

To dispose of POP or not



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I have recently returned from the UK and the US on a whirlwind tour of the global world of POP.

What I was struck by was the proliferation of the use of cardboard and temporary display solutions that seems to be on the increase. As an answer to global warming and the desire to be more 'green' or sustainable in their processes, it seems that cardboard has come through as the front runner solution for retailers and brands across the globe.

However I wonder whether a cardboard solution is really the best answer for the planet, or in fact for a brand's or retailer's ROI?

Temporary solutions inevitably create a greater rotation of 'disposable' displays that need replacing with a whole new unit, only after a short period of time in-store. The rigours of the shop environment tend to make short work of the appearance of cardboard that can break down quickly after installation. This could be compared to replacing a car that breaks down every four years with the same type of car. I think you might stop and wonder if there was a better solution.

As we saw recently at the UN Climate Change Summit in Copenhagen, it is a difficult process to get global leaders to agree what is the best way forward to help stop global warming. Within the world of grocery, it could potentially be as difficult to agree on protocols for brands and retailers alike. It is also something that can't be championed by only one side of the industry; both retailers and brands will need to work together.

First steps are to ask yourself a few simple questions. Is a stand that deteriorates quickly through wear and tear, going to enhance a brand's equity in-store? Is it going to make the retail space look attractive and appealing? Is a stand that needs to be replaced from scratch every second week cost effective? Production and recycling of cardboard uses high amounts of energy, water and bleaching processes to remove dyes and colours. While this isn't that unusual in terms of general manufacturing, it's the frequency that this process occurs, due to the

fact that cardboard and temporary solutions are so disposable, that begs the question – just how sustainable, and how cost efficient is a temporary cardboard solution?

Smart architecture that can stay in-store for longer periods of time that can become attractive and flexible furniture in the retail space is one idea I think worth pursuing. These can be manufactured from recycled plastic, which is then recyclable at the end of its extended in-store life. Energy use and materials are drastically reduced as would production costs over time.

Retailers could take ownership of these stands and rent them out to different brands for set periods of time. The stands could be moved around the retail space to suit different products and promotional uses, but always enabling a brand to achieve the highly sought after goal of 'off-location' prime real estate to hero their product.

Flexibility is the key to such an idea working. The stand would stay the same, with only the graphics changing to accommodate a new product. The brand then has the opportunity to create a real 'wow' factor through its graphics and exciting die-cut shapes for the header. Cardboard could still have a place as an accessory through the header and side cladding, however as it would no longer be used structurally, its environmental impact is reduced. Other alternatives could be electronic media to really make your product message stand out.

In this way, promotional programs can be re-dressed in-store, rather than having to return a stand to a pack centre. A whole leg of the merchandising process is eradicated, reducing transport time, costs and emissions, as well as packing time and warehouse logistics.

If the design is smart, the time to assemble and disassemble is reduced, as is the space needed for storage between promotional periods if needs be. It should function across categories, including but not limited to: confectionery; salty snacks; batteries; DVDs; impulse drinks and e-shots; cough/cold/gum; magazines or books. Options on the same unit could encompass

hang-sell with hooks to shelving, as well as shelf extenders or pods for new SKU promotions.

Brands could also get into this way of thinking, and look to create units to be used across their product range, simply changing up the graphics for each new promotional period. A semi-permanent stand would be ideal for DVDs, having the option to change according to new release promotions. Alternatively impulse snack products could look at a flexible stand that would go from a small-footprint floor stand to counter top in a matter of minutes. Creating a well designed semi-permanent unit can also become a category solution for a brand, which ultimately ends up owning the branding opportunities across all competitors.

If retailers start to take ownership of their key promotional architecture and rent out the space on a weekly or monthly basis, they look to create new revenues streams. If brands take to this method, reducing their merchandising costs becomes a viable option.

What also will follow is a reduction in the disposability of POP solutions by doing away with built-in obsolescence. By reducing the amount of energy and materials needed to be constantly replacing promotional units in-store, the grocery industry can offer a constructive way to make a difference to the future of the planet, in a cost effective and efficient way. 🛒



A semi-permanent tower design that enables re-use across categories, example batteries, snacks and DVDs.

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