



# The Nose Is Not My Favorite Organ

By Peter Dichter, Mane, USA, Wayne, New Jersey

Is there any room for growth in the fragrance industry? After all, time after time we hear that we have exhausted our creativity and are unable to create anything new.

But who needs creativity anyway? If God had wanted us to be more creative, He would have given us more ingredients with which to work. There's a limit to what you can create with a handful of aromatic flowers, barks and animal glands. There's a limit to what you can *create*—but not what you can market! As it is, we have to create chemicals that help fill in for the pitiful lack of naturally fragrant raw materials. Or we could tell consumers that aldehydes grow wild alongside the roadways of Madagascar or talk about the spring harvest of benzyl acetate. And didn't God give us the mainstay of all perfumes—dilutants?

But this is neither here nor there. Our industry may be the most creative of all! How else can you account for the fact that perfumes were created originally? Can you begin to imagine those primitive times when mankind was reduced to rubbing themselves with herbs or sticking flowers in their clothes? Now we can rejoice in the realization that there are fragrances in a whole host of products: cleansers for the body and hair, deodorants, skin creams, douches, candles, baths, floor waxes, window washes, toilets, air fresheners, lipsticks, insecticides, stationery—the list is long. Yet obviously not long enough, because we are being challenged constantly to make the list longer.

## Natural Growth in Perfumery

We are constantly being told that growth is necessary. We could ask every man, woman and child to spend a mere five dollars a week, that's only 71 cents

a day, on fragrances. That way, we'd be a 60 billion dollar business instead of the three billion we are now. But, let's be realistic. Growth is going to have to come naturally. Trust me, we're doing all the right things now, we just need to carry them a few steps further. What do I mean? Let's start with perfumes.

There was a time when the major breakthrough was that a renowned designer like Dior or Chanel would use his or her prestige to convince the public that a perfume was a natural extension of the expertise they had in clothing and the accompanying taste that went with it. How naive! Now we know that *any* designer, no matter how obscure, can come out with a fragrance. It really doesn't matter whether these designers are famous. People love the idea of a designer even if they've never heard the name. Change Peter Dichter to Pierre Dicté or Pietro Dichter and a cologne is sure to follow. What does this have to do with growth? Just this. No longer do we have to wait for the next fragrance from Ralph Lauren or Calvin Klein. Call yourself a designer, phone a perfumer and the rest will be history.

But even this is naive. Who needs designers anyway? Any celebrity will do. Elizabeth Taylor is a legend and Joan Collins and Cher are unique personalities, but what they have done is initiate an apparently limitless trend. I'm sure that many, many more celebrities from movies and television will be putting their stage names on perfumes and colognes for years to come. I can see a Glenn Close fragrance called *Fatal Attraction*, or Sylvester Stallone's *Rambeau de Cologne*. Or even one from Alf named *Melmac* and targeted directly to aliens.

The trend doesn't end with screen personalities. What rationale does a singer have for a cologne? OK, Julio Inglesas, maybe, but does this mean we're going



to see a whole rash of singers with fragrances? But I can handle this. Show business personalities are at least theatrical, and if they want to have their names immortalized in alcohol, so be it. But where is the reason for sports figures?

Can you imagine what a fragrance name "Strawberry" would smell like? But why stop with tennis, wrestling, baseball or football? These are well-known sports and the player chosen to endorse a product may not be universally liked. Why not go after the leading lacrosse or water polo player? "Hi! I'm a three time yo-yo champion. My cologne will see you through those ups and downs."

Will political figures be next? Is the world waiting for a Barbara Bush fragrance? Or one from our vice president? How about other countries' leaders? Oh, well. At least we're talking about living people. What about Barbie? What kind of fashion authority is a doll? Will "Moi" from Miss Piggy be next?

How about jewelry stores? It wasn't enough to sell "madame" a charming emerald tiara for \$30,000 or a \$600 fountain pen, ink not included. No. Now there was the perfume, as well, and for far less than you'd pay for a sapphire encrusted potholder. But for some reason—I guess the concept of elegance, good taste

and high mark-up—perfume is as esteemed as the Hope diamond. OK, I can handle that.

