DUSOBOX

Things to Consider Before Designing Custom Packaging

Custom Packaging: Pre-Design Process Considerations

Standard packaging design takes a simple, templated approach. Your brand's colors and logo are added in certain predetermined areas to a stock box or display. While the simplicity of this approach may seem appealing, the reality is that standard packaging design places huge constraints on the creative process and makes it difficult for your brand to stand out.

Custom packaging, on the other hand, focuses completely on your brand. With a custom-designed package, you begin with a vision of how best to display your product, then tailor the size, shape, material, and imagery of your package to fit that concept. In this case, the design process is a more intense cycle of brainstorming, design, and revision. However, the result pays for itself in the form of a standout package that represents your product exactly as you want your customers to see it.

To make the most out of the custom packaging design process, it's important to first clarify both your vision and constraints. In this eBook, we'll walk you through these crucial pre-design considerations so you are fully equipped to achieve your brand's unique packaging goals.

01. Have a Strong Product Marketing Concept & Strategy

Consistent branding builds consumer confidence and familiarity with your product, and a custom package makes the most sense when it can advance your existing brand image. A custom package should advance your brand's visual identity, but it needs to be coherent first.

Prepare Your Branding Guidelines

Effective branding guidelines dictate the colors, fonts, and imagery that define your brand. You likely already have a set of guidelines from other marketing campaigns, but if you don't, invest some time up-front to iron out these details. What colors are associated with your brand? What style of images? What tone and font for the copy? A custom package should advance your brand's visual identity, but it needs to be coherent first.

Concentrate on Color

Once you've revisited or established your branding guidelines, verify that your manufacturer can execute them. In addition to printing resolution, your main concern should be color fidelity. Screens render color based on an additive light process, mixing red, green, and blue light to achieve a certain tone. On the other hand, printing uses a subtractive, ink-based process, combining cyan, magenta, yellow, and black (key) to render color. In inexperienced hands, the transition from RGB to CMYK can be dramatic and jarring, as can the transition between two different CMYK printing presses.

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Variations in color across mediums erode the cohesive brand image you've worked hard to develop. Similarly, color printed on various printing materials and mediums may differ. To prevent inconsistencies, ensure that your manufacturer uses G7 color specifications, which establish industry standards for gray balance and color consistency. Look for G7 Master Qualified Facilities as you browse design companies.

