



INTRODUCING YOUR CONSUMABLE BRAND IN A CUSTOM FLEXIBLE PACKAGE FOR THE FIRST TIME: FIVE IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

There are many factors to consider when moving a product into a custom flexible package. Whether you're considering using flexible packaging for the first time or expanding your SKU's already packaged in a pouch, the design and functionality of the packaging you choose is critical. The stakes are big and brand owners demand a high confidence level in the manufacturer's attention to detail, from quality control to controlling costs. Before committing to packaging your consumable brand in a custom flexible package, there are several considerations that are important to know and understand. From soup to nuts, both literally and figuratively, we've broken it down to the five essential decision categories for achieving a successful transition.

1. Functional Requirements

At the foundational level, it's imperative that your product's packaging function flawlessly for its users. The performance and ultimate success of your brand depends on it. A package that's attractive, durable and convenient to store and use, such as a reclosable stand up pouch (SUP), will enhance the brand's image by improving the perception of its quality.

Of equal importance are the barrier properties of the package that directly impact shelf life. Choosing the best option for each specific product involves selecting the right combination of materials, the appropriate gauge of each layer, and other factors including protection from light and UV as well as moisture and oxygen. An open, continual dialogue is needed to ultimately identify and determine the right combination of protective properties to be engineered into a custom lamination that will deliver the performance characteristics your product requires. For example, if you manufacture a crunchy snack product, protection from moisture is critical to ensure a positive customer experience because moisture is the mortal enemy of crunchy snacks.

When deciding on materials, it's about striking the right balance between protection and economics. Engineering packaging for a two year shelf life when your product has a 30 day average turnover is an unnecessary expense. We'll bring recommendations to the discussion based on our experience with other customers who are packaging a product similar to yours. We've found this to be especially helpful when working with startups that by their very nature do not have an in-house package engineering and materials expertise. This also provides a good platform from which to select a final construction.

2. Printing and Graphics

Visually speaking, your package needs to effectively represent your brand through color, great design and quality printing. There are many options and choices in the printing process and one of the big decisions when transitioning to flexible packaging for a first time is whether to use a printed label or a printed pouch. The decision is driven by many variables, including your current production schedule and associated volumes as well as planned future increases. Pre-printed labeling takes time to apply and can impact production, even in-line. As volume increases, so does the aggregate time spent to apply a label. At some volume, there will be a point at which the impact on productivity to apply a label is also measurably impacting your sales. Hitting this tipping point should be the signal for the brand owner that a change is required. In addition to the resulting switch generating production efficiencies, concurrent benefits include an enhanced consumer experience and improved brand perception.

Printing choices such as line or spot color printing vs. process or CMYK printing and special finishes like matte or high gloss are part of the overall decision making process for your flexible package. Flexographic printing (flexo for short), a process that uses a flexible relief printing plate made from plastic, rubber or a polymer, is the primary process used to print flexible packaging. With recent advances in flexo printing technology, production times and costs have been reduced, while the quality of printing has improved. The option of high definition flexo printing can produce graphics that are indistinguishable from the more expensive gravure print process.

Plate requirements and cost are an important consideration for first time flexible packaging customers to understand, as it can be a significant front-end expense. The number of SKU's can impact costs accordingly. Any change in design requires different printing plates, even if it's a small change like a few ingredients or some aspect of the nutritional information. The unit cost for a printed package is reduced via amortization and the economies of scale; as the volume of printed packages increases, the cost per package decreases because the fixed plate costs decrease as a percentage of the total cost of packaging. Higher volumes per production run also reduce unit costs because the fixed cost components of printing, e.g., set-up and clean up time, are spread across a larger base. If volume is increased enough due to the success of the brand growth, the plate cost becomes inconsequential. When working with a converter that offers a lifetime plate replacement guarantee, the brand owner will realize even more savings for the duration of the relationship.



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3. Package Size

There's a lot that goes into determining package size besides the contents alone. The thought process behind what will work best for any given product is multi-dimensional. How is the consumer interacting and using the package? Is it single serve or multi serve? Does a hand need to have direct access to the contents or are the contents to be poured out? These answers become part of an extensive process to identify the right size, dimensions and features for the ideal packaging solution. We'll offer recommendations factoring in our experience with similar products.

There are many variables, including the weight and density of the product, that go into choosing the "best" dimensions and construction of the package. Interactions between package material and product ingredients are essential considerations when choosing package size. Manufacturing efficiencies that are impacted by dimensions are also something to consider. The ratio between the actual dimensions of a package and the volume of the production run becomes an important element because it can significantly impact pricing, encompassing raw materials, fixed costs and amortization over time. When it comes to package size, it's important to strike a balance between what's best for the product and the consumer experience.

4. Recloseable Requirements

When transitioning to flexible packaging for the first time, a key consideration, in addition to the protective qualities required, is whether the package will be opened and closed multiple times or if it is designed for single or limited use. For multiple access products to be maintained in an optimal state, the decision about a recloseable feature is significant. There are different zipper profiles and other recloseable options available so when

choosing, considerations should include expected product life span after opening, user type, size of the package, type of use and the degree of protection required. The number of times the package is reopened and reclosed can affect selection of the reclosure feature. For example, a 25 pound bag of dog food will experience many more openings and closings than one with a product volume of 5 pounds. The type of closure and primary user category can also impact the selection process. If a segment of potential users is the baby boomer generation, they may be starting to face dexterity challenges that can be addressed with closure options that incorporate easy-to-open-and-close features.

5. Timeline Expectations

For new orders, i.e., a never before manufactured bag or pouch, you should anticipate a 5-6 week turnaround from when you give final signoff to the artwork to when the product is ready to ship from the manufacturer. For reorders without changes, the turnaround is generally reduced by one to two weeks. Be aware that production timing may fluctuate because it is influenced by a number of other variables including availability of the raw materials and how many orders are in the queue.

Whether your product package contains people food or pet food, medical products or health and beauty products, we are here to help you find the best solution. As a vertically integrated manufacturer of flexible packaging, we work with customers to identify the most cost-effective solution for their particular needs. Whether or not you are new to using flexible packaging for your products, we will be happy to answer all of your questions and work hard to find the right solution for your unique situation.



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About LPS Industries

John M. Robinson founded LPS Industries in 1959 primarily as a converter of military specification barrier materials. Today, under the direction of Madeleine D. Robinson, LPS Industries is a diversified manufacturer and leader in the flexible packaging industry, providing packaging solutions for a diverse range of markets, including medical, food, transportation, electronics and agricultural. LPS Industries is an ISO 9001:2008 certified company offering three separate product groups: flexible packaging, coated products and general packaging systems and accessories. Modern production facilities and state-of-the-art equipment assure all products are manufactured to the highest quality standards. Research and development are also an LPS priority – a modern R&D laboratory is dedicated to product innovation and quality assurance. LPS is a woman owned and operated company.

For more information on LPS Industries and its flexible packaging products and services, please visit lpsind.com.