



Tween Sensation

P&G expands its reach within the family tooth-care market with new packaging for the elementary-school set.

As she boarded a flight from her hometown in Alabama back to P&G's headquarters in Ohio, Procter & Gamble senior design manager Tracy Murchison was a little anxious, thinking about the radically different packaging she and her team were working on for the 8-to-12-year-old "tween" market.

But then she met her seat mate. A chatty tween traveling alone, "he was scribbling away in his spiral-bound notebook," Murchison says. When she saw pages covered in doodled graffiti, she breathed a sigh of relief. "It was a tell-tale sign—something tangible—that gave me the assurance we were doing the right thing."

Those doodles (which the boy allowed Murchison to photograph for her team) were along the same urban lines on which P&G had already decided to base its designs for the new tween Pro-Health For Me (PHFM) oral care products. While the PHFM banner, powered by P&G's Oral-B and Crest brands, already had product lines for babies and young children, the tween market represents new territory. The company's research showed that for parents, getting kids (and tweens in particular) to brush their teeth regularly, let alone use mouthwash or floss, is a big challenge. Sara Keating, P&G's associate design director of oral care, global,

notes that tweens can make the task that much more daunting because they have no shortage of opinions on everything—including what Mom brings home for them to clean their teeth.

The research stage

To get a better feel for what tweens and their parents like, the company erected a shopping environment in its Cincinnati headquarters to observe what exactly catches their eye. What they found, Murchison says, is that graffiti-inspired designs are indeed a big draw (which explains why they're so prevalent on t-shirts, sneakers, notebooks, and other merchandise targeting tweens).

Beyond its internal findings, P&G turned to Gelcomm, a branding and package design agency, for additional market insight. In that first year, the creative team immersed itself in the tween culture and market. "One meeting lasted three days," Murchison recalls of the regular communications several times a week between P&G and members of the Gelcomm team.

Gelcomm founder Patricio Fuentes says that P&G wanted a "new visual language" for tooth care that spoke to tweens. While an eye-catching look was the main thrust of the initiative, the packaging



also needed to communicate all of the product attributes to parents—the ones making the purchase. “It’s a fine line how far you can push the creative,” says Alicia Lichens, Gelcomm’s creative director.

The research also included in-home visits to see what tween bathrooms and bedrooms actually look like to get further insight. As with any generation, tastes and attitudes vary wildly within the range. (Anyone want to refute that an 8-year-old boy and a 12-year-old girl differ in dramatic ways?) So another challenge was coming up with packaging that would appeal to the entire span of the age group, both boys and girls. So focus groups of kids and moms were presented with several creative approaches to help settle on a single, gender-neutral look and feel.

To help make those colors and package designs really pop, packaging printing supplier Color Inc. used hexachrome technology, a six-color printing system with a specially enhanced color ink set to reproduce rich, vibrant images that can include more than 90 percent of Pantone colors.

A growing market

The resulting packages are vibrant with an urban hipness that is decidedly youthful but not childish. It’s

also a sharp departure from the much simpler approach used by Crest and Oral-B oral care products for younger children. Those packages aim to appeal with licensed cartoon characters such as Winnie the Pooh, the Disney Princesses, or Spiderman.

Instead, the complexity of PHFM graphics speaks to the personality of the tween consumer segment itself, which Sharon Jayson of *USA Today* has described as “a complicated lot, still forming their personalities.” With a varied range of interests from music to movies and sports to fashion, tween consumers can be difficult to charm. The rewards, though, are great and growing. Jayson notes that in 2009 there were already about 20 million tweens in the U.S. and that population is expected to increase to 23 million by 2020. **PD**

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Graffiti-inspired packages use a single, gender-neutral look to appeal to the entire tween market.

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