Develop Your Sustainability Plan

Consumers are increasingly concerned with sustainability and corporate responsibility, and this, in turn, impacts their decision-making processes when selecting new products to try. A plastic packaging alternative, such as corrugated cardboard or Mako-Board™, can improve your overall packaging design at minimal cost to you and signals that your brand is eco-conscious. Both of these materials are recyclable, affordable, and easy to print on, making them excellent choices for sustainable packaging.
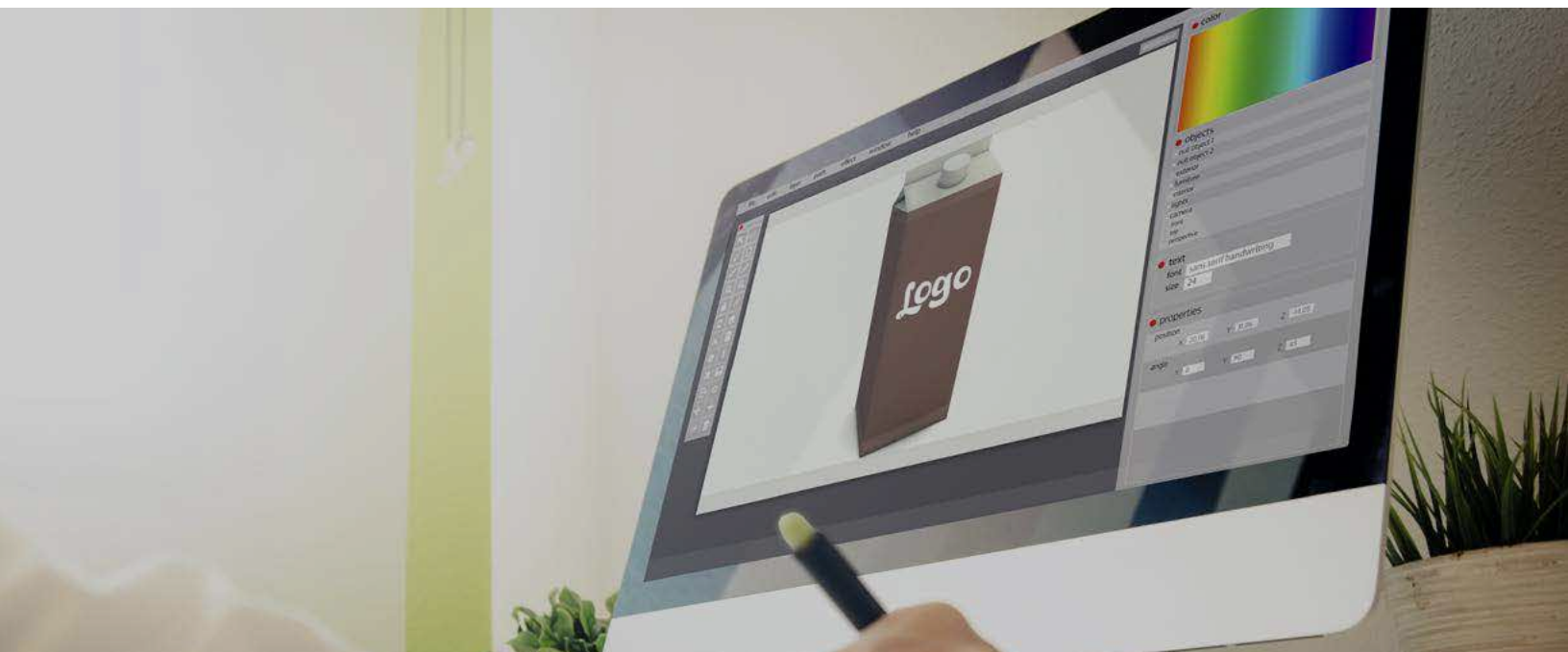
02. Determine Your Needs for **Packaging Use, Placement, and Visibility**

Your packaging design must consider the product's retail distribution, whether digital or on the shelf. As you design and revise your package, consider the following factors:

Practical Considerations: As early as possible, outline the weight, dimensions, and physical constraints for your product. Do you have a bottle that needs to remain upright? Are you using fragile glass? Will the package be put in a freezer and potentially exposed to moisture? All of these practical constraints limit what's possible and will guide the remainder of the decision-making.

Position and Shopping Behaviors: Consider how your product is to be displayed in-store. For instance, a product placed on an endcap or POP (point-of-purchase) display is more visible and disrupting, and there is more room to integrate the package with the display space. Products displayed on an aisle shelf should have packaging designed to make it stand out from the other competing products on the shelf.

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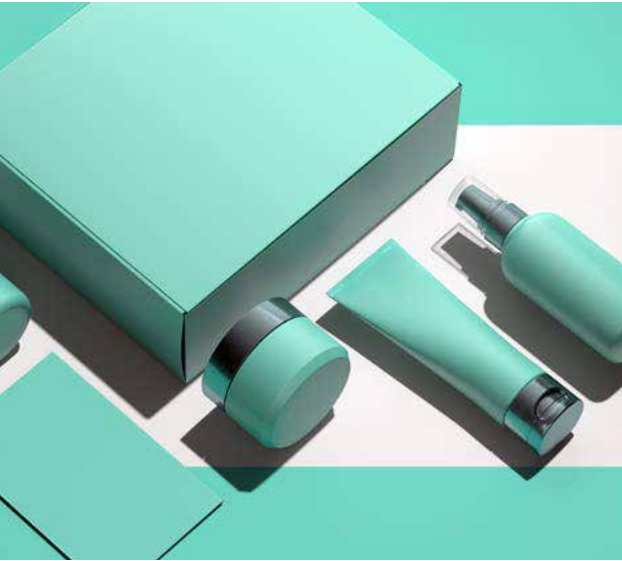
Retail Regulations: On-the-shelf products are subject to retailer constraints regarding dimensions and weight. Know your distribution channels to ensure that your package doesn't exceed the size requirements for your retailers.

