



NAVIGATING THE OMNI-CHANNEL MARKETPLACE

A VISIT WITH WILLIAM FOX MUNROE (WFM)

Today, there are more channels than ever before, where consumers can experience your brands. That includes retail — whether mass, club or C-store. This also means online shopping at sites like Amazon. It can even involve locations like airports, malls or kiosks. So how do brand-driven products ensure quality executions across pack types, product extensions, personalization and merchandising displays? We recently sat down with Matt Kennedy, design director at William Fox Munroe (WFM) to see how the agency takes a single, compelling idea and makes it work consistently across all communication pathways.

BXP: We know that omni-channel strategies require that consumers get the same experience and messaging through each touch point. How does WFM do that?

MK: Let's say there's a product that's sold in mass retail stores like Target,

in club stores and online. To work across all channels, we look first at simplifying the brand architecture, so that the brand is as successful in stores like Walmart as it is online for sites like Amazon. We start with a single, compelling idea and test how it works across product variances, promotions and special customization initiatives. The stakes are high. In fact, statistics tell us that brands with a well-defined omni-channel strategy achieve 91% better year-over-year increases in customer retention rates.*

BXP: Is there a different strategy for established brands versus the challengers that are competing in the marketplace today?

MK: Big, legacy brands typically have a lot of product variance and product lines. Smaller brands can tell a story about their uniqueness in the category. An example of how we created a standout story for a challenger brand

is what we did for Uglier Chips. The client came to WFM with an interesting backstory. The product strategy was around reducing food waste. They purchased potatoes that were oddly shaped and featured colors that are typically not seen in big brand chips. Because of their odd shapes and colors, the potatoes would normally have been rejected. In fact, every year 6 billion pounds of produce goes un-harvested or unsold, simply for aesthetic reasons. So, we collaborated with our client on naming and creating a fun story around Kettle Cooked "Uglier" Chips. The client got props for significantly reducing food waste, and enjoyed a lot of positive press. For WFM, it was a truly fun experience to take this new concept all the way through to success. When people look at our site, they see some pretty big names. But we also work with emerging brands, and we believe that this keeps the industry fresh.

BXP: How do you take advantage of all the product variance you mentioned in connection with the bigger brands?

MK: We recently worked with an OTC pharmaceutical brand, commonly used for heartburn. When we launched it, we learned how the different core aspects of the brand played in each channel — in retail stores like Walmart, in merchandising displays, in FSI coupons and in advertising. Then we developed a communication strategy that maintained brand integrity, but hit the sweet spot for each communication path.

BXP: To accomplish that kind of precision demands a lot of time spent in the creative process, doesn't it?

MK: At WFM, we are comprised almost entirely of creative talent. We do everything through a design lens. Strategy, of course, is essential, but we are devoted to the executional disciplines as well. We believe in collaboration with a capital "C" — whether that's among ourselves, or with our clients and their customers. We try to live the packaging experience and are always on the lookout for the way categories develop in terms of design trends.

*Source: <https://www.emarsys.com/en/resources/blog/multi-channel-marketing-omnichannel/>

BXP: How do you help brand owners who seek to create an experience in a new channel?

MK: First you have to find a way to connect with consumers in that environment. We recently helped the Hershey's and Reese's brands connect

in the travel space where gifting and souvenirs are highly relevant. Consumers have time at the airport, so we thought

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through how to make compelling offerings that touched on comfort and familiarity. From that came luggage-themed packaging and a theme — The Hershey Company World Traveler Collection. We created travel motifs, travel tags and used varnishes and textural effects that felt memorable and unique. We added special touches such as playful messages inside the box. Traction for this evolution of the brand story has been outstanding.

BXP: WFM is often associated with food and pharma; do you work in other categories as well?

MK: Yes we do. We have designed product lines for home and hardware brands such as Stoner's Invisible Glass and Kutzall's Shaping Disk tools. When it comes to changing a long established

perception of a brand, we've done some very interesting work for Zippo. This collaboration was all about expanding the product line and creating a new story. Consumers think of Zippo in terms of their heritage. They are an iconic name in lighters, but we wanted to

help them develop as an outdoor brand with a full product line. Zippo Outdoor includes everything from the AxeSaw and Easy Spark Tinders to the Typhoon Match Set, Flex Neck Utility Lighter, hand warmers and more. We used cultural and competitive analysis

to create structural concepts and designs. To add differentiation, we developed a whole new brand language. Plus, Zippo Outdoor features a clean white background with a debossed topographical map, red foil stamping and bright green hues for a more exciting and rugged look. This kind of packaging plays as well in Bass Pro Shops and Cabela's as it does in Walmart. As a result of our collaboration, WFM and Zippo won a GDUSA American Package Design Award. Right now, Zippo Outdoor is in the process of doing a broader rollout.

BXP: What role does packaging play in today's omni-channel world?

MK: Packaging can supply something that purely digital marketing cannot — tactility. There's something satisfying about holding an object in your hand.

You relate to it. It's an experience. No online viewing can duplicate that tactile relationship, but what it can do is meet the need for convenience and speed. For those who have embraced an omni-channel strategy, it's critical, however, that every touch point makes good on one thing — a consistent consumer experience. It's also important to stress that product differentiation is still part of the mix. With an omni-channel approach, people can lose sight of this. They get excited about the breadth of channels available, but forget that to connect with consumers, you must still show them something that speaks to them in context.

BXP: What's the secret to getting it right?

MK: Once again, it's all about the collaboration. Our clients rely on WFM's deep category experience and our ability to leverage key partnerships for project-specific expertise. This ensures the brand message is relevant in all executions of their omni-channel strategy. We share research with our clients, and facilitate conversations with stakeholders and partners. Working toward a common vision drives success and business results.



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