

The Hidden Battleground— Maintaining Aesthetics in a High Tech Product Form

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One of the more interesting aspects of this symposium is that the general subject of environmental fragrances concerns a new and as yet untested market; a market which nonetheless has captured the imagination of suppliers, marketers, retailers and the trade press before capturing the pocketbooks of consumers. The reason for both the degree of our enthusiasm and its shading of desperate optimism is obvious. The entire industry needs some focal point, some issue for which we can recreate for the future the enthusiasm that has unfortunately become a hallmark of our past. Environmental fragrancing, like the deo-cologne market before it, is just such a focal point, a focal point for our wishes to return to the halcyon days of ever expanding markets. A new marketing opportunity is in the making.

With every such opportunity comes risk. In both the deo-cologne and environmental markets, the risks are now greater than ever; in part because these markets must generate immediate success. There will be no allowance for "slow-growing" the market, even if that is the only ef-

ficient way to achieve success. There will be little time to learn from early mistakes. There will be little chance for quiet rearranging, shifts in positioning, midstream changes in strategy and the like. In our haste to bring life to the bottom line, what scant venturous capital and corporate bullishness remains in our industry may bolt and run at the first sign of disappointment.

Though it is not the subject of today's discussion, I feel the need to point out that what we allow or encourage to happen with deo-colognes today, in our haste for swift and sure profits, may well happen to environmentals tomorrow. These are product categories which require more than hope, haste and money to develop to significance. If we abandon them before they've achieved some position in the consciousness of most consumers, before they've found a suitable placement on the shelves, or before they've been sufficiently flanked by competition to establish the "presence" of the category, then we will have done ourselves a great disservice.

No doubt about it, the market place has become one of the major industry battlegrounds.

Of the many battlegrounds, hidden or otherwise, upon which the future of our industries may be determined, none could be more pivotal to the success of the environmental fragrance market than the one which determines aesthetics. What is largely hidden about the battle for aesthetics is the extent to which we forfeit aesthetics as a result of the many regulations and constraints we routinely apply to the creative process.

The development of fragrances for a variety of end uses must involve the consideration of many regulations and constraints. This applies to briefs which are intended for the development of fine fragrances, for personal care products, or for the latest polymer environmental fragrance substrate. The common explicit constraints for all projects are price, project deadline, number of submissions and target market demographics. The similarities become seemingly outnumbered by myriad technical intricacies, once we leave the apparently benign product categories, such as cologne, and venture into the heartland of high technologies, such as environmentals.

If we allow ourselves to be deceived, if we presume that high-tech constraints and numerous regulations are primarily the province of technical projects, then we become one more of the numerous victims of Sophie's Sophism: namely, that the lack of explicit technical constraint equates to the absence of such limitation. Or, put another way, "what you don't see can't hurt you." Nothing could be further from the reality that we all face. In fact, the vast majority of constraints which are imposed upon the creative process are implicit in all of the projects which our industry undertakes.

That we take them so much for granted is nothing more remarkable than a sign of the times. Nonetheless, the aesthetics of the products we create, and the ability of those products to excite, intrigue, amuse, arouse and satisfy is often severely hampered or completely destroyed by those constraints. We must beware.

To serve as an illustration of the extent and diversity of such constraints, I will give you a typical set of limitations which might apply to the projects we are now undertaking in the environmental fragrance area. To underscore the effect of such constraints on the creative process, I will also illustrate the impact of each constraint on the availability of raw materials and specialties to the perfumer. Imagine, if you will, that a color wheel represents the entire spectrum of perfumery raw materials; perhaps one to two thousand in number. With the enforcement of each constraint, the available materials are reduced in approximate proportion to the significance of that limitation. What we are left with is equivalent to 10—20% of the original, or only blue and blue-green on our imaginary color wheel.

We are expected to strictly adhere to a vast array of constraints listed below.

