

# Designers – the pillar of point of purchase



**Steve Howell**  
is Director of Creative  
Instore Solutions.

In industries like advertising, clothing, accessories and architecture, designers are placed on the pedestal and worshipped. And with good reason, as they define the brand, product and everything it stands for. However, in areas like graphic, web and POP design, the designer's job is sometimes tantamount to a back-end process that focuses on execution of briefs. Beyond recognition at awards like POPAI which bring designers to the forefront, as an industry, are we working with our designers or against them? How often do we acknowledge their role in delivering award-winning products.

I sat down with my design head, Jeremy Davis, to find out how he sees design in POP changing the playing fields, both locally and globally. What is the impact of Australian agencies winning global awards and generating multi-market sales orders against bigger markets with more opportunities like the US and UK?

## Move your back-end to the front

Being involved from the get go in the client briefing stage is the best gift any organisation can give its designers. According to Jeremy, he has seen the economic benefits of moving designers to a client interface role from the start – working alongside the sales team.

When you are trying to describe design value in business terms to a potential client, let the designers do the talking. Working the sales and design teams together will give you the power to understand the situation from every dimension – and come up with solutions. Bringing designers to the forefront also ensures they get to not just understand the brief, but also the brand values of the client.

Working together, let your sales and design teams show clients functionality and product differentials through a great presentation that helps sell the dream.

## Research, research, research

Creativity often comes with being open to what is taking place in the environment around you, absorbing

information and interpreting it in your own style to match the brief. Jeremy loves going to international trade fairs in the UK and US so he can review systems from these larger markets to gain inspiration and see what can be adapted to the market in Australia. Adaptation of technology in POP is still in its nascent stages in Australia and this is an area he hopes will change soon as he strongly believes that POP is an underrated sales tool often losing out to its big brother – above the line.

Jeremy uses the knowledge from exposure to international POP market executions that are innovative and have yielded fantastic ROI for clients to then explore local market acceptability. But in doing research locally, it isn't and shouldn't be limited to ideas and theories. Go out and see how the idea might fit in Coles, Woolworths, Harvey Norman or any other destination the products are likely to sit in and adapt it. But if you are supplying to a global market, it obviously isn't possible to have all your designers jetting off everywhere. In cases like these, Jeremy still researches his audience – but remotely by speaking to the client to understand the brand and the challenges and reviewing local shopper behaviour.

Jeremy's research process usually involves looking into the brand, its current in-store activities and then exploring what the brand and POP product can become. His advice is not to be restricted by the brief but to explore the shopping environment to identify multiple uses for the units – see if the product can be used at other locations like petrol stations or as exhibition displays or even if its modularity can be shifted and top shelves can be made to counter units. Obviously clients will be satisfied with such economies of scale. But this will only happen if the designers are at the forefront, discussing core issues with clients so they can then use their knowledge and research innovative solutions.

In doing all this, remember that design for its sake is not the hero. Adaptation to address a situation or issue within the environmental factors that guide it is what will set you apart.

## Boundaries and parameters

Designers start working on a clean slate with a blank piece of paper and given their creative thinking, the final sketch can be completely radical. Jeremy's trick (and tip) on controlling the design process is three key words: quantity, budget and timeline. These three simple factors help set the parameters for the process and help deliver on brief.

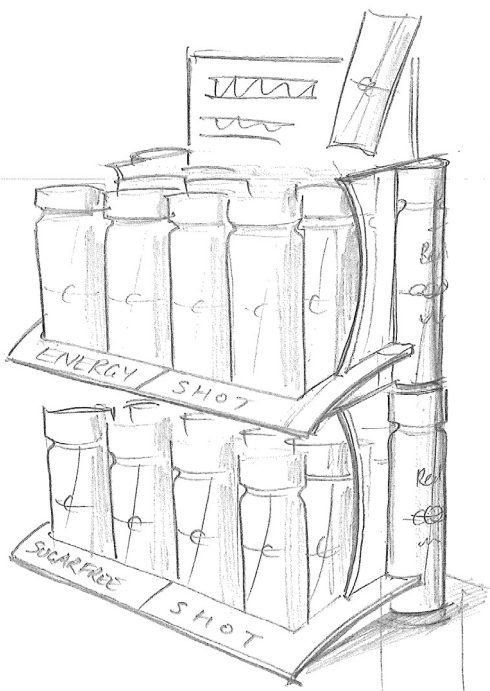
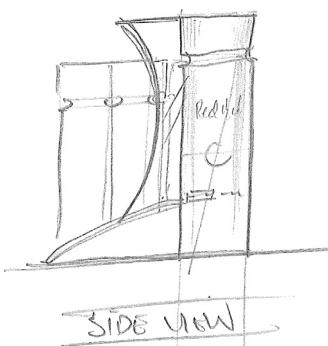
But again, don't let these parameters restrict the creative process. Use them as guidelines and if you feel a creative idea is what best suits the brief and the issue at hand, push for it with the client. Present two or three ideas and justify your reasons for each of them – but do so within the parameters.

One other element to consider within these parameters is where the manufacturing will take place. Manufacturing techniques are different in various countries. In China production is more manual, using hand jigs, while in Australia it is digitally controlled; so be aware of how design principles will affect the manufacturing process, shape of product, cost and the speed of delivery.

## A designer's last words

Jeremy's last words for companies and designers:

- Let the sales and design teams take the client on a journey by involving them and exploring the relationship so the end result is a fantastic product.
- Ambition + Pushing the boundaries = Innovation (there are no shortcuts).
- Don't push radically creative ideas with clients who don't understand it. Work within their parameters to deliver on what you see is fit. Remember, creativity isn't just about design but also on how effective the product is within the brief and budget.
- Apple, Red Bull, Deus Ex Machina – all great examples of design in every element. Likewise, carry your client's brand across different platforms – TV, ATL, BTL and at shopper touch points like POP.
- And finally, and most importantly, translate design value to business ROI. 🛒



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