

# MASTERING MARKETING



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## PACKAGING THAT SELLS

Packaging is more than just a way to get your product from A to B — it's also an incredibly valuable customer touchpoint. In today's age of "Social Media" moments and You Tube videos, your product packaging is an additional way to get extra marketing mileage for your "brand". A product's packaging communicates many things, from what the product can do for your customers to your company's values. It is important to take some time deciding exactly what you want to accomplish by packaging your item, because for most food products, almost a quarter of the cost per unit that is realized comes from the price paid for packaging.

While the primary function of packaging is often containment, how you package your product and now how that packaging pairs up with your target customers values is emerging as an important product differentiation variable. For example, the emergence of packaged meals and direct to the customer's door delivery has weathered most of the model's growing pains. But how will these models differentiate themselves and attract new customers?

They have already tapped into their target audience's desire for convenience in their food preparation. Since they have identified their customer's key value points, they can start marketing to those as well. ButcherBox is a meat delivery service, which ships 100% grass-fed beef, free range organic chicken and heritage breed pork directly to their customer's door. Vericool, makers of high-performing compostable insulation and recyclable thermal packaging, has announced a \$10M packaging partnership with ButcherBox to provide sustainable packaging to safely deliver their product to their environmentally conscientious customers.

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**Step 1 Know Your Product and Brand**

There are many reasons why we package food for sale.

**Primary Functions**

- ▶ **Containment:** Containing or holding the product without necessarily protecting it is a very basic function of a package.
- ▶ **Protection:** Protecting the product from microorganisms, rodents, dust, external contaminants, humidity, and light is a crucial function. Protection is also the most important consideration in determining shelf life of food products.
  - From intentional tampering
  - From shock and vibration during handling and transportation.



Which of these applies to your product? Is your packaging part of your brand identification- your logo, package size or shape, how it's sealed, disposal of the packaging?

**Does Product and Packaging Stand Out?**

Some experts think that the package design is more important than the product itself for attracting customers. People buy with their eyes. Does your packaging reflect the quality of your product and create a memorable link to make the product easier to find and purchase again?

**Pass the five-year-old test**

If you can describe your product to a five-year-old, send them into a store or into the farmers market to find it, and actually get it, your packaging creates an iconic connection. Consumers will come back week after week looking for it. The key to this stickiness is a distinctive brand mark. For example, you could tell a five-year-old, to get the salt pack with the girl in a yellow coat with an umbrella on it; she will come back with Morton Salt. Similarly, ask for the blue pack with the big black and white cookie splashed in milk, and he will return with a package of Oreos. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/onmarketing/2014/07/23/the-five-things-product-packaging-must-do/#7156a26e3ac4>

**Step 2 Know Your Customer**

Your target market will greatly impact the type of experience your customer will expect on receiving your product.

Being focused on a market niche means that your first concern is not your product, itself, but how your product fits into the needs of the target market that you have chosen. When you are focused on the customer, you will want to learn how your target group relates to these issues. The customer's needs and wants, and how closely they align with the products and services you offer are the bases of your marketing efforts.

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Knowing that your customers like the reassurance of a shrink-wrapped lid on a bottle of BBQ sauce, or that they want 8," rather than 12," pies (as they become empty nesters) can make all the difference between an effective, or ineffective marketing strategy.

The process of framing a niche market takes a bit of work that will have to be re-addressed as your business develops; these questions must be asked regularly – with an openness to realize that the issues and responses will change.

**Step 3 Consider Some Practical Variables**

So, what are the tangible aspects of product packaging that you need to consider?

- ▶ **Durability:** Even the most beautiful package won't make a good impression on your customer is easily damaged. Consider your product and what kind of protection it might need. Is it breakable? You'll definitely want to include elements to protect your product either in the packaging itself or in a separate box.
- ▶ **Function:** Is your product perishable? If so, then your product packaging might need to include an airtight component.
- ▶ **Display and Carrying:** Does your product packaging allow it to display well on a store shelf or on your market table? Odd shaped packages can fall over or are hard display neatly. Does your packaging make it more difficult for your customer to carry or position in their shopping bag?

