

Packaging design and printing

The label is one of the most important pieces of the marketing mix. Research has shown that many consumers' buying decision is based around a wine's packaging. Other factors include the variety, the region and of course the brand.

In order to get the best label design possible, you should talk to, and even brief a number of designers.

Many designers are not specifically wine label designers, and this often makes the process more labour intensive.

Companies such as The Collective, Tucker Design and LKS Design specialize in wine labels. Their work and fees usually reflect this.

Other designers such as Pinnacle Creative and Designhaus also specialize in wine labels; however their fees are often lower and more manageable for the smaller winemaker.

By using a specialist wine label designer, you'll ensure that the mandatory requirements on the label are taken into account. E.g. the size of "750ml" and the knowledge that it must be on the front label.

If you decide to use a general designer, i.e. one that designs brochures or logos etc, be prepared to carefully guide them through all the mandatory requirements of the label. This is especially the case for international labels as they have very specific, market orientated requirements.

The design brief should cover the following:

Background – the story and history of the brand, including the people and winemakers. This will give the designer a firm understanding of the business and so will be in a better position to design something relevant.

Brand Proposition – A brand proposition or essence is often expressed as a single minded idea, theme or group words that forms the core of tactical marketing communications.

A brand proposition should be:

1. Established from the brands core values.
2. Relevant and engaging to the customer.
3. Able to generate a positive emotional attachment from the customer.
4. Consistent in and outside of the business.
5. Continually referred to.
6. Consistent across all forms of marketing communications (e.g. packaging, advertising, PR etc).
7. Adaptable to business environments.
8. Known and believed in by the business partners.

What Needs to be Achieved – This is basically what is says. Explain to the design that you need, for example, three designs, with full bottle mock ups including front and back labels, capsules and cartons. If you have decided on which bottle you want to use, specify it here.

Pricing – Give the designer the details on what retail price point the wine will be selling for. This ensures that the labels will look the goods. As well, it will give the designer an idea of what embellishments could be used on the labels. I.e. it's no good using all the foils and grains for a wine that will sell for \$5.00 as the printing costs will not fit within your budgeted cost of goods.

Varieties – List the varieties and vintage of the wine so as to ensure that you don't need to make too many changes to the final artwork (as this costs money and time).

Mandatory Requirements – List these requirements for the designer. I.e. Standard drinks, alc/vol, address, etc. Again, this will save time and money later on.

Timing – Specify the dates that you want to have (i) initial concepts, (ii) agreed changes, (iii) final designs, (iv) finished art, and (v) printing. It's also worth specifying which printer you are using, as often the designer will know the limitations of each label printer and so not create a design that physically can't be printed.

Budget – Always ask for a written budget prior to giving the designer the final go ahead.

Label copy

What's written on the label is almost as important as what the label looks like. The label copy really needs to encompass a couple of objectives. It needs to help sell the wine by creating interest from the buyer. As well, it needs to reassure the customer that what's in the bottle is in line with their preferred flavour profiles.

Whilst creating this background and description, keep in mind that what ever you write, should tie back into your brand proposition. If, for example, your brand proposition is a fun and cheeky brand, then the copy needs to reflect this. It's no use waffling on about malolactic fermentation and finer details of oak maturation. A good example of this is the Devils Lair label. This was written by Devils Lair marketing Manger well before Southcorp took over the company and is still used by Fosters years later because it works well with the brand.

When writing the copy, keep in mind the consumer. Think about some of the descriptors that are used by your customers (the people that enjoy your wine!). Often when consumers like a red wine it's because it's "smooth". Without dumbing down the copy, just keep in mind who you are addressing.

For example, many people can understand and relate to descriptors such as 'fresh' and 'crisp', rather than 'balanced acid structure'.

Printers

Once the design of the label is almost completed, it's worth while talking to a label printer. Don't get the designer to take the design to finished art (and charge you accordingly), just to find out from the printer that they can't actually print the thing. This happens quite often. Designer sometimes get carried away with a design and include all sort of embellishments such as gold or silver foil, graining, screens, too many colours etc.

By discussing the design (prior to taking it to finished art stage), you have an opportunity to amend some of the finer points of the design to enable the printer to actually print the label.

As well, the printer could offer you advice on how to save some costs without changing the finished look of the label. For example, using an embossed grain instead of expensive paper stock.

The three key things to look out for when selecting a printer for your labels are quality, value and service.

I have used most of the label printers and a few stick out for the wrong reasons. Poor quality is just not acceptable for your labels considering it is usually the first part of your wine that the consumer sees. Some printers lack the equipment, and some just lack the willingness to offer a solution to your printing requirements.

Value is also important. Some of the cheaper printers may be OK to use for labels that are on stock standard paper, with little or no embellishments. However, the top quality printers (who may be more expensive) may still offer value as the finished label is of the utmost quality and consistency. The better

printers do not need to be spoon fed, allowing you to get back to the more important part of your business – selling wine!

Once you have decided on the printer for you and had them met with your designer, you can get down to printing the label. If it is a new design, always do a press check. Never rely on colour print-outs to sign off a label.

For the cost of a trip to either Sydney or Adelaide (depending upon where your printer is located), you will know exactly what the label looks like. You will also be in a position to make some slight changes on line. This is important, as often the colour proofs that the designer gives you to sign off on differs from what the label printer can achieve on line.

Link this trip in with a trade visit or tasting in that particular city.

The other part of the printer that needs consideration is the service that they provide. If the printer has a sales manager in your region it make life a whole lot easier as they can visit your winery and keep you abreast of what's happening in the printing industry. For example, new methods of printing that can help decrease your costs.

Printers with a knowledgeable art department is also beneficial as they can make the relevant changes to vintage, varieties or market requirements (just think about the requirements for the USA or Europe), without the need to go back to a costly designer.

If your printer has a good relation with the company bottling your wine, it also helps make the whole bottling process easier and less stressful.

One last thought – don't get so caught up on the process that you forget the brand proposition. Always come back to this as a checking point for any design or printing work.

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