



WHITE PAPER

Smart Retail Food Sales Strategies: Engineering Better Packaging

When it comes to developing the latest food products, marketers often spend years perfecting an idea down to the smallest detail. They price out the best ingredients, from local produce to exotic spices. They calculate every second of labor involved, refining the process wherever they can until they're sure they have it right.



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They price out the best ingredients, from local produce to exotic spices. They calculate every second of labor involved, refining the process wherever they can until they're sure they have it right. Finally, they put together a winning marketing plan to ensure product placement and generate sales. But marketers all too often overlook one key component of their product experience—the packaging.

Many businesses look at packaging as just another cost of doing business, which is a big mistake. Packaging gives food manufacturers a unique opportunity to increase customer satisfaction, and doubles

as a powerful marketing tool. The biggest mistake food product companies can make is to exclude packaging from both your product model and your business model.

According to Gene McMillion, Client Relationship Manager at Ernest Packaging Solutions, “You can spend years working on a great idea, costing it all out, and then realize at the end that you have to get it from point A to point B without breaking it. For a lot of people, it’s an ‘Uh-oh!’ moment.”

A primary consideration for packaging

The best way to approach packaging is to build it into your model from the start. This way you're not only turning a cost into an opportunity, you can also ensure that you create the best packaging for your product. When the packaging is an afterthought, you're more likely to cut corners. This leads to using lower quality materials, which in turn can lower the overall quality—and value—of your product.

When it comes to food product packaging, the four most important elements are:

- Protecting your product from damage
- Keeping it fresh for as long as possible
- Making it pop on the shelf
- Telling your brand story

While design of course has its place in this conversation—logo placement, color, messaging—great packaging starts with great engineering. Finding the right engineering resource can help you meet the unique needs of your product, while taking into consideration your company's volume and budget constraints to ensure you end up with the best solution possible.

High quality packaging actually raises the value of your product.



Your product starts with packaging

At Ernest Packaging Solutions, we're on a mission to ensure that retail food product developers make packaging an important consideration—not just an afterthought. Most companies understand that they can't ship a product without packaging, making it a necessary cost of doing business. However, most companies fail to see packaging for what it really is: a valuable part of their product. This flawed view often leads to cutting corners on a crucial element of your product and your business. At Ernest, we are actively changing this.

Think of your own experience as a consumer. Have you ever bought a snack and opened it up to find the contents in crumbs or, even worse, stale? You know you wouldn't buy that brand again. That's why it's so important to protect your product from damage and keep it fresh. You also know what catches your eye on the grocery store shelf, and what you look for when shopping for food products—things like value, nutrition, and brand appeal. Every shopper looks for products that fit their specific needs, which is why you need to make sure your product pops and tells your brand story. Great packaging can improve your product's retail performance.

*The key questions:
What do you want to achieve?
Based on your unique constraints,
is that achievable?*

Packaging is also a powerful way to solve some of your toughest product challenges. First, you must decide what you need to accomplish. For example, is your biggest concern keeping the product fresh? Do you need it to make a statement on the shelf? Are you facing cost constraints? Defining your goals helps to drive your engineering solution. Once you've defined your needs, you have to consider three key engineering aspects: substrate, structure, and visual design.

Case Study: Cape Seasonings

For Cape Seasonings Natural Snacks, an engineered approach to packaging has made all the difference for their business. The Cape Henlopen, Delaware, company makes delicious, bite-sized snacks using all natural ingredients. With no additives, preservatives, GMOs, or gluten, they're perfect for health-conscious shoppers—and they taste great. Owner Butch Feeser says, "It doesn't matter how healthy something is if it doesn't taste good."

But Cape Seasonings had a serious problem. Their product was getting crushed in transit and shelf life was limited because the packaging wasn't airtight. No one wants stale, crushed chips. Add to that a "blah" shelf presence and these bags were ready for a revamp. Cape Seasonings contacted Ernest to help them solve their packaging problems, and help their delicious snacks pack a punch on the shelf.

First things first: material matters

When it comes to selecting your packaging material for food products, the most efficient choice is to use proven substrates. This reduces the need for additional certifications, because these materials have already been scientifically tested and evaluated, with performance data to back them up. Selecting the right substrate can significantly help maintain your product's freshness and quality. The materials you use can also play an important part in protecting your product from damage during shipment and while on the shelf.

For Cape Seasonings, Ernest was able to significantly extend the shelf life of their snacks by using a three-layered engineered film. The OPP, ZIPA, and LDP film protects the product from damage while also keeping air out. Extending your product's shelf life has the added advantage of saving money on returns and reducing your risk of fewer reorders.

Structured for success

Creating food product packaging that stands out—and stands up—on the shelf can serve both your product and your sales. Undamaged product boosts customer satisfaction, which means they'll keep coming back for more. And an eye-catching shelf presence means more people will buy it for the first time, too.

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Ernest solved every problem that I had with packaging. When everybody else's bag is falling over, mine's still standing.

Butch Freeser
Cape Seasonings Founder

Your package's structure should be driven by your objectives, and by the materials you select. For example, there are certain things we can do with paper that we can't do with film, and vice versa. A good engineering resource can help you decide which structure works best for the material you have chosen. Another key consideration in the world of food packaging is volume—which can have a big impact on your structural choices. As much as you might want to put a tray in every cookie package, it might not be cost-effective if you're only manufacturing 5,000 units for your first run. Good packaging engineers can also help you find the best options while accounting for both your budget and volume realities.

Cape Seasonings' core requirement was a bag that would stand up on the shelf while the competition slouched, leaned, or fell over around them. A stand-up package really pops, and Ernest engineered a package that does just that—stands up to the competition. We integrated side wells that lift the product off the counter and the bottom of the shipping container. These wells act as “crumple zones,” similar to the way a car bumper works.

With any impact, the bag gives and the air absorbs the impact, protecting the product from breakage. This smart design also reduces the need for complicated structural design on the shipper package, because the product package does the heavy lifting (or giving), so to speak.

Designed for impact

Once you've set your structure, its time to turn your focus to making sure the packaging appearance suits your brand's needs. On-the-shelf impact is a critical engineering consideration. The key question to ask is, do you have the surface area you need to share you message or showcase your product in the best possible way? There are a number of ways you can go about this, depending on your package structure and your brand's design elements. Cape Seasonings chose a white substrate that both showcases the company's eye-catching label, and stands out amongst a sea of sagging brown paper sacks.



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Cape Seasonings: Still standing

For Cape Seasonings Natural Snacks, the newly engineered snack bag met all of their needs, and passed the on-the-shelf test with flying colors.

THE NEW PACKAGING

Protects the product

The three-layer film package is engineered to keep out air and moisture, and the side wells absorb shock to protect chips during shipping. That adds up to a better product, and longer shelf life.

Stands its ground

The strong packaging base keeps Cape Seasonings standing while the competition slumps around it. This helps to catch shoppers' eyes in the aisle and boost retail sales.

Tells a story

In this case, the story of Cape Seasonings' great taste and all natural ingredients—something consumers are hungry for. Now, it's easy for them to find a healthy choice in the snack aisle.

Perfect your packaging. Propel your product.

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We take all your wants and needs, and come up with the best possible solution that suits all the requirements and restrictions of your particular product.



Contact Ernest today to find out how we can help you engineer the perfect packaging for your food product.

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