidity. They have the latest equipment, the largest budget, the greatest number of personnel, and do not like any of us. They cannot fill anything that is thicker than water, goes in a container that has an orifice smaller than about 2 inches. Wrap round labels don't wrap round, caps don't cap securely, standard bottles are never standard, shrink-wrap either shrinks too much or not enough. Cartons are always 1 mm too small for the machine to handle, 250 ml bottles always manage to contain 248 ml (the rest is aeration), and their indelible ink code always rubs off.

Despite the fact that R&D can make 1 kg of a product time and again with no problems, they are totally unable to reproduce the same product when they make 10 tons of it, which everyone finds surprising.

A product which has been made regularly for the past five years suddenly becomes a marketing and R&D problem, because it is not flexible enough to cope with a new manufacturing employee weighing out the wrong material into the batch.

Never take any tea or coffee with this department, because without manufacturing instructions they will not know how to make it. Always decline the offer of a biscuit, because they have a weird sense of humour and (trust me) chewing through a filter pad can be extremely arduous.

Suppliers

[Slide G39] It would not be fair to leave out the raw material and packaging suppliers. We all know that they are highwaymen, who have no interest in our developments apart from making a huge and unrealistic profit. They are useful for a free lunch out and in the old days used to supply all the Christmas presents for you to pass on to loved ones and relatives. Grandma was always delighted with the diary and desk set, and today, Mother has one of the most interesting collections of promotional paperweights in the country.

Consultants

[Slide T28] It would be unfair of me not to mention consultants, since I am one. Consultants have a wonderful life of ease and luxury. They start work when the sun comes out, work in the garden when it is too hot to be inside. In the winter, they work in front of a glorious roaring fire with their laptop perched on their knee.

Never visit a consultant, they are worse than troglodytes, and often desperate for conversation, because they rarely see anybody during the day. They will talk to you for hours given the chance and then invoice you for the pleasure of your company.

Coffee at a consultant's premises (often their home) is frequently the best, because they need to take it strong to keep them awake. Be prepared for espresso and a little brandy taken for medicinal reasons. There is always a very good selection of biscuits and often cake provided, since Consultants are eager to keep your business.

If you believed any of this for more than one minute, then you are definitely on something stronger than Benson & Hedges.

Interactions between teams

So how do all these personal interactions work in practice?

This is the story of a typical development, though I may be guilty of guilding the lily along the way, but Christmas is coming....that is, unless our marketing department have postponed it this year.

Let us look at the development of a gift pack. The name itself is not without problems. It may also be called a coffret, or a composite pack, or in the case of an unacceptable design - it is sometimes referred to as a disaster.

Basically, it works like this.....

Marketing choose a "composition" of products that can be sold together as an attractive variety of toiletries. They usually select as wide a variety of shapes as possible, so that even the winner of the Crypton factor would have problems in arranging them into a configuration that would look attractive.

Just to make life more interesting they add what we call the "nobble factor", this might be the incorporation of a Spanish Terracotta wall planter weighing a kilogram with two fragile bath cubes, a sachet of pot pourri, a sweet little Father Christmas blown out of the finest and most delicate Venetian glass, attached to a bottle of foam bath.

It makes Mission Impossible look like a piece of cake.

So let us look inside the heads of all the team members as we move into the product development cycle.

The Marketing perception looks like this.....

[Slide of red box]

To the art studio it looks like this

[Cartoon of carton with roses]

The Customer has a vision that looks like this....

[Slide of white box with red ribbon]

The Packaging Technologist visualises.....

[Slide of white box]

The Production Manager sees the design as.....

[Slide of another white box]

The Accountant has a very novel view....

[Slide of a paper bag with a bow on it]

To the consultant, well for him any commission is like Christmas

[Slide of Father Christmas]

To the Technical man it is not so picturesque.....

[Slide of complaints letters]

Yes, it is certainly reassuring to see the whole team moving forward as one body, intent on achieving a successful launch. We can then begin the task of briefing the packaging suppliers, and I cannot tell you what a blessing it is, that all we have the same mental picture of the final package.

Conclusion

Most of the scenarios that I have described come from a rich history spanning over quarter of a century in this industry. There are no simple solutions to any product that we develop, we need each other, we need to **know** each other and to experience and understand the problems that each team has to experience. There is no finer industry, when it comes to the art of communication. Each player brings his or her own expertise, without which a new product would never be possible. We are all different, we are all different both in our approaches and in our philosophies. It is the marriage of all of us that makes the launch a success. Though I have taken a frivolous and light-hearted view (I might even have exaggerated things a little), this conference programme will provide an insight into the very elements that I have mentioned albeit very briefly. I hope that you (like me) will enjoy the next two days and participate by joining in with questions and discussions.

And so on to our first speaker.....