

What Makes a Successful Fragrance Launch

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In the way of words, Thomas Edison certainly was both compelling and entertaining. He was a lot more, too. We know, for example, that he was exact. A story about him points up the reason I'm here. One morning, he walked in with some crude drawings and specifications and handed them to an assistant with the curt words: "Build this!"

Naturally curious, the man asked, "What will it do?"

"It will talk back," Edison replied, and walked away to other matters.

Well, the assistant did as he was told. The result was the phonograph, a machine which talked back. Now, Edison is honored for his inventive genius. But he also was very skilled at marketing. To him, everything—everything!—had a purpose. At almost the same time the phonograph was invented, he made a list of eight uses which it could be put. The first four were strictly business, but number five was reproduction of music.

He used music to demonstrate the machine. The oldest recordings still in existence is of Edison singing a song into the phonograph—"Mary

Had a Little Lamb."

About a year and a half ago, I was listening to the radio, to a song being played on some descendant of Mr. Edison's invention. I was not working for Jovan at the time. In fact, I was with a toy company, Mattel, out in California. The song was by Kenny Rogers. "Lady," I liked it. No. I *loved* it. It was . . . romantic!

What a great word, romance. Through the 1970s, romance was lacking from American life. The title of the era said it all: the "me" decade. Self-centeredness. Selfishness. To hell with you. It's "me" that counts.

Well here was this guy, this really great singer, Kenny Rogers, with this terrific romantic song. "Lady." And it wasn't about "me." It was about "you!" It seemed to herald a new decade, a new era of romance and giving.

Now, I think we all like Kenny Rogers. He's an everyperson's singer; he appeals to us all. When I heard that song, I thought to myself: something can be done with that. That song, in some other form, can become a voice for a new, more outgoing, more romantic aura to American life.

Kenny had another song about the same time. "Gambler." It wasn't "Lady;" it said something entirely different. It was more of a "man's" song, about the risks a man must take in life, how a man has to account of himself. That's romantic, too, but in a different way. And "Gambler" was just as popular as "Lady."

Well as far as I was concerned, that did it. I was hooked. I loved those songs so much I became determined to do something with them. I wanted those two songs to evoke themselves in other ways than music. Now, at Mattel, that wasn't so easy. "Barbie" okay; "Lady," no way! The road suddenly opened up for me when I came to Jovan about a year ago.

Jovan is a fragrance house. It's not a toy store. Then again, in many ways it is. It certainly is in the sense that our purpose in being is to bring joy and happiness into people's lives, to make them feel good about themselves and others.

But the essence of our toys is not electronic and plastic. It is scent. A television game appeals to one set of senses, a cologne or perfume to quite another. One thing is sure though: no matter how the appeal is cast, it's all a matter of communications.

There are many forms of communication. When I speak to you; that's oral communication. My speech was from a text, which is written communication. Tied all together, from my reading to speaking to your listening and comprehending, is what we collectively call verbal communication.

Now, verbal communications don't appear magically. Before there is a word on paper, there must be a thought in mind. It can be the greatest thought in history, an idea to cure all our ills. But until communications come into play, it's just that, a thought and nothing more, like a secret under lock. And communication is the key to letting it out.

Our fragrances are no different. Out in the market, some whisper, others shout, but *all* communicate, and by this communication they sell. When they sell and sell well we make money, and so do you. And every one—every fragrance begins with an idea, a "what if . . .?"

I took my "what if" about Kenny Rogers' two songs with me to Jovan. I talked it up. People liked what they heard, so we all talked it up. Slowly and surely, over the course of a few weeks, we took the idea of two new scents based on two song hits and began to give them form. We communicated among ourselves about what we thought should be the essence of such fragrances.

We wrote notes and passed them back and

forth. In strategy meetings, we discussed them. We continued to communicate, and as we did so, we *created* the heart and soul of "Lady" and "Gambler." We refined our notes into finished copy. Some of those first sketches of what we believed should be the *essence* of these new *essences* still exist, of course they're refined and edited, as the promotion and packaging copy on "Lady" and "Gambler."



After a few weeks, we verbalized both "Lady" and "Gambler." We knew what we wanted them to be, and we also had a pretty fair idea of how to market them. This is necessary at this stage of the creative process. It's not enough merely to romanticize about a new fragrance and then bring it into being. The business nature of our business demands that the scent be saleable—very saleable.

That may be the hardest part about being in this business. On the one side, it's great fun to create a new fragrance. But the other side must be as coldly pragmatic as the first is warmly romantic. So while we were communicating to create two new fragrances, we also were communicating market strategies for them.

