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# Estée Lauder: A Master in Package Development

By Janet Herlihy, Editor

**A**cknowledged as one of the premier marketers of beauty products around the world, Estée Lauder Company's packaging process is a carefully constructed system that receives input from multi-disciplined groups to maintain a steady stream of innovative, high quality, yet cost effective packaging.

With 19 brands as diverse as the original Estée Lauder, Bobbi Brown, Stila and Laboratoires Darphin (to name just a few), it is critical that the identities of each remain distinct even while the quality of packaging overall meets the high ELC standard of excellence. This is overseen by Roger Caracappa, senior vice president of Global Packaging for the Estée Lauder Companies. Reporting to Caracappa are brand specific development teams directly responsible for all package development relating to each brand.

There are very clear development guidelines. The package development teams, by brand, drive each assignment, working directly with marketing, products and creative, as well as operations. These brand package development teams also have the added responsibility of making sure all corporate guidelines are met. The corporate support teams, headed by Harry Bennett, vice president of Technical Packaging, are directly responsible for engineering, package testing, systems support, regulatory and value analysis. The Innovations team, headed by Gary Korba, vice president of Creative Global Packaging for Innovation, has direct responsibility for capturing breakthrough, commercially available, new package innovations and effectively communicating these concepts to all 19 brands.



The packaging for Stila's Crème Bouquet uses concepts from the Innovations team.

## Sharing the Wealth of Information

Making sure that the latest/best ideas are accessible to the various teams working on packaging was problematic until ELC set up ways to share information. Suppliers are encouraged to bring innovative packaging ideas to the Creative Global Packaging Development group, which selects the most promising for the Innovation Room, a dedicated conference room at the New York headquarters. The Estée Lauder brands can find the best, most innovative materials and technologies available there on display. Those without easy physical access to the Innovation Room can still check out what's there. Caracappa noted, "We created the Innovation Group to capture new ideas from suppliers. Everything is then photographed and available with a detailed explanation through an Internet connection. We've also set up Innovations on Call. And there are development teams in Japan and Paris that also collect and transmit new ideas that are commercially available back to New York—it's proven to be invaluable."



The D&J Lipstick package, developed by the the New Venture Packaging group, has only four parts.

“Our mission is to drive innovation so that people have choices from the beginning of development,” said Korba. “We have more than 1600 ideas in a library and a searchable computer program called Design2Launch System, where the various brand packagers can go to find the information on the ideas, which come from current and new beauty suppliers as well as from other industries, including innovations from the auto, food, toys, furniture, stationery, gifts and compact disc markets.

“We have also created the Material Connection, a database of materials from all different industries, which we can tap into to see what’s out there and then brainstorm to see how we might morph the ideas into something useful for ELC,” Korba added.

“We’ve become a corporate library for ideas. Suppliers know they can submit ideas to us by filling out a form including a complete specifications list.

“Since July 01, we’ve had 148 concepts go to market out of about 800 ideas—that’s 20% over the past three years,” Korba said.

The team scours the world looking for the latest. In late February, Korba had just returned from a trip that took him to Paris, Hong Kong, China, Korea and Tokyo.

“Our strategy is to find ways to improve packaging quality, process and value. We can take on a corporate project such as an initiative to develop childproof closures or look into tamper-evident features for all of ELC packaging.

The group recently did a study on tubes and tube dispensing technology that included information from around the world. “We put together a report and then held meetings with each division to show them what we’d learned about tubes.”

When a project runs across all brands, the Innovation group drives the assignment and them meets with each brand to give the results. “We’re working on a color management process that will allow for precise color matching across numerous different materials.

“We work with major suppliers such as Eastman, DuPont, Clariant and Akso Nobel to understand their capabilities and know what their latest advances are and how we can use them,” Korba added.

The group can also supply design outsourcing and partners with trend analysis companies to be able to identify future style and product directions.

### Being Ahead of the Curve

Caracappa also stressed the importance of staying ahead of the curve. Recently, the Estée Lauder Corp. established the Advanced Package Development team. This team is lead by the Innovations group and schedules regular meetings with Research and Development, in order to combine the two energies and be able to submit proposals for new product formulas as well as new packaging at the same time, rather than packaging getting started once the formula is developed.



Roger Caracappa



Gary Korba



Herve Bouix

“This sharing of information early on in the process of developing a new product is invaluable, especially if a totally new packaging concept is needed, stressed Caracappa.

Korba summed up, “Our mission is not only about the package of the moment, but to be ready for the future too by doing research and developing better processes as well.”

### New Venture Packaging & Special Projects

An international group of package designers based in New York and Paris, headed by Herve Bouix, vice president of the New Venture Packaging and Special Projects group, works to



The 'Dots' compact is an Innovations concept.

create totally new, proprietary packaging concepts. The group, reporting to Corporate Product Development, was established in 1997 to develop "breakthrough packaging," explained Caracappa.

The New Venture Packaging and Special Projects group is about creating totally new package concepts that can take three to five years to bring to fruition. It's a 'blue sky' team that gets assignments to work on new, proprietary projects and also develops breakthrough packaging before brand affiliation, according to Bouix.

Because the New Venture group is split between

Paris and New York, Bouix travels to Europe approximately 10 times a year to stay up to date on the latest high-tech developments to be found there. The group is made up of Christophe Jacob and Francis Corbellini in Paris, and Charles Neuner, Bill Bickford and Jonathan Thayer in New York.

So far, the new venture group has applied for more than 25 patents. "Most of the patented designs are related to makeup packaging," Bouix noted. "There are new launches in color every six months so there's a constant need for new ideas."

A lipstick container developed with D&J, a French manufacturer, is a recent success. "The D&J lipstick reduces the number of parts from six to four," explained Bouix, resulting in a significant savings.

Familiar with the various packaging component manufacturers, Bouix works with suppliers at the invention level of development. He noted, "Sometimes, we start with an idea and go to a company that we know has the expertise to work on it."

"Once or twice a year, the New Venture group has a meeting when they will present 30 to 35 new project ideas to senior management. Sometimes, it's just a rendering of a concept. We get direction whether we should continue to work on each project or not."

The packaging for recent ELC mascara launches was developed by New Venture. "It was our mission to develop new, excellent mascara packaging. It's a huge challenge, and we have really been successful," noted Bouix.

In closing, Caracappa stated, "Before you experience the product, you experience the package. We want that experience to be the best on every level."



The Illusionist Mascara package is a New Venture success story.