I can almost handle *hotels* coming out with their own perfumes although I wonder if this will lead to a trickle down effect leading to a *Holiday Inn* fragrance. Will there be a bottle of perfume next to the Gideon Bible in the rooms of *Motel 6*? I can almost handle *cars* coming out with fragrances. Today *Jaguar*, tomorrow *Cadillac*, next Thursday, well, when we refer to the *Honda Accord*, it will have a whole new meaning.

Yes, I can handle most inanimate objects representing a perfume, but even I can't find the rationale for a restaurant fragrance. When I order something alcoholic in an eatery, I want a martini, not an Eau de toilette. To me the chef's special is not a blend of tuberose and ylang. I've often thought of retaliating by putting the catsup in a Lalique bottle or having Mark Larrasy knock off the *steak au poivre* at 21 and selling it for \$3.95. And who's to say that only the elite establishments can have a perfume? Why not go for mass distribution? "Hey kids! It's Ronald McDonald, and guess what he's got for you today? Yes, it's *perfume McNuggets* and if your receipt has the word 'patchouli' on it, you're a winner!" Will future Wendy's commercials feature a woman exclaiming; "Where's the jasmine? Where's the jasmine?"

It would be meaningless for me to go into detail about my feeling toward Broadway shows, although *Les Miserables* does seem to sum up my emotions.

### New Concepts for Growth

All of this is an indication of what can be achieved when a strong desire to succeed is present. There is no question that the future holds bright promise when it comes to spokespeople and spokesobjects. We can't expect all growth to come from this, however. We must look to new concepts.

First and foremost, we must consider the world around us and ask ourselves where fragrance is needed or where the concerns of the consumers lie. For example, we have yet to convince people that fragrances are more than pleasant additions to other things; fragrances are good for their health. After all, we all have been convinced that vitamins and exercise are beneficial. Treatment products are good for the skin and shampoos are good for hair. Toothpaste is good for teeth, but has anyone gone beyond aromatherapy and pointed out that, since the increase of perfume usage in this country, there has been an equal drop in yellow fever, malaria and the plague? There's a growth area right there.

Look at natural gas. Right! You can't look at natural gas. That's why we have added a smell to it—to warn people of its presence.

Consider our deteriorating environment and the



things fragrances can do to fill a much needed void. Let's expand on what we did for potpourris. Here is a collection of dead roots, bark, twigs and things you used to find under a rock when you were a kid. What looks like a toxic waste site to the eye has been sprayed with perfume and renamed the chic sounding, potpourri. Why can't we do the same for real toxic waste sites? Can you imagine what wonders our industry could do with radon? I can see the fragrance now, Geranium 235. What if Exxon had had the foresight to put a marine fragrance into its oil? No one in Alaska would ever have known! There's a whole wonderful world of pollutants out there, from gasoline emissions to asbestos to spewing chimneys to Three Mile Island—a whole new area of growth for us to capitalize.

The point is made. Growth will come as long as you remember that a fragrant world is a happy world, words we say frequently in our office, usually around payday.

But it would be unfair of me to stop here and not provide at least one word of caution. All this growth has created a minor, but none the less aggravating problem. We are fast running out of names. All the

good ones have been taken and second guessing has led to lawsuits and payoffs. It is my contention that every decent word in English, French and Italian has been used by some company. Yet, I would not bring this up, if I did not have a solution. Instead of running the risk of having a name already trademarked, turn to languages that we have not overworked.

And so, I offer languages to you that have not been overexploited by our industry. How about Yiddish? *Chutzpah*, for the man with nerve. How about Russian? *Glasnost* . . . a perfume that will bring you peace. Or Latin: something like *E pluribus unum*. Et tu *Brut* has been taken already. If all else fails, call me and I'll tell you how to say "passion" in Serbo-Croatian, "obsession" in Swahili and "poison" in Laplander.

I was once asked a question by Amelia Bassin at a fragrance seminar. She said, "Peter. What is the one factor *guaranteed* to promote growth in our industry?" My response was, "If I knew the answer to that I'd be a complete idiot to blurt it out at a symposium in the Waldorf-Astoria."

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