

# Quality in a Perfume

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It wasn't long ago that the perfume house was thought to be a strange castle in Transylvania and the perfume laboratory an obscure, damp place guarded by dragons and unknown creatures. The perfumer was the original invisible man who spoke a strange language and who everybody was afraid to look at for fear of turning into stone.

It's 1985—have we made progress? Have things changed? A little in some cases, but not a great deal in many ways. When planning my presentation on "Quality in a Perfume", I wondered if we should consider quality to the perfumer, or quality to the perfume house. Do these mean the same thing? Yes, of course, they mean the same thing! In the final analysis, isn't the perfumer *still* the perfume house? So, let us see what the perfumer needs to do and look at the changes which have occurred in the last ten years.

Years ago, the salesperson would talk to the manufacturer's purchasing agent and the perfumer and come up with an appropriate submission. This was the entire extent of the creative process. Now the salesperson talks to the manufacturer's creative director and/or the marketing director and then goes back and talks to the perfume house sales and marketing group, the evaluation group, the creative and perfumery group and general administration.

All of these people have different opinions, run a large gamut of inter-

ference among themselves and to top it all off, none of them really knows what the manufacturer wants and has asked for.

To make things more difficult, the consumer today has greater choices. For example: Before there was one new perfume every five years. Now there are ten perfumes per year. Before, the functional products were just that: **Functional!** Shampoos cleaned the hair, deodorants deodorized. Now without the "proper" perfume, shampoos do not clean any more and deodorants do not deodorize any more. In addition, education and sophistication have reached the consumer via perfumed inserts, smelling scratch and sniff cards, sample vials, perfume bars at store counters, articles in magazines and educational workshops in department stores.

So, things have changed *drastically*. Let us ask now have the perfumer and the perfume house changed *drastically*? I say no. They have changed a little, but certainly not drastically. What do perfumers need to do? What do perfume houses need to do?

## **Total Involvement!**

The time of sitting around the conference table sniffing bottles and blotters and deciding on which submission to present to the manufacturer is no longer the case. It is a thing of the past. We need to mod-

ernize our thinking, and seek *total involvement*.

I do not differentiate between a so-called "major perfume" profile and a "small" shampoo or floor cleaner refragrancing profile. They are both of the same importance and intensity. They both will reflect considerable business and profits. They both can make it or break it on the basis of how good the perfuming job was.

The perfumer needs to get up-front detailed specific information of what is expected when that first meeting is held with the manufacturer. But this is not all. The perfume house evaluators and the market research people must be with the perfumer so that all can learn, I mean learn, first hand, how the manufacturer is going to evaluate the product. The perfumer needs to attend up-front meetings and follow-up meetings with the testing and evaluation people and those of the manufacturer. This point is key and very important. How the manufacturer is going to treat and test the submissions has now become paramount to success. If the perfume house, the perfumer and the evaluators do not have an early reading on how the manufacturer is going to test, the wrong submissions can be made.

The perfumer needs to understand that each manufacturer has different testing procedures and methodologies. The manufacturer has different judging criteria, and these criteria

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vary from manufacturer to manufacturer. Consequently, what we need is a customized approach for each manufacturer. The perfumer needs to compare ideas and bring new suggestions and new approaches to the solving of a problem.

The perfume house and the perfumer cannot generalize anymore. They need to understand and learn the manufacturer's testing procedures and evaluation procedures. They need to customize their testing according to the manufacturer's testing procedure and needs.

It could be a simple soap wear test, an antiperspirant residual perfume transfer from skin to fabric, a washing machine metal interference odor, hair spray residual smell, odor chamber and environmental insult.

### **Early Reading On Consumer Response of Product End Use**

The perfumers and the perfume house need an early consumer response to the final proposition. How many times we have chosen a final perfume according to our best inter-

nal testing procedures, been very happy about it and then find out that the consumer did not like it at all. As I said, just smelling the submission from the bottle or the blotter often leads to an early burial.

The perfumer needs to understand the chemistry and physical properties of the various product bases that the perfume will eventually complement. The perfumer needs to work with the product development chemist to understand how the product is going to be manufactured, at what temperatures, and how it is going to be filled. Is the finished product going to be held in a tank at 50 degrees C for six hours or 24 hours before filling? Will its composition withstand this type of insult? Or more? Or different ones?

Manufacturer testing procedures, early consumer responses, manufacturing details are all *new* factors which the perfumer now needs to consider. These factors cannot be ignored and must be part of the creative process at the very early stages of perfume creation.

Not just one person but the perfumer, the manufacturer's testing and evaluating people, together with the perfume house testing and evaluating people all are partners in success.

Is this true? To a certain extent. But there still is a single person who, in the final analysis, is responsible for it all. And that is the perfumer. However, the sooner the perfumer starts using all the other disciplines available, including and especially those of the manufacturer, the more success and the more quality will be put into each creation.

So going back to the original proposition of the perfume and quality, the answer lies in the two words—total involvement.

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