

A triumph of design



Chris Hayward, managing director,
Beswick Design

'The fundamental factor in successful display material is the customer – and we must never lose sight of this. Display material should be created with an understanding of who the customer is, responding to their needs or desires as a targeted, focussed communication. This is the key point that all involved parties and relationships need to work towards.'

'The best display materials do not leave this to chance. Fixtures and displays should be designed for users, not designers. A creative agency can offer excellence in design without any external input, but in terms of ensuring not just wow-factor but practical commercial success, the most important qualities are relevance & objectivity.'

'Relevance and objectivity come from customer insight, research, testing and focus. Retailers and brands too often make the mistake of pushing a project through without having invested enough time in this stage. Unnegotiable brand ideals or unworkable briefs are much easier to counter when faced with direct customer input.'

'Customers may not be best placed to design packaging and display materials, but they are the best source of relevant insight and direction. Working with Burton Foods, customer focus groups helped not just improve the success, but shape the brand approach of a product re-launch.'

'Retailers, brands and agencies all need to understand the customer, and by working together and finding the areas where objectives and driving forces overlap, it enables the outcome to maintain objective customer-focus.'

'Increasingly, brands and retailers now have their own customer insight teams, often with shopper profiles to segment their markets. This information is of great use to other parties involved and should be maximised and interpretations tested.'

'In terms of making the most of the different relationships, the mantra is 'it's never too early to be involved'. My experience is that cross-functional teams from the early stages add untold value. An agency will struggle to create effective materials if the brief is not accurate and responsive to its potential audience. Similarly, brands need to understand the physical and cultural nuances of retailers before developing new products and packaging.'

'The agency and brand absolutely need to be involved in ensuring compliance of implementation; it is not sufficient to leave the retailer with full responsibility. And the point where many go wrong here is by considering this is something to be taken care of in the final stages. The best way to ensure success at every stage is by creating cross-functional teams and bring the different parties together at the offset, listening and responding to everyone's objectives – and this is much easier to do if done early.'

'This approach has been highly successful at B&Q, where we sat around a table at the offset of various projects with brands and retailers – sometimes we've



been working for the retailer and sometimes the brand - to ensure everyone knows and understands each others' expectations and requirements. Far from restricting creativity - understanding the commercial aspects, the marketing, requirements and equipment simply helps to create solutions that work.'

'In terms of implementation, we worked closely with B&Q & GE Lighting to create a step-by-step visual manual that used knowledge of the stores along with product knowledge to create an appropriate pick-list and to provide merchandisers with a foolproof system for implementing as well as maintaining.'

And it doesn't stop there. We also have a post-implementation review process, which ensures the best bits are improved and the worst bits reconsidered.'

'In our current markets, people are more conscious of making every £ count – working together, researching and getting things right from the start, looking at a project as a whole whilst maximising the sum of the different parties is the sure way to spend wisely. Cutting corners and failing to follow best practice and objectivity means that money is wasted on inefficient display solutions.'