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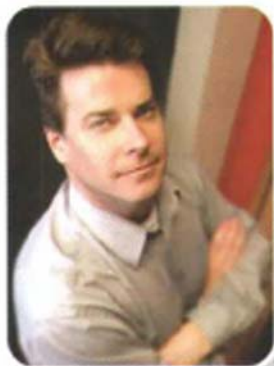
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Q&A

A reality check on package design

When David Kendall, principal and creative director of Kendall Ross, a Seattle brand development and design firm, addressed students recently at the Metropolitan State College of Denver, he told them that the discipline of graphic design is being reduced to a commodity. Packaging World asked Kendall to elaborate on his perspective in the context of package development.

PW: Why do you say that designers need a reality check?



Kendall: We should be positioning design as a business tool and a business solution, and I don't think schools teach it that way or designers grasp that until quite late in their careers. They just tend to wallow in the design base rather than offering solutions-based services. So there is a trend toward devaluation—trying to get it done cheaper.

PW: What does this mean for brand owners who want

strong package design?

Kendall: Designers need to communicate that they're more than decorators. Early in the package-creation process, they can bring a lot of creative thinking that can help a brand. Everyone who is involved with the package's development can be on board.

PW: What value-added services can effective designers bring to the table, and what should brand managers should expect from them?

Kendall: New ways to communicate product features better and to relate to the psychographic mind-set of consumers interested in the brand. How does my work as a designer solve a problem and improve your sales? The idea is to move

the talk with a brand manager beyond the job's price. Successful design firms get inside the mind of the retailer and their strategy, and how the brand owner can be successful within that environment.

PW: Where is the value of this relationship playing out well at retail?

Kendall: Target is still a mass-merchandise retailer, but they want designers to create a special environment that responds well to Wal-Mart. Method Home Care designed its distinctive dish soap bottles with a specific audience in mind and a specific retailer in mind. They really understood the retailer's mind-set and created a package design for that environment. —*Jim George*

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