- Insure base compatibility: No grazing, cracking, swelling, shrinking, excessive synerisis
- Limit range of volatility
- Limit range of polarity
- Minimize reactivity
- Insure consistency of plasticizing, color, clarity
- Control rate of migration, permeation, diffusion
- Insure compatibility with manufacturing equipment
- No change during processing
- Insure safety in shipping, handling, manufacturing
- Insure packaging compatibility
- Insure preservative system compatibility
- Insure resistance to oxidation
- Insure color stability and U.V. insensitivity
- Insure solubility
- Insure availability
- Insure regulatory conformity and industry IFRA standards
- Comply with RIFM monographs and company lists
- Make sure it never changes
- Limit price
- Control odor intensity and character as required
- Do it all in six weeks

Only the first six strictly apply to technical

projects. The last item is the only one that does not affect raw material choices, but it often is the greatest example of industry magic: three years of creativity in six weeks' time.

Asking perfumers to create great fragrances from the meager list of materials which remains, after we've applied our list of constraints, is akin to asking Leonardo DaVinci to paint anything he wishes using only red, yellow, and blue.

The advantage of this illustration is that no one doubts the loss of aesthetic value. Would that our situation were as simple.

Unfortunately, ours is an art form which does not encourage many to make judgments on aesthetics. We are often left to infer the value of our creations from the affect they have on performance of the products they are used in, or the success of those products. Quite often, fragrances are chosen only because of their lack of negative affect. In other words, we often select the non-discoloring, unchanging, fully compatible fragrance, rather than the one which produces the greatest benefit. This occurs because we can measure the former effects and not the latter.

In turn, the lack of readily quantifiable measures of aesthetic value leads to a distorted view of fragrance worth.

It leads to a kind of "zero risk for zero benefit" regulatory view of fragrances, and it leads to a continual trade-off of aesthetics in order to

achieve zero technical defects on the product development side.

To combat this non-functional view of fragrances, there is no question that our industry must do more homework. We need to establish the direct relationship between the use of fragranced products and the benefit which can and does result. We need to create the watershed documents which establish the positive value of fragrance aesthetics against which trade-offs may be measured. What we need to document is what we have all experienced; that fragrance can create an unquestionable and direct positive affect upon attitude, mood, and behavior.

Unfortunately, the continued creativity of many of those in the industry has resulted in fueling one of the most powerful arguments against my "call to arms," and I assure you it is a counterargument which I have heard more than once; namely, that the industry has succeeded in developing better and better products in spite of ever-increasing constraints, and that it will continue to do so in the future.

The argument is persuasive though not correct. Our industry has succeeded in finding creative responses to many new sets of conditions.

Chemists have found new routes for making the familiar less expensive, and they've created stronger, more stable, more varied odors to add to the palette of the perfumer. Something a

ASP Past Presidents: (top row) Henry Weiner, Robert Gaudelli, Morrison Patterson, (center row) John Porter, Jack Funesti, Emil Buongiorno, Lawrence Janosky, (bottom row) Edward Shuster, Simone Fedak, Victor Di Giacomo, and Jacques Masson.

Leonardo could never have hoped for.

Perfumers continue to accept the challenge, and find new ways to take "the leftovers" and create beauty and excitement; making seven dollars smell almost like seventy. Yet, that very creativity has lulled us all into expecting one more miracle to follow the last one. Not that I have lost faith in our creativity but, as with the issue of shrinkage margins, there is a limit and I believe we have passed it.

We cannot continue to accept the ever-more-pervasive regulation and ever-increasing technical constraint without adequately defending aesthetics before the fact, before we experience ever shorter product life cycles, before we lose ever more consumers to the ranks of the unscented. There is little doubt that both may result from the unspoken, sometimes poorly focused but significant dissatisfaction with the products that are marketed. Perhaps it is time to recognize that Chanel's continued success is in great part a tribute to its passionate adherence to the aesthetics of their products. Conversely many of our recent now-you-see-it, now-you-don't launches stand as mute testimony to the unseen trade-offs. I believe it is not only time to recognize these issues, but time to act.

I must also recognize, however, that eliminating regulation and constraint, technical or otherwise, is not the solution. There is no doubt that the industry needs to arrive at standards of practice, limits of usage and test protocols. We need to have review boards which insure the reasonable safety of our products. This we have done and should continue to do. Marketers must look to their own interests of regulatory conformity, product safety, quality, reliability, and cost control. Nonetheless, our general acceptance of the need for regulation does not mean that we must accept it all, unquestioningly.