E-Commerce: Don't neglect packaging concerns of e-commerce customers, especially as Covid-19 has moved so much shopping online. Packages sold over the internet should be sturdy enough to withstand shipping and offer a pleasant, on-brand unboxing experience. Printing on the inside of the box with a special message, pattern, or design is a great way to further connect with your customers for an even better, more memorable unboxing experience. Companies should also consider how their product packaging stands out from the other brands' product imagery being displayed in that same digital category online. Having an understanding of Amazon Frustration-Free Packaging Program Guidelines can also help set you up for greater success.

03. Set a Budget and Stick to It

One of the most important elements of a custom design plan is your budget. Often, clients become excited about an ambitious design prospect before truly considering the cost of cutting, printing, assembly, and storage. While tempting, it's a bad idea to let the design determine the budget. Instead, approach the process with a balanced mindset, considering the practicalities of your design at every step. Paradoxically, this perspective actually *increases* your creative freedom because it allows you to focus on additions to the design rather than cuts.

Budget vs. Vision

As you refine your package design, you will encounter many points where a bit of flexibility decreases your overall costs without dramatically altering your vision. Conversely, you may also find that a certain design feature is integral to your vision and worth the extra expense. While we generally recommend a judicious approach to design, you should also be true to your brand's values. For instance, if sustainability is at the core of your business model, it makes sense to avoid plastic, even if that affects the overall cost. In those cases, consider compromising elsewhere so that the final package is one you can be proud of.

Key Budgetary Decision Points

The following represent some of the major factors that determine the cost of a custom package.

- **Printing Options:** Today, you have many choices when it comes to printing on corrugated or plastic. These include traditional approaches like silkscreen

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or offset lithography, as well as digital printing and rotogravure. While a full comparison is outside the scope of this eBook, offset lithography and rotogravure tend to render the best prints, but they require tooling investments that may be cost-prohibitive at lower volumes. Digital printing also provides a more cost effective and sustainable option for low volume needs. Your packaging design company can help you compare printing options based on packaging material, order volume, and cost.

- **Appearance & Materials:** As you might imagine, premium materials come at a cost. If your packaging needs to convey a sense of luxury or indulgence, you may opt for a common shape or a black-and-white design to accommodate higher material costs.

- **Customization:** At the core of custom packaging design is, of course, customization. However, that doesn't mean that you can't begin with a template to save time and money. The more intricate your design, the more rounds of prototyping and revision required, so consider customizing only those elements that are most central to your vision.

04. Choosing a **Packaging Design Company**

After reviewing these factors on your own, it's time to partner with an experienced packaging design company that will make your ideas a reality. In selecting a partner, look for a company with:

- **Design Process Expertise:**

Your manufacturer should be able to walk you through the constraints and complexities of packaging design. For example, your design company should help you establish and stick to your budgetary constraints, as well as make key decisions about your design practicality and execution and how it will translate into a physical package.

- **Mockup Capabilities:** The best way to be confident in your package design is to go through several phases of mockups and prototypes. Dusobox uses WizbangBox™ to allow rapid ideation and prototyping so you have a clear picture of your package throughout the process.
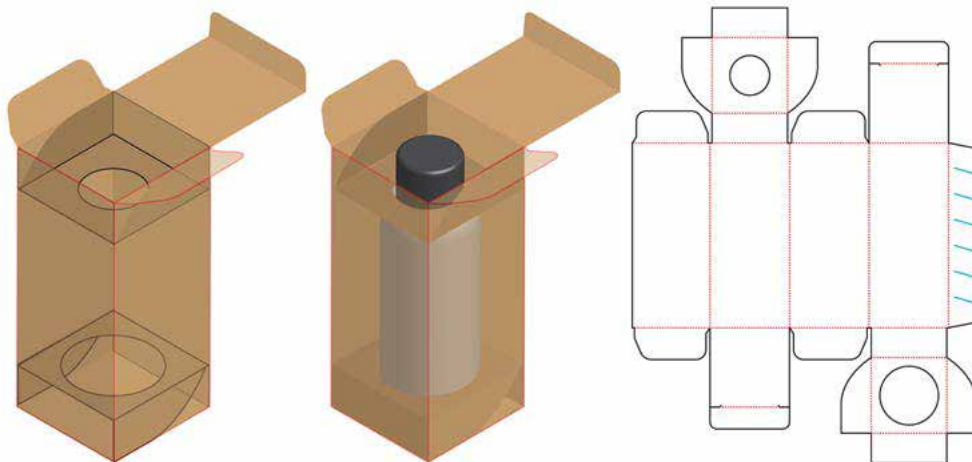
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- **Scope of Services:** Ideally, you'll work with a single company across the design, printing, assembly, and fulfillment processes. A full-service provider can offer the best lead times with minimal opportunity for error.

