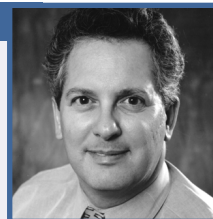


VIEWPOINT

FLEXIBLE INSIGHTS

Shopping for New Flexible Packaging Ideas? Visit Your Local Supermarket

by Dennis Calamusa, Alliedflex Technologies Inc.



If you're like me, you are constantly on the lookout for new ideas and potential market opportunities for innovative flexible packaging solutions. We visit trade shows, conferences, technical forums, and symposiums, hoping to get a glimpse of what the future holds for our industry. These types of venues are an important part of our continuous education process to stay in tune with the latest trends and developments in our industry.

No matter what discipline we are involved with in the flexible packaging industry, we all have a need to be stimulated with fresh, innovative ideas.

What do we do for inspiration until our next flexible packaging event or *Flexible Packaging* magazine arrives? Try visiting your local supermarket! That's right, the supermarket. It doesn't matter which one, how big it is, or where it's located. The supermarket represents the ultimate display of flexible packaging innovation.

Take some quality time and casually stroll down the aisles, shopping cart optional, and relish in the delight of how our industry has contributed toward the successful sales and marketing campaigns of both the major and minor brands from around the world. Let's take that stroll together and see the impact that flexible packaging is having in the market, the "supermarket", that is...

Refrigerated meat, dairy, and freezer case

From the deli counter to the fresh meat, dairy, and freezer case, we see numerous examples of how flexible packaging offers the specific barrier properties needed to protect our foods and provide extended shelf life and marketing appeal of these products to the savvy consumer.

Flexible packaging innovation is extended to the home with the incorporation of zip-

pers (press-to-close and "slider" varieties) for the continued extension of quality and convenience even after the package is opened by the consumer. Reclosable flexible packaging has proven to dramatically grow an already mature category and actually create or invent new value added products.

Snacks

Speaking of dominance in a category, the snack aisle represents flexible packaging at its finest. The array of bags is staggering, including a multitude of sizes, styles, and multi-packs all beautifully printed and providing the film characteristics to keep your favorite snack fresh and crisp with each and every serving. Notice how the resealable standup pouch has infiltrated the classic bag-in-box retail shelf for cookies, biscuits, and snack mix items, providing an alternative package format to the consumer.

Beverage

This is an interesting category to analyze and also a growing user of flexible packaging. Flexible packaging is utilized in shrink and stretch film for unitizing or overwrapping multi-packs of PET bottles and "juice boxes". Look closer; the labels on many of these beverage bottles represent a major part of the flexible packaging industry. These stretch or shrink labels are brilliantly printed to prominently display our brand's favorite colors and unique designs to differentiate them from the competition.

Another beverage category beginning to embrace flexible packaging is the single-serve "standup pouch", targeted to the six-year-old through 12-year-old age demographic. This segment has been dominated by a single brand for more than a decade and a half; however, it is now joined by both major and minor players all eagerly looking to satisfy the demand of this thirsty

consumer. The volume in this category is estimated to be approaching 3 billion units and is growing rapidly.

Produce

Flexible packaging has revolutionized and even made possible the pre-washed salad kit category, in addition to peeled and washed carrots, grapes, dried fruit, etc. Wow! This is one of the fastest growing flexible packaging categories in recent history. Creative new products are constantly being introduced and enthusiastically welcomed by the consumer, all perfectly suited to our busy life styles. We are even starting to see retort pouches of tuna, salmon, and diced chicken appearing in the produce department to enhance the creativity and quick preparation of a healthy meal.

If you are lucky, you may even bump into a new product introduction that is being test-marketed for the first time. This is why I like to visit supermarkets all over the country and the world. Supermarkets truly offer global insights into flexible packaging that are not available through any other resource. Think of the supermarket as your "packaging library". And when you begin to get bored with supermarkets, you can always move on to super stores, club stores, and convenience stores.

Happy Hunting! 🍷

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