The answer to the apparent riddle involves nothing more complex than reaffirming the rightful and necessary place of aesthetics in the hierarchy of product development issues.

Perfumers must remain the staunchest advocates of aesthetics. When too much has been traded off, too many limitations applied, then the perfumer must accept the added challenge of creating the aesthetic alternative, and must argue for its rightful position among the submissions. There must also be an eager and informed audience.

Those in research and development must consider fragrance aesthetics just as important as any other functional aspect of the product, and keep aesthetics in the forefront of development

issues. Marketing groups should themselves become advocates for aesthetic benefit and ensure that the effect of corporate policy is very carefully considered. The need to ensure that their own market research methodology is capable of recognizing the benefit of high standards of aesthetics.

I would like to offer some further suggestion which may help in controlling the rampant growth of burdensome constraint. (Doesn't that sound like an unbiased, scientifically objective statement?) The suggestion develops from one concept that I describe as zero-based project planning.

Zero-based project planning may be defined as the need to justify the appropriateness and necessity of all constraints applied to projects. Where trade-offs are deemed necessary and worth the calculated loss of aesthetics, then these determinations should be made at the highest possible levels. Where the effect of the trade-off is not known, this determination should become an essential part of the early stages of the project. Moreover, the constraints, and their underlying assumptions, should be spelled out in each project document.

This explicit delineation of the constraints will help focus attention on them and help encourage constructive challenge and re-definition. Scrap your photo copier and abandon the boilerplating in your word processor, thus forcing the definition for each project with no carryover from the last. Unless marketers can reasonably convince themselves that their particular list and its order of priority is proprietary, then it should be shared, at least to the extent possible, with suppliers. This will also serve to encourage further input and exchange.

Coupled with the advocacy previously described, this project planning should serve to avoid the worst excesses of creeping constraint. Furthermore, we could benefit from considering our options in the broadest possible context. Take for example our industry-standard-view of shelf life and its far reaching affect upon packaging, product functionality, aesthetics, and product costs. We assume that our products must achieve a one to three year shelf life, and that this shelf life expectation translates into X number of weeks at elevated temperature, Y number of hours UV exposure, etc. etc. As a direct result of this shelf life assumption, we may well be missing an opportunity to give the consumer better aesthetics and to reduce costs. This piece of seeming magic would be relatively easy through shelf dating of products. Find a lower cost package that is not everlasting. Use a fra-

grance that smells great but is not infinitely stable. Tell consumers to look for date codes to insure that the product is still "in date" before buying.

You might well improve consumer satisfaction for the majority while still protecting the few against the old-package-on-the-back-of-the-shelf syndrome. The idea is not revolutionary, but rather represents the kind of thinking which might help release us from increasing constraints.

Consider your options carefully and creatively. Work to maintain and improve aesthetics wherever possible. The alternatives are not at all attractive.

The Downward Aesthetic Spiral

For want of aesthetics, a consumer was lost
For want of a consumer, a brand was lost
For want of a brand, a company was lost
For want of a company, a supplier was lost
For want of a supplier, a perfumer job was lost
For want of a perfumer, aesthetics were lost



Joseph Forkish has experienced quite an impressive career in the fragrance industry.

Mr. Forkish holds a bachelors' degree from the University of Maryland. He began his career as a marketing manager for Ultima and served in a variety of other administrative positions at Revlon.

He then joined Max Factor and spent the next ten years there, during which time he served as Vice-President of International Marketing, controlling the marketing of popularly-priced Max Factor products. Also during his tenure, he was appointed Executive Vice-President and General Manager of Halston Fragrances, and initiated and guided this division to well-documented success until his departure from that division in 1979.

Mr. Forkish joined Jovan, Inc. in January 1982 as Vice-President and General Manager of the Jovan Operating Division. His responsibility centers predominantly in the management of the day-to-day operations, along with those in the new products, marketing, and advertising areas for all other divisions of Jovan, Inc. This includes Yardley of London, OMNI Cosmetics Corp., Beecham Cosmetics and Lancaster, U.S.A.

Mr. Forkish will share some of his views on what makes a successful fragrance launch.