Jovan has a proud and enviable history in this regard. The basis for Jovan's success, we believe, is our ability to read the public sense of what is about to be, then to establish a trend that capitalizes on this prediction. In other words, we anticipate the wave, then ride its crest into shore.

We've been riding this wave for more than a decade now. In musk oil, we established a new fragrance category overnight. But it wasn't created in a vacuum. Someone didn't wake up some morning and say, Hmmm. Think I'll go to the office and whip up some musk oil. Should go over great. It began as a concept to capitalize on the tone of the times, the peak period of the so-called sexual revolution.

Our Andron line for men and women was quite another story. Here, we capitalized on a scientific breakthrough, the isolation of pheromones, the scent signals in nature that ac-

tually trigger attraction between sexes. The result was the most successful fragrance introduction in 1981.

Our signature fragrances—designer scents, you might call them—are yet another story. We introduced them in 1979, coinciding exactly with the sales surge in designer products. We based our signature fragrance success on that of other fashion products. They were established, and we used that fact to ride to success in our own field. It's a coattail effect and the same principle applies where "Lady" and "Gambler" are concerned. In fact, it's even better, for in this new introduction, we're coattailing several established successes.

First, of course, is Kenny Rogers himself, one of the most successful singers ever. As I said, he's that way in large part because he appeals to everyone, he's been popular a long time, and this is bound to continue.

Then there are the two songs themselves. As Rogers is popular, the songs are equally so, two of the greatest hits he's ever done. They've been out for some five years now and sold over 15 million copies and they're still going strong. Chances are you can catch either "Lady" or "The Gambler" on some local radio station anytime.

Then there's the nature of the times—the return to romanticism. Just look at the mini series which have been on tv lately: big, romantic shows like "Winds of War" and "Shogun" and "Thorn Birds." You can see it in the surge of romantic novels, of books and articles extolling a new sense of giving and sharing between couples. Have you ever heard the phrase, "High Monogamy?" If you haven't, you will. It refers to a new concept of devotion in marriage in which some couples achieve such a special degree of oneness that they come to exist on a high plane. Now, that's romanticism!

So the total communications package is starting to take shape. We have verbalized what we think the fragrance in forms for men and women should be. And we've done the ground work and homework in establishing a market for them.

Now it's about this time that the perfumers enter the picture. It's customary that once a fragrance house has the concept of a new scent established, that it then takes it to a perfumer to be blended into reality. That's the usual scenario—but not in this case. We kept working on "Lady" and "Gambler" in our offices. Nobody had smelled a thing yet, but we kept working—this time on all the merchandising and packaging that surround a scent. We created the bottles that would hold the scents; we de-

veloped a unique design which communicated these still nonexistent fragrances in a special way.

We created unique outer packages that would hold the bottles. Look at the color: Black. Deep, dark, sensuous, mysterious, romantic—black! Once again we knew that we were creating both an aura and establishing a trend.

We went further. We created the sales and merchandising aids that would attract consumers to step up to the counter and try "Lady" and "Gambler." And we went on from there, talking and designing almost everything that a fragrance must have to attract the consumers' attention. In fact, we did not stop until we nearly had the total look, feel and aura of "Lady" and Gambler." In the end we had everything to bring a fragrance to market except the fragrances themselves!

Now, what was our purpose? Why go to all this trouble and expense to create packaging for products that don't even exist? Just this: a fragrance communicates. It speaks a language all its own. But it's a language locked in a bottle!

Until you actually open the bottle, who knows what it smells like? Who knows its voice? Is it floral, fruity, spicy, romantic . . . what is it? To get the answer, to hear the voice of the fragrance, you must assist it, amplify it, let it out of the bottle without actually letting it out.

And that's what our exercise was all about. By our months of work, we let the *genii* in the bottle speak out without ever taking out the stopper. Before "Lady" and "Gambler" had *life*, we gave them *voice*!

Gambler™

by Jovan

Anyway, we took all this packaging and merchandising, this "voice" we had created, to the Palace Hotel in New York. There, we put on a big show for select perfumers.

We demonstrated everything we had conceived for "Lady" and "Gambler" from packaging to product descriptions to advertising and merchandising concepts and said, in effect, "There! we've created everything you need to market a new fragrance. Now, take this information and create a fragrance to match it."

In a very real sense, we did what Edison had done years ago. He did not approach that young man with vague ideas and sketchy concepts. He came in with exact specifications and from that preciseness came one of his greatest inventions. We sought to do the same.

Our approach worked. The two fragrances were created exactly in the image we had developed. "Gambler" hit the mark right away. "Lady" took a little more work, but both came in on budget and on time. We wanted to be ready to ship in February, and we met that deadline.

