



Stout Outlook

News for Stout Alumni,
Parents and Friends

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UW-Stout Alumni Association

Creating colorful connections

Students develop new packaging solutions for Binney & Smith

Students in UW-Stout's packaging program received professional experience first semester as they worked with Binney & Smith, the makers of Crayola products. The company charged the students with designing a new package for its eight-count washable markers.

"In consumer's minds, the current package does not present a connection to the product it contains. So, consumers usually dispose of the package," explained Dan Orlopp, a senior packaging student.

The students began their project by interviewing target markets, including children, parents, teachers and day care workers. They also evaluated the display needs of retailers.

While conducting interviews at UW-Stout's Child and Family Study Center, packaging students said they found that young children had trouble opening the existing marker packages. Also, the children's approach to organizing the markers varied. "Some would take one marker out of the package at a time, replacing it when they were done. Others dumped the whole package and let the markers roll all over," said Mike Gilgenbach, senior packaging student.

When student Kevin Davis talked to older children at St. Joseph's Catholic School in Menomonie, he received several inventive suggestions. According to Davis, the kids said they didn't want to play with "baby markers" anymore. "Some thought it would be cool to have markers that updated them on sports scores. Others thought it would be nice if the markers rolled back to them, like a yo-yo," he said.

Most parents, day care workers and teachers had more practical responses. They said they preferred Crayola brand markers because they lasted longer, according to members of the packaging class. Chad Ericson even interviewed single fathers, who he found were less concerned with clean up of the markers than the children's mothers were.

Graduate student Federico Gutierrez conducted additional evaluations focusing on Spanish-speaking communities. He said that Latin Americans are not as easily seduced as Americans are into buying a product because it has new, flashy packaging.

"This is a cultural difference," said the students' instructor, Ken Neuburg. "As American consumers, we see goods as expendable. Latin Americans focus more on durability."

The students said they had to work within a few design

perimeters set by Binney & Smith. For example, the company wanted to keep the familiar Crayola yellow and green colors a prominent feature of the design. They also took the company's present manufacturing and distribution processes into account.

"Still, the sky is the limit," said Neuburg. "These students are getting ready to begin their careers. I want to push them beyond the usual classroom exercises. This is applied theory all the way. The design portfolio they are developing will allow them to really shine during their upcoming interviews."

The students said they considered designs that would serve specific marketing purposes, including travel, gift-giving and seasonal packages. Because most of the people they interviewed said they often keep their markers in a container other than the package they come in, the students said they thought a practical solution would be a durable premium container that could be used to store the markers.

"This premium package would cost more, but the consumers would get a container that provides better storage. They would only have to buy it once, and then keep it supplied with refill packs," said Neuburg.

Split into three groups, the packaging students developed zippered plastic bags and resealable packages made of a shiny metalized film. They also designed a container similar to a zip disk or cassette tape holder. When opened, the container stands on its own, making the contents easy to find and replace.

Most of the students' designs were drafted using computer aided design. They produced prototypes in UW-Stout's various packaging and prototyping labs. In addition, they revisited their test markets to get responses to their prototypes.

For each of their recommended solutions, the packaging students developed specifications, identifying test and precision procedures, what materials were used, and the costs involved in producing the new packages.

The students provided all nine of their ideas to Binney & Smith and formally presented the three best designs to representatives of the company in December.

"Even more than for the solutions they came up with, I am proud of the students for the way they worked together and bonded," said Neuburg.



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Ken Neuburg

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