

Rise Above The Pack: How Fragrance Brands Break Through The Clutter

Consumers are daunted with the mass of fragrances, and it's hard to weed through them, resulting in many of them being forgettable. But there are brands that stand out of the pack. On October 23, The Fragrance Foundation's Associate Board held Breaking Through The Clutter—an event that emphasized how fragrance brands can become unique in their own right and get noticed among the masses.

Amy Marks-McGee of TrendIncite, LLC moderated the discussion. She mentioned that there is a lot of clutter of fragrances and that according to the NPD Group, in 2007, 1,100 women's brands were on-counter, compared to 10 years ago, when there were only 360. "That's 3 times as many fragrances on-counter, yet there is 1/3 less in sales," Ms. Marks-McGee commented. The panelists for the evening were **Greg Andersen**, Head of Engagement Planning, BBH, **Polly Blitzer**, Founder and Editor-in-Chief, beautyblitz.com and **Gene Pressman**, former CEO, Barneys New York and Co-Author of *Chasing Cool: Standing Out in Today's Cluttered Marketplace*. They each gave their perspectives of positioning a brand differently than the rest.

Mr. Andersen gave a riveting presentation on how his company marketed the Axe brand. "Time

and attention are the most precious commodities that we have," he stated. He expressed that there has to be an innovation with media because brands are vying for the consumer's attention. He continued, "Efficiency cannot break you through the clutter. Your competition is life, not other brands in your category." So how do brands break through the clutter? Mr. Andersen suggested that strategy, context and content all have to work together, which is what BBH did with Axe. They changed the dialogue of deodorant and made it "about confidence, not sweating," since it was targeted towards young males.

"The marketplace is saturated," Ms. Blitzer asserted. She did a case study on two brands—a contemporary brand and a classic one—on how these particular ones broke through. The Sean John Unforgivable fragrance launched in 2005 and is continuing to break barriers. For one, **Sean "Diddy" Combs** is a celebrity that invites consumers into his

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Moderator Amy Marks-McGee (2nd L.) with Author Gene Pressman, beautyblitz.com's Polly Blitzer and BBH's Greg Andersen



The Fragrance Foundation's Associate Board

Sean John Fragrance's Donna Rapisarda and Sam Lee with The Estée Lauder Companies' François Turainne



The Estée Lauder Companies' Catherine Barber, Andrea Goris, Carol Russo, Dina Nelson and Mr. Turainne

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life. "He didn't keep consumers at arm's length," she stated. The key is to let people into the lives of the brand because "people like to feel like they're famous." She added that positioning made the fragrance a great hit. Mr. Combs went on a 25-city fragrance promotion tour, had models promote it at his concerts and even had a partnership with Myspace.com, resulting in live broadcast launches. Besides the knockout promotion, he also created controversy with his provocative ads. The risqué ads were banned from airing on TV, so he placed them on YouTube.com, and it started a phenomenon.

On the flip side, CHANEL, a pioneer brand in so many ways, has enjoyed stability in the business. Ms. Blitzer added, "It's a classic yet it maintains its freshness and modernity through the decades." Coco Mademoiselle is geared toward the younger consumers, and to reach out to more audiences, in September 2007, CHANEL invited a dozen bloggers to Paris to tour the CHANEL house and meet the Perfumers at



P&G's Christine McAfee and Clinique's Nicole Howard



BPI's Cara Krysti and Daphne Lee



The Estée Lauder Companies' Janice Hall, Sarah Crocker, Remy Roisen and Rita Chen

get on the customization trail. "People crave and demand customization... new media creates dialogue between people and brands," she noted. As an example, she suggested having a different skin on a fragrance bottle.

For Mr. Pressman, he mentioned that "there's no doubt that 'cool' sells." He continued, "Cool has to be an outcome of a well-received authenticity—which is an important component because people cannot be fooled." He went on to explain how Barneys New York built a reputation for having different clothes than other stores. His father went to Europe to seek out new manufacturers to have higher-end merchandise in the store. Giorgio Armani

the CHANEL facility. This was an innovative way to take advantage of an emerging media that is not going away anytime soon.

Ms. Blitzer had her own CHANEL experience as well. She had the opportunity to visit their fields and witnessed how the fragrances are made "from bloom to bottle." She explained that it was an interesting experience and noted that making a fragrance is a quick process—it's thinking of the name and marketing that takes a long time. "I really applaud CHANEL and Sean John Fragrances," she stated.

Ms. Blitzer's advice for breaking through the clutter is to have a cohesive strategy, knowing the target audience and thinking outside of the box. She further advised to



Estée Lauder's Elana Drell-Szyfer with Firmenich's Joanne Halev



Ms. Russo, Ms. Goris, Ms. Barber and The Estée Lauder Companies' Phebe Farrow Port

was among his discoveries of European fashions. The store decided to have the selling floor uncluttered with merchandise so that each piece could be viewed as art. Mr. Pressman strongly believes that there is tremendous value in getting the story of a fragrance and getting empirical research on it as Ms. Blitzer had done. Having constant change is vital to standing above the rest. Most companies become complacent, but Mr. Pressman feels that "real vision never has an end." *BF*