**Branding and Marketing**

Appealing to the broadest demographic through brilliant design and excellent functionality is what will achieve sales and increase profits, or is it?

So how do you galvanise consumers to purchase your product over the competitions?

Bringing your Designers and Marketers together early on in the Design Cycle will engender a coherent approach to your brands message and how your product is successfully marketed to the consumer.

**Identifying Your Target Audience.**

Regardless of market, in order to see growth in your business you’ve got to figure out who you are targeting with your products. Many of us may believe that our product is for everyone, but trying to get your product in front of everyone is going to be both painful and expensive. What you want to do is figure out who you are specifically targeting, figure out that niche and put your efforts into understanding them. Finding out more about them will help your effectiveness and eventually help your reach because once you know who you’re selling to, you’ll better know how to design for them.

**Know Your Competition**

Identifying early on in the Design Cycle who your competitors are is vital and reviewing their products and understanding why they have succeeded or failed will provide you with essential information and a strong indication of what the current market is looking for in a product. Undertaking your own research is free and the information you source can be implemented in your design thus improving the chances of your product being well received on launch.

Identifying competitor products that convey the brand image you aspire too is also beneficial in helping you to carve out your own products identity.

At this stage having a good look at key elements, such as colour schemes, material combinations, styling and overall feel of the product will help you push your own design further forward.

**Know Your USP**

Working on the basis that your new product should have a Unique Selling Point (USP), something that would differentiate your product from the competition, then it is imperative that the consumer is aware of this, and it is something you need to promote and display at Point of Sale (POS) so that the consumer chooses your product over your competitors.

If it uses fresh ingredients, then say it, promote it! If your product has innovative features or the latest in technology convey it clearly to your target audience. Use any marketing material and packaging to its optimum in the promotion of your product. Once the product is established your USP will become synonymous with your brand.

**Market Trends**

Your product may be well engineered and visually attractive and that’s a strong combination, however technology and consumer expectations are not going to strand still whilst you bring your product to market. Catching the wave of an emerging trend is vital to ensure your product sells. Throughout the design and development cycle you need to keep one eye on your product and the other eye on your market. Your product cannot be out of date before it hits the stores.

Once launched most brands have a continual product development cycle, tweaking their products every 6‐12 months to keep up with consumer expectations, so every effort must be made to identify these emerging trends and changing consumer expectation. Using focus groups made up of your target audience and gathering feedback and input on your product early can be extremely beneficial and reduce the chances of launching ‘last season’s’ next big thing!

**Make It Aspirational**

Marketing gurus have long sold the virtues of marketing products that people aspire to own because huge premiums can be attached to them, in turn generating more profit.

This is where branding comes into its own, where all the factors such as product, packaging and the marketing material needed, come together to generate a brand and life style that your target audience aspire to own or achieve.

For example, a loaf of bread in plain blue and white packaging labelled “Value Loaf” would be perceived less aspirational than a loaf named “Finest Loaf” in olive green and gold packaging even though there may be little to separate the quality of the product inside.

At every price break, even in the low cost high volume market sector, there are subtle ways of compelling your audience to buy your product but you need to be clear on your strategy. If you don’t have the expertise in design, marketing or packaging and merchandising then outsource it to experts. A team with an established track record of bringing well-known products to market will help your product achieve the best chance of success. But remember the consumer is King and it is they that will ultimately determine whether your product is a success or not.

**Assess Your Budget**

Unfortunately not all companies bringing products to the market have huge budgets, and if you are on a limited budget you need to be smart from the outset and cut your cloth accordingly.

There are things you can incorporate into the design of your product to reduce the need for spend on packaging and expensive marketing campaigns. You can design your product such that the outer casing is sufficiently robust enough that it can be transported without the need for packaging. It can also be designed to carry the visual impact and branding features on the product itself. Even point of sale (POS) features such as stacking feet or hanging eyelets can be incorporated at the product design stage.

If your budget cannot stretch to a marketing campaigns such as in store promotions, media content or adverts in the press or TV, look to social media to grab the attention of your target audience.

With a small marketing budget your product will have to work harder on the shelf so the work you did early on in the design process is really going to count now. But if you have created a brilliant product with excellent functionality that is visually striking with its use of colour and materials and is better than the competition, your product it will get the attention of your target market and sales and profits will come.