

BRAND PROFILE

REPACKAGING by Leah Genuario OLD NAVY

Known for bringing trendy fashions to the whole family at reasonable prices, Old Navy recently undertook a comprehensive makeover of its “furnishings line” (think socks and boxers).

You've got yours, and I've got mine.

For anyone who watched even a fair amount of television in the days leading up to Christmas, this little phrase set to music is probably indoctrinated.

Males and females of all ages consider the retailer a one-stop-shop, but not everyone in the family wants the same thing. Rugged dad isn't into donning the same pom-pom sweater as preppy mom. So if the clothes aren't the same, why should the packaging be? For fall 2007, Old Navy decided to individualize more than just clothing—to play off of its familiar marketing message and tailor its packaging to different shopper segments.

It may not be top of mind with consumers, but packaging actually plays an important role at Old Navy, heavier in some areas like the retailer's bread-and-butter furnishings line, which features such basics as socks, shoes and underwear. Consider that the fall 2007 upgrade to the men's and boys' packaging has already resulted in a visible jump in profitability for the line.

> TIME FOR A CHANGE

Prior to the redesign, all furnishing items were sealed in polybags with integrated plastic hangers and flexographic-printed graphics. Under the old system, it didn't matter if the product inside was for men or women, young or old. It was a basic packaging system for basic products. And at six to 15 cents per package, it was also incredibly economical. >

> This peak-top carton has the look of an inter-office envelope, with a string tab, “handwritten” graphics and other details that reflect a military surplus inspiration.



Despite the cost advantages, though, packaging was missing the opportunity to connect with consumers. In the case of the men's line, "it was a happy family look for the men's division that didn't fit in with the shop," says Jason Rosenberg, senior packaging designer for Old Navy.

The merchandizing team wanted to get away from the polybag because "it felt very commodity and value," explains Brent Seward, who serves in label and packaging sourcing for the San Francisco-based retailer. "The desire was to elevate [the] packaging to make it more relevant in the marketplace."

In short, it was time for a change. Educated to the problems with the current furnishings packaging, the professionals behind the Old Navy brand got to work to redesign the men's and boys' furnishings line (the women's and girls' lines have not yet been overhauled, though Rosenberg says it's in the plans).

Rosenberg served as the "general contractor" guiding the design and art direction for the project and working with about 20 individuals culled from a variety of disciplines—members from the design, editorial, digital production, project management and sourcing departments.

The team's task was to create packaging that would feel rugged, relaxed and fun. Of course, it also needed to fit into the overall brand image.

The new packaging also had functional requirements. It had to hold up to the rigors of shipping and remain serviceable in a store setting;

structures needed to be strong enough to hang on walls, for instance, and also to offer customers the ability to open and feel the garments.

Affecting 80 SKUs throughout its U.S. and Canadian stores, the packaging project, which also included a new box architecture, turned out to be one of the largest packaging initiatives in Old Navy history, says Rosenberg. And, remarkably, the initiative moved from the approval stage to the shelf within five months.

> THE FINAL LOOK

The concept of a military surplus store served as the backdrop for the project. But staying true to that design concept, while adhering to strict budget considerations, was a challenge. "Cost was a huge driver for the type of materials that we were able to use," says Rosenberg. "One of the biggest challenges was to keep it reasonable. At Old Navy, every penny counts."

Some initial ideas fell prey to cost considerations, including the use of photographic edges and faux wax seals. But in the end, the design concept was captured and translated in a variety of ways. To begin, the packages were printed on 16-point coated-one-side paperboard using five-color offset printers. In an unusual move, the uncoated side of the paperboard was printed to create the look of kraft paper.

Rosenberg also spent time researching common office supplies that could be incorporated into the packaging, examining invoices, tape, envelopes, paper clips and file folders to find just the right source materials. "The goal was to try and make each package unique, something that [customers] could own or feel was made for them exclusively," says Rosenberg.

Each package was also differentiated with slightly varied stamps, symbols and "handwriting" graphics that were well-executed with sophisticated printing techniques.

"The time we put into ensuring the handwriting and stamps would look realistic paid off," says Rosenberg, whose own handwriting graces the >

"The desire was to elevate [the] packaging to make it more relevant in the marketplace."

—Brent Seward

> UV spot coatings give a "hand packaged" feel to the shoe packaging, making it appear as if each box was sealed with packing tape.



packaging. “That’s one of the most striking elements of the packaging—one that makes it stand out.”

Structure was another element. Men’s briefs and boxer briefs were all housed in a peak-topped box that, according to Seward, was “inspired by a transmittal envelope and evolved into a box with a peaked top and hook.” Consumers can view the garments through a die-cut window.

The hook on the boxes resembles an antique metal hanger, a striking upgrade compared to the plastic hangers used in the past. Aside from its functional use, the hook “elevated the packaging” and “enhanced the surplus aesthetic,” Seward says.

A special three-pack boxers gift set uses a string tab with two disks attached to the box with grommets. Although this concept was initially conceived for all of the peaked top boxes, “it proved a little too complex for packaging and handling within the store environment,” says Seward. It was used in the gift version “to make it feel more special,” he explains.

The retailer’s shoe boxes also deserve special mention. Finished with what appears to be Scotch and packing tape—a look achieved with UV spot coatings—the shoe boxes are an excellent example of the “hand packaged” look Old Navy was going for, says Rosenberg.

So, how has the packaging project been received since its fall 2007 debut? As well as any marketer would hope for.

“Old Navy saw growth in the business by allowing a higher retail price on the product,” says Rosenberg. “By elevating the



> **Spanning 80 SKUs, the redesign rolled out in U.S. and Canadian stores as one of the largest packaging projects in the retailer’s history.**

packaging, distinguishing us from our competition, our customers accepted paying more at the register, resulting in a 12 percent average unit retail price increase.”

> THE BIG PICTURE

Rosenberg says packaging will remain an integral part of Old Navy’s marketing program, pointing to the fact that the retailer recently moved its packaging arm from the garment design unit to the marketing wing.

Future packaging projects will remain a collaboration of the five teams that make up the marketing unit. The group will work together to overcome time constraints and material sourcing difficulties that, according to Seward, include “finding the right supplier to produce the packaging the way we want it, at the right place, with specified lead-times, in the right production location and able to support the volume of our business.”

The next area to receive a packaging revamp, according to Rosenberg, is the company’s men’s and boys’ denim line.

As in the case of the furnishings line, Rosenberg says a creative muse can emerge from anywhere. “Packaging in general provides inspiration,” he says. “Looking out in the marketplace and nabbing a good concept that may have never been used for retail packaging is always fun.” **BP**

Leah Genuario is a New Jersey-based writer specializing in the packaging, printing and beauty industries.

> **Men’s crewnecks are housed in 16-point coated-one-side paperboard cartons, with the uncoated side printed to create the look of kraft paper.**



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