- **Retail Knowledge:** It's best to partner with a company that has worked with major retailers and has knowledge of retailers' specific requirements such as their style guides, store environments, and display requirements in your industry. A strong portfolio shows that the manufacturer can work around your market's constraints.

- **Proactive Design Process:** Finally, look for a company that employs a proactive consultation process. This means you work together to establish common expectations and goals grounded in your budget, aims, and marketing strategy. You are entering into a partnership, and your supplier should understand that.
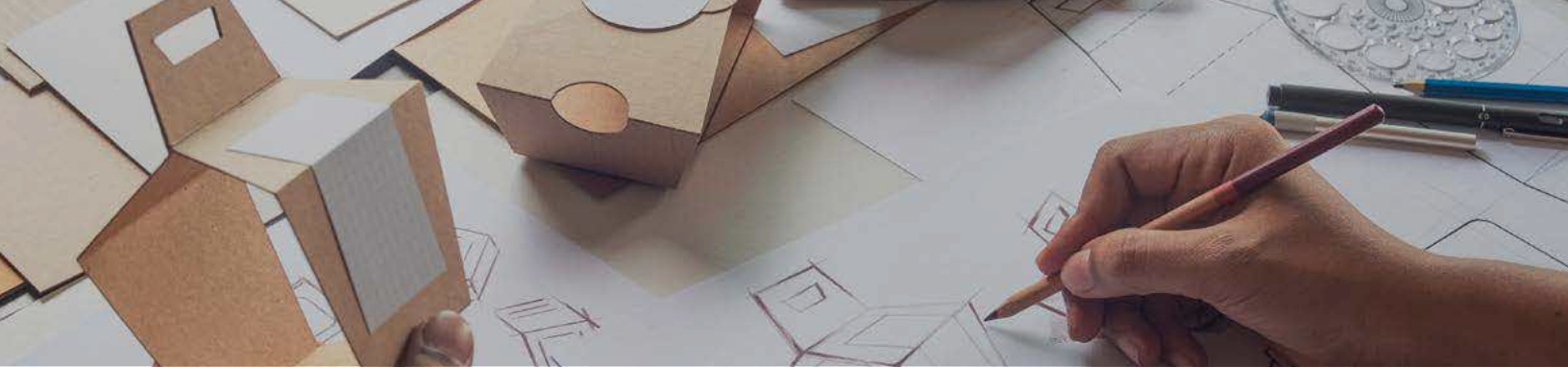
Custom Packaging Design from **Duso**box

Dusobox fits the bill as an experienced, one-resource packaging design company with a proven, proactive consultation process. To learn more about our services, review our **blog**, **resources**, and **work samples**, or **contact us** to get started.

DUSOBOX

About Us

As a privately held family business since 1951, today, Dusobox continues to operate under the leadership of the Kelley family. With roots in the manufacturing of corrugated boxes first in Boston, Dusobox is now located in central Florida and is one of the most innovative manufacturers of custom corrugated packaging and display solutions in the world.

Dusobox is a G7 Master Qualified Facility across our digital, offset, and flexographic presses so you can be confident in the integrity of our color prints. Our investment in both traditional and digital print technology provides you with unique opportunities that ensure customized, speed-to-market displays, packaging, and signs for seamless domestic and international distribution. We also offer a **sustainable replacement** to synthetic, non- recyclable outdoor sign and packaging material, Mako-Board™.

With a critical eye for design aesthetics, coupled with the absolute science of engineered functionality, Dusobox provides brilliant, accurate, and effective corrugated packaging, displays, and sign programs that maximize our clients' ROI and market share. Learn more about us **on our website**, or **contact us today** to get started on designing your ideal packaging.

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