"Lady" and "Gambler" communicate. They speak as no fragrances before or since. They are distinctive. And for all our work, the efforts of perfumers make that single, chemical fact possible. For in the final analysis, all the words we can assemble, all the materials we can mass together are nothing if the chemistry does not give the fragrances an *aromatic* voice.

What's happening is that we move from one form of communication to another. The perfumer provides the chemistry—the catalyst, if you will—to transform our words and packages into the communications of scent, of appeal to

another set of senses. Perfumers give it life!

So now we have our fragrances, and we have our sales and marketing strategy in place. The two forms are poised ready to go at the world. We're still a long way from home. With all the greatness that is now in "Lady" and "Gambler," they are still just two new fragrances. And they are about to join a very big crowd!

Let me ask you—Do you know how many fragrances were launched last year? Dozens, at least. Maybe hundreds! We can not keep track of them all. We cover our main competitors and a few others by accident, and that's about it. I'll tell you this for sure, though: think kindly of all the fragrances you can name from last year, because by this next Christmas holiday season only some five percent will still be around. That is frightful attrition rate by any standard.

Somewhere there's somebody who likes something in the way of a fragrance. Just last year, two entrepreneurs from California (where else?) came up with a fragrance they called "Stash" based on—guess what!—marijuana blossoms. Well, that may be silly, but others have been equally so. And to us, they all communicate one thing—competition! How do you beat the competition? How do you make *your* fragrance *the* fragrance. For this year and later? Well, we should know. We've done it often enough.

So for both "Lady" and "Gambler" and indeed for any product of ours, the marketing approach is very like football strategy. We get the best team we can, then work on the basics, blocking and tackling and ball handling. Then adapt the game plan to the situation at hand.

For "Lady" and "Gambler," this meant laying out a very definite marketing plan and schedule, including advertising and special promotions. To take another non-fragrance analogy, it's like planning a war—a product war. Timing is especially important, no, make that *critical*!

We were ready to go in 1983. But when? Not to overuse the football analogy, but the launch of a fragrance is every bit as critical in its timing as the hand-off in football. Muff it, and you've blown the whole play.

The Christmas holiday season traditionally is the time to launch a fragrance to capitalize on gift-giving. You also run up against all the competition shouting for the shopper's attention. For instance, last year the fragrance industry spent 95 million dollars in advertising in the last quarter, the Christmas buying season.

So lately, spring has become fashionable, the time to capitalize on freshness, rebirth—all manner of good words associated with springtime. There is also less of a crowd. Last

spring, for example, the fragrance industry spent just 41 million dollars in advertising, less than half of what it would pay out six months later during the Christmas period. The competition for the buyer's dollar isn't so heavy from other quarters, for example, running up against the new automobile season. Also, there are some good holidays in the spring: Mother's day, Father's day, Easter. So it is a pretty good sales season, with 26 percent of all retail sales occurring in the second quarter, including a total 244 million spent on men's and women's fragrances. All in all, not bad.

So we chose this spring to launch both "Lady" and "Gambler." But the season was not the only reason. The launch also capitalizes on Kenny Rogers' 1983 tour, which just began. It promises to be big, his first in two years. And guess who's the sponsor? Right! We're still amplifying the fragrances which we conceived and perfumers created. We did a lot before they were even fragrances. But a lot more needs to be done.

The "Lady" product line was decided before the fragrance itself was born. All together it includes the perfume in a bottle and as a spray, cologne concentrate in bottle and spray and dusting powder. The packages come in various sizes, from samplers and trials to tabletop bottles which could last years. The line is an art and a science all by itself.

On the countertop, that package alone can be the strongest voice. In fact, it could be the only voice. In the fragrance industry especially, the package has to sell every bit as much as the product it contains. Large replicas of the package are commonly used to get a shopper's attention from several aisles away. Your fragrance may only whisper, but your merchandising often has to jump up and down. We will have samples out by thousands for both "Lady" and "Gambler" but, in many cases, the package will attract that buyer to the counter in the first place.

From a coldly analytical standpoint, it is all very much a team effort—the fragrance, its dilution, its application, the bottle, the package, the color, the advertising image, the price. I could go on and on. All work together, an ensemble of marketing artistry that in harmony communicate and sell "Lady."

"Gambler" gets the same treatment: bottle and spray colognes, aftershave, deodorant, aftershave *balm* in different sizes, for home or travel use. Notice that while we are marketing the two as a pair, "Gambler" has its own distinctive shape and texture to reflect its fragrance position—for the man who knows the risks of life, and is sure enough of himself to be ready for any

challenge, for the kind of guy who doesn't try to impress anyone, yet who does so just by standing there.

