



Achieving global standardization of package structures

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Global consumer goods companies are increasingly focusing their resources on fewer brands and developing products that can be adapted globally. The goal is to leverage brand equity and squeeze more revenue from their brand, package, and product development expenditures. For these brand owners, there is a need to ensure that global package executions strengthen the brand while avoiding creation of consumer confusion that over time undermines brand equity. Crucial to meeting this objective is ensuring that packages, both graphically and structurally, present a consistent image across all markets.

A well-thought out structural design that can be adapted globally unleashes the full power that a global brand possesses to support pan-regional brand strategies, increase consumer awareness, and build long-term brand value. Brand owners spend years and millions of dollars working to ensure that consumers immediately recognize their product and that there is no confusion with other brands, so consistency across regions is critical.

The following are proven approaches for developing and executing global package structures that embody the brand's core DNA while addressing local needs.

- **Do the upfront work.** The first steps should be to compile a list of package structures that are currently being produced in the target markets and to understand each market's supply chain capabilities for filling and decorating secondary packaging and tertiary packaging. Next, identify the key package attributes that affect manufacturing and the distribution chain. These attributes, along with the key brand design cues, should serve as a starting point for developing package structures that minimize capital expenditure, as well as line changeovers.

This point cannot be overemphasized for a company whose markets have varying abilities to fund new equipment and change parts for packaging lines. This approach will also minimize the structural modifications that might be necessary for the package to be compatible with other country or regional market needs, like pallet utilization, compatibility with vending machines, and fit into merchandising fixtures. Manufacturing line changeovers also reduce valuable line uptime, so it is of particular concern for operations that have tight capacity constraints.

Educate your structural designers about the package attributes that would be the primary drivers of local and regional modifications. As global designs are executed, inevitably there will be requests to modify the global standard structures to meet local requirements. Designers should identify areas where there can be some latitude to accommodate these requests, and they should be prepared to compromise in balancing functional needs and brand attributes.

Brand owners can create a family of structural designs with similar attributes, but that also include some features allowing distinction

between brand variants. If package structures are developed with strong insight to manufacturing and the supply chain, distinct packages can be created whose differences are largely transparent to a packaging line. Methods for achieving this include molded

features in areas that don't interact with the packaging line and visual/tactile effects like embossing and etching.

- **Create brand guidelines.** The creation of a document that spells out branding and design guardrails helps ensure consistent execution across the different regions of the world and clearly communicates the critical design cues which are off-limits to modification.

Disseminate this document widely to all stakeholders, including the R&D, brand, procurement, design, commercialization, and quality teams—in short, anybody who has accountability for the brand's shelf appearance or package performance.

- **Plan realistically.** It is important to include time in commercialization timelines for adapting the global designs for local launch. There may be give and take in this process, and the designers should be included in the discussion for two reasons: 1) to efficiently arrive at a compromise, and thereby reduce re-design iterations, and 2) so the designers will gain a first-hand insight to the drivers of local adaptations. In my experience, a direct dialogue between the designers and local engineering teams usually leads to a swift compromise in which both parties feel their needs are being addressed.

In summary, the use of a package structural design approach that considers local needs from the beginning will result in less investment, faster time to market and greater on-shelf consistency for global brands. **PW**

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