

# From Creation to the Retail Shelf

By M. E. Patterson, PPF International, Ramsey, New Jersey

The subject, "From the Creation to the Retail Shelf," from the standpoint of an American perfumer in an American fragrance compounding house presents much to think about.

First of all, do we have a problem—or does everything work so well from creation to the retail shelf that there is nothing to worry about? I think not. I have had the good fortune in my career to have been a creative perfumer, as well as having been involved in the purchase of raw materials, production, and contact with customers on their final selections for the retail shelf. Let's take each of the above one at a time.

*First—the creative perfumers.* Do they have any worries after creating? After all, their job is to create. Why should they worry about anything else? How about the availability of materials for starters? I can remember a few years ago a perfumer creating a fragrance for a mass market product involving large tonnage and using a very rare essential oil that had a worldwide production of only a few kilos. This could have been a total disaster. Fortunately, it was caught in time, *before the submission.*

It is essential that perfumers have the freedom to use any material they deem necessary to create a fragrance, but perfumers must also use common sense, as well as all the information that is available about a material. The perfumer of today cannot simply create and then walk away; the days of trial and error perfumery are long gone. Products have become more complex, and the perfumer must understand the nature of the product.

We, at PPF, spend a lot of time with our product research area to test a raw material individually in different types of bases to see how stable it is and how much odor value we can get from it in

a given base. This information is given to the perfumer who works to create a stable and a good dollar value fragrance for a given product.

Once the perfumer has created a fragrance, it should be checked in the intended base for stability and odor value as well. This should be done with a number of basic tests, such as accelerated oven tests, room temperature light and dark, refrigerated samples and possibly UV, for approximately three months. Once this has been completed and the data is satisfactory, for all practical purposes one should now have a stable, cost efficient, recreatable and reproducible product. We also run a vulnerability program to assess raw material implications when we submit for significant briefs. This enables us to foresee any major problem prior to the submission.

I will only touch on safety briefly, as the whole subject is being covered in detail elsewhere in the proceedings. However, it is important that the perfumer create a fragrance which meets country or customer specifications. Our position on this is to store our own and our clients' safety criteria in the computer. The perfumer's assistants, working to input a formula in the labora-

**The three panelists for the session Fragrances from Production to Market are (from left) M. E. Patterson, Paul Johnson and John Hillier. The full texts of their presentations begin on this page.**

## Fragrances from Production to Market

tory, are alerted on the terminal screen if there is a safety restriction on a material. Each formula is cleared for safety, either ours or our customer's, before an *official company code* is placed on it and a submission made to the customer.

Practicability—what is it? Is it really necessary? I think it is. Do you really need that one to one hundred and twenty-eight percent (1:128%) solution of material "X" at zero point zero five (0.05) in your formula? Is it really affecting the odor, or just adding to the cost? I do agree that trace components can be necessary, but the perfumer must look at the need in the formula, and when the formula is scaled up for production, can it physically be weighed into the formula? The perfumer has a responsibility to create a fragrance that not only meets the requirements of the customer, but that is reproducible and practical as well as safe.

*Second—Raw material purchasing.* Easy, buy the material at the cheapest price, sit back and read the newspaper. Wrong. In 1974 during the petrochemical problems and panic commodity buying, the industry separated the order placers from the real purchasing agents. Purchasing is a very important part of getting a fragrance onto the retail shelf in whatever form.

Once the formula has been created, the purchasing agent should be able to secure not only the most cost effective, but the best reproducible material available. By watching the politics of the world, the dollar exchange rates, the climatic conditions, or anything else that may affect the availability of a raw material, the purchasing agent is a very important part of the team that brings the fragrance to the market.

*Third—Production.* A big heated, jacketed tank, a mixer and off we go. Sounds easy, after all, it's just a list of items and percentages on a computer print-out. Let's see—we can heat the five percent coumarin and the two percent vanillin with the ten percent ethyl acetate and five percent orange oil and maybe throw in a little of that cherry base. After we've heated all of this mixture, we can now add the rest of the good stuff, right? That's great if you're in the business of making potpourri. I don't think most of us are in the business of making potpourri, but rather in the business of selling properly produced and reproducible fragrances. Compounding is a skill and good compounders are a very important part of the project of getting a fragrance on the shelf.

*Fourth—Customer assistance.* The customer has a product that is being designed for a young active sportswoman. Great—let's give them a lily of the valley fragrance. Wrong. Lily of the valley is not the right fragrance for a young, active sportswoman. Lily of the valley has basically been associated for years with the older woman. The perfumers can be and should be the first people to be involved in a project. They can design a fragrance that will promote that total project. They can make it for the young attractive sportswoman, for the orange and red package that it will be put in, and even help the advertising claims of the product being fresh and clean. Too often the fragrance becomes an afterthought of the marketing department or the R & D department who are busily designing the product and the concept. The fragrance can make or break the product. Our companies should offer and our customers should expect the help of the perfumer at the concept stage of a new product.

In summing up, the perfumer, the purchasing agent and the production people are all very important parts of the total team that will promote, from the creation to the shelf, a successful product.

Address correspondence to Mr. M. E. Patterson, PPF International, 50 Williams Drive, Ramsey, New Jersey 07446 USA. 