

Label Design that Captures a Customer's Attention, Meets Budget and Your Needs

By Damion Hickman

Nineteen years ago, when I was just getting started in the graphic design industry, a small label company gave me a chance to design labels for their customers. In college, I wasn't really taught how to effectively design based on the customer's needs—or maybe I just skipped the day this was taught. Looking back, it seemed that designing “something cool” was all that school required.

Then, real world reality hit. I remember coming up with a wonderful, “cool” design for a line of sunscreen products, but there was just one problem: my draft resembled their competitor's products. Four times I had to start over for that customer, coming up with different directions each time. I was disappointed, but it taught me early on that researching the market and really listening to what the customer needs are key ingredients to developing an effective label.

Designing a Label to Beat the Competition

Many times our customers don't know exactly what they're looking for in their label designs, but they do know that they need something to beat the competition.

Labels are important sources of information for consumers since they spell out everything about the product. In the case of a wine label, it tells the type and origin of the wine. The label is often the only resource a buyer has for evaluating the wine before purchasing it. The challenge is to design something that sells the product and stands out over the competition. A label's function is to attract attention, communicate a message and persuade the consumer to buy. A good label does all three things simultaneously.

My label design projects have grown in complexity and volume over the last 19 years. I've learned along the way that the marketplace changes constantly and brands are competing for market share that is hard to gain and easy to lose. That means my job as a graphic artist is constantly changing as well. I always try to keep an open mind to new design ideas, while learning as much as possible about my client's product. Product labeling, still one of the strongest key physical connections to a brand, is becoming even more relevant and powerful in evolving marketing strategies.

100 Wine Design Projects, and Growing

My business has grown and now I manage a small design agency. Over the past 15 years, we've designed wine labels for roughly 100 different wineries and vineyards. We've designed labels for celebrities, major sporting events and organizations. We've designed so many pharmaceutical, nutraceutical and cosmetic labels that I could probably fill a store with the products containing our labels.



Our agency looks at each label project individually and we develop the design to perfectly match the customer's needs. Designing wine labels is very much like designing a logo. The object is to design something that represents the brand in a relatively limited amount of space.

Designing with Your Bottom Line in Mind

Another challenge we constantly face is project budgets. Our team has the knowledge to design something effective for our customers and also keep production and printing within a realistic price range. We've worked with customers who started out with one designer, and then asked us to "fix" their art or adjust it so they could get it printed cost effectively.

Looking for a small run of labels? No problem. We understand that it small runs are most likely to be printed digitally, so we're not going to waste your time and money trying to develop an area on the label for foil stamping or embossing. Maybe you are developing only one product now, but have plans to roll that into a product line in the future. We'd look at the initial design with the mindset of how to expand effectively to the other product designs so we wouldn't be faced with a design problem later.

'The Look' Matters

With all of the labels and packaging projects we've designed, I still find myself making my purchases based on how the product packaging and labeling looks. I believe most consumers make the subconscious decision that if the labeling looks good, the product must be good, too. In a way, that may be true. If the manufacturer spent the time with a designer to get the label the best it can be, they probably invested that type of development time with what's inside the package as well.

If you are developing a new product or revamping the look of a current product, take some time to make the label the absolute best it can be. Your effort will get the attention of a customer who is making a quick decision on which product to purchase. And who isn't trying to make a quick decision these days?

*Our design team is ready to discuss your label project with you, whether it's a small product launch or a complete line of products. We offer a free consultation and cost effective design solutions. Our work can be seen at **www.damionhickman.com***

-Damion Hickman
Principal



DAMION HICKMAN DESIGN, INC.
1760 Kaiser Avenue, Irvine, CA 92614