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Turn the carton upside-down

Turn the carton up carefully

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BRAND PROFILE

REPACKAGING OLD NAVY

by Leah Genuario

Known for bringing trendy fashions to the whole family at reasonable prices, Old Navy recently undertook a comprehensive makeover of its "furnishings line" (think socks and boxers).

You've got yours, and I've got mine.

For anyone who watched even a fair amount of television in the days leading up to Christmas, this little phrase set to music is probably indoctrinated.

Males and females of all ages consider the retailer a one-stop-shop, but not everyone in the family wants the same thing. Rugged dad isn't into donning the same pom-pom sweater as preppy mom. So if the clothes aren't the same, why should the packaging be? For fall 2007, Old Navy decided to individualize more than just clothing—to play off of its familiar marketing message and tailor its packaging to different shopper segments.

It may not be top of mind with consumers, but packaging actually plays an important role at Old Navy, heavier in some areas like the retailer's bread-and-butter furnishings line, which features such basics as socks, shoes and underwear. Consider that the fall 2007 upgrade to the men's and boys' packaging has already resulted in a visible jump in profitability for the line.

> TIME FOR A CHANGE

Prior to the redesign, all furnishings items were sealed in polybags with integrated plastic hangers and flexographic-printed graphics. Under the old system, it didn't matter if the product inside was for men or women, young or old. It was a basic packaging system for basic products. And at six to 15 cents per package, it was also incredibly economical. >

> This peak-top carton has the look of an inter-office envelope, with a string tab, "handwritten" graphics and other details that reflect a military surplus inspiration.



Despite the cost advantages, though, packaging was missing the opportunity to connect with consumers. In the case of the men's line, "it was a happy family look for the men's division that didn't fit in with the shop," says Jason Rosenberg, senior packaging designer for Old Navy.

The merchandizing team wanted to get away from the polybag because "it felt very commodity and value," explains Brent Seward, who serves in label and packaging sourcing for the San Francisco-based retailer. "The desire was to elevate [the] packaging to make it more relevant in the marketplace."

In short, it was time for a change. Educated to the problems with the current furnishings packaging, the professionals behind the Old Navy brand got to work to redesign the men's and boys' furnishings line (the women's and girls' lines have not yet been overhauled, though Rosenberg says it's in the plans).

Rosenberg served as the "general contractor" guiding the design and art direction for the project and working with about 20 individuals culled from a variety of disciplines—members from the design, editorial, digital production, project management and sourcing departments.

The team's task was to create packaging that would feel rugged, relaxed and fun. Of course, it also needed to fit into the overall brand image.

The new packaging also had functional requirements. It had to hold up to the rigors of shipping and remain serviceable in a store setting.



"The desire was to elevate [the] packaging to make it more relevant in the marketplace."

—Brent Seward

structures needed to be strong enough to hang on walls, for instance, and also to offer customers the ability to open and feel the garments.

Affecting 80 SKUs throughout its U.S. and Canadian stores, the packaging project, which also included a new box architecture, turned out to be one of the largest packaging initiatives in Old Navy history, says Rosenberg. And, remarkably, the initiative moved from the approval stage to the shelf within five months.

> THE FINAL LOOK

The concept of a military surplus store served as the backdrop for the project. But staying true to that design concept, while adhering to strict budget considerations, was a challenge. "Cost was a huge driver for the type of materials that we were able to use," says Rosenberg. "One of the biggest challenges was to keep it reasonable. At Old Navy, every penny counts."

Some initial ideas fell prey to cost considerations, including the use of photographic edges and faux wax seals. But in the end, the design concept was captured and translated in a variety of ways. To begin, the packages were printed on 16-point coated-one-side paperboard using five-color offset printers. In an unusual move, the uncoated side of the paperboard was printed to create the look of kraft paper.

Rosenberg also spent time researching common office supplies that could be incorporated into the packaging, examining invoices, tape, envelopes, paper clips and file folders to find just the right source materials. "The goal was to try and make each package unique, something that [customers] could own or feel was made for them exclusively," says Rosenberg.

Each package was also differentiated with slightly varied stamps, symbols and "handwritten" graphics that were well-executed with sophisticated printing techniques.

"The time we put into ensuring the handwriting and stamps would look realistic paid off," says Rosenberg, whose own handwriting graces the

> UV spot coatings give a "hand packaged" feel to the shoe packaging, making it appear as if each box was sealed with packing tape.