

# KEEPING IT REAL; A CONVERSATION WITH TOM NEWMASTER FROM FORCEPKG

## What are the biggest pain points your brand and retail clients face, and what unique capabilities does FORCEpkg bring to the table?

Pain points vary based on product category or the retail channels. Let's say you're a cannabis manufacturer or brand; your challenges are unique to the state where your products are legal. It can be as simple as labeling differences on edibles, or as complex as developing innovations for product dispensing that must meet child-resistant regulations. Then there are layers of complexity around medical vs. recreational products. You've got FDA labeling and Nutrition Facts guidelines, not to mention CBD and THC content. For packaging companies, there's a lot to master.

When it comes to integrated marketing, the buzz is on "Omni-channel." The best definition I've read comes from Aaron Agius who says, "Omni-channel experience is a multi-channel approach to marketing, selling and serving customers in a way that creates a cohesive customer experience no matter how or where the customer reaches out."

## How does your company translate into value for brand owners in terms of better consumer experience, lower cost, speed to market or other advantages?

FORCEpkg has a mobile design studio that we can bring right to the client's door. This enhances collaboration, builds trust and results in better outcomes. Let's be honest, if you're willing to pay, great creativity and brand design aren't hard to find. But if you want inspired problem solving that saves time and money, we've found that direct interaction cuts through a lot of potential roadblocks. Because we have the ability to change the work environment, we can keep it fresh. In fact, we work from anywhere — a craft brewery, a cabin in the woods, on the beach or from a museum.

## What is your sweet spot?

Retail is more stressful today than ever. The demand for speed to market increases. Digital techniques are delivering on consumer experience, but can you afford it? Or can you afford not to adapt? The drumbeat of personalization gets louder as budgets get tighter. And

let's not forget the pressure to deliver on sustainable products and packaging. At FORCEpkg, we think of ourselves as creative problem solvers...not just creative talent. We focus on the business of design and packaging, the cost of pre-media, the most effective channels and how to compete for end-user loyalty.

## What's most important to customers in today's business climate?

You have to ask the right questions. What's going to work for the brand, for the target consumer, for the current economy and for the marketing budget? I have enjoyed some of the biggest wins with intelligently executed strategic enhancements. We were asked to help a client address their packaging expenses and brand positioning. Many would suggest a complete redesign. In this case, what made the most sense was to eliminate SKUs and avoid adding pack-types or designing new packages. Their design wasn't out of date or wrong; they had a business problem. By tackling that, we were able to win their trust, deepen the relationship and go on to create wins for us both.

## What trends are you seeing in brand design?

Every creative brief sermonizes about the Millennial consumer and how to engage them. I'm not buying it. I wonder if we're hitting the target or simply stereotyping a very large group of people, expecting them to all like the same things and react the same ways. Are we just projecting our own idealized expectations and beliefs onto them? My generation created and raised them, so they must be awesome. Actually my kids despise the word Millennials, so that may be a clue to a potential misstep. Something we should all think about.

## What are the keys to a successful client / agency relationship?

Trust is built on consistent integrity in the way you do business. And it goes both ways. I've built my career on trusting people, and I do until they give me a reason not to. So far, it's worked pretty well. In our business, deadlines are everything. Budgets are everything. Getting a great return on investment is

everything. This happens when agency and client have a shared mission, a focused strategy and a plan for contingencies. Everyone starts with good intentions; experience is what gets you over the finish line.

## Where does your design inspiration come from?

Inspiration is everywhere. People-watching is a great source. Becoming a good listener is an important way to get at the heart of what matters. With packaging design, you have to go into stores and look at products in their natural habitat. Many times I can take a product home and notice something I didn't see in the store. Why is that? Was it bad design or does the product message get lost among all the visual noise? This is a great opportunity to turn it into something better. As for fuel, you have to love what you do and truly have fun with design...otherwise this business will eat you alive. Personally, I thrive on the fast pace, the competitive nature of innovation, even staying up late drinking too much coffee. When I launched FORCEpkg, my first thought was, "I'm going to have fun again." Everyday, we make that happen!



### Our services

Packaging & Brand Development, Onsite Project Management & Support, Mobile Unit, Start-Up & Challenger brand base

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