The fragrances themselves, in all their forms, are just part of the total package that we ship to the trade. There are promotional items as well. A key chain and money clip are to go with "Gambler" in top-of-the-line department stores; a nylon travel kit is for second-level department stores, while a black lacquer jewelry box is for a special promotion arranged with J.C. Penney.

The "Lady" line of promotional items includes a tote bag with a spray perfume for the top-line department stores and a black lacquer hand mirror in a black velvet pouch for the second-line department store.



All the promotions for both "Lady" and "Gambler" are designed to be included as bonuses to accompany certain versions of the product when bought at retail. In addition, throughout the year there will be price break promotions featuring certain products.

The "Lady" promotion schedule from April 1983 through April next year will have four big promotion periods, with the biggest push coming in November, in time for the holidays.

The schedule for "Gambler" also lists four promotions during the next twelve months; some coinciding with "Lady" promotions, others not. Are we done? No way! We communicate with a broader voice now, but we really want to be sure that no one out there misses the message.

The sales aids which we created early on are everything we can think of to make the store's job easier. To a great extent, these are standard items which go out with any major fragrance launch, customized to speak only "Lady." They include sample vials, fragrance packets, merchandising kits and introductory displays.

These fragrance packets play a special role. While a million of them will go out to the top-line department stores where the perfume itself will be sold, another 500,000 will go to the second-level stores so shoppers there will be

made aware of the fragrance in the perfume form. Then, we hope they will hustle themselves over to a top-line store where the perfume is being sold.

The merchandising kit contains all kinds of goodies. Again, many are standard items made special for "Lady:" a window banner, counter card, shopping bags, even merchandising idea kits, shelf paper and a bundle of sample vials. Inevitably, these are taken by the sales people themselves—and that's exactly what we want. Along with all this packaged stuff, a little word-of-mouth advertising from behind the counter helps, too.

We decided last fall to include in these kits a very special item—a tape cassette with Kenny Rogers singing "Lady" along with a copy of the sheet music and words.

The sales aids and merchandising kits for "Gambler" are the same as for "Lady." Once more, there's everything from shelf paper to the tape cassette and sheet music.

Advertising is both special and somewhat unusual. For one thing, there will be no print ad campaign for these two fragrances. Where you see a print ad for either fragrance, it will be in the context of a department store tie-in which happens to mention "Lady" or "Gambler."

Instead of print, we're putting our entire advertising effort into a national electronic campaign. You will see "Lady" and "Gambler" on television and hear them on the radio. Because of the musical basis for the fragrances, we can use the electronic media to play those great songs over and over, so the public will associate their sound with our fragrances.

The 30-second television spot for "Lady" is already on the air in network time slots for heaviest coverage. That is the most expensive time there is, but we consider this fragrance so big that we will be running the spot hundreds of times over the next dozen months.

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A "Gambler" spot, too, just now being wrapped up, will get heavy coverage over the next year. Our plan is to saturate the air waves with both "Lady" and "Gambler." Our research showed that no one else in our industry has a

fragrance based on a popular song. And here, we have two that enjoy that privilege. That fact is very special to Jovan and you can be sure that we will capitalize on it for all it's worth.

Remember Edison's answer to that young assistant's question of what the machine would do? *It will talk back!* It will communicate. "Lady" and "Gambler" do the same, and they do so perfectly, because other communications worked so exactly. If any ultimate credit is due, it probably should go to Edison. After all, it was he who first made tin to speak and pictures to move. Everything since has just been add-ons and refinements. Certainly we can say that Edison made life richer and more meaningful for us all.

I like to think that we do the same. But one thing is sure: we couldn't have done it without the perfumer. Time and again, perfumers take our words and descriptions and purple prose and give them life. For that, we are very thankful.



For certain special people, the creative process is an integral part of everything they do, finding expression in a wide variety of activities. Diane Love, whose credits and accomplishments range from designer, artist, author and lecturer to photographer, poet and entrepreneur, is one of those special people.

A graduate of Barnard with a degree in Art History, Diane is an authority on oriental art and "Ikebana," Japanese flower arrangements. She is a consultant to the Metropolitan Museum of Art and is often called upon to give lectures on flower arranging and various aspects of art and design. She is the author of "Flowers are Fabulous for Decorating," which is a comprehensive text on flower arrangement and its role in interior decoration.

Diane initially established her reputation as a definitive design force with the creation of an extensive range of fabric flowers. Over the last few years, her work has expanded to include a collection for Mikassa. Her collections, including a new home fragrance which she created for Prestige Place, can be found at fine department stores, including Bloomingdale's, Saks Fifth Avenue, Bullock's and Burdine's.

Recently, Ms. Love opened her first wholesale showroom in Manhattan, created as a showcase for the entire Diane Love Collection.