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When It's Time to Redesign

How designers and wineries collaborate to revamp and refresh wine packaging

By Jane Firstenfeld

When wineries have grown enough to become established brands, the time inevitably comes that someone wants to redesign the packaging. The blessings of success and market recognition come with implied demands for change, be it to keep pace with current trends or expand product lines.

Redesigning a package that's been working for your company comes with inherent risks. Here, leading package designers describe how best to meet these challenges, and well-established wineries reflect on their most recent redesign experiences.

First, what prompts winery owners to revise their designs?

David Schuemann, president of CF Napa and author of the book *99 Bottles of Wine*, enumerated what motivates clients. He said that, typically:

- * Sales are lagging.
- * New competitors have entered the marketplace and are threatening brand space.

Highlights

- Reasons for a packaging redesign include adding SKUs or differentiating multiple tiers offered by the winery.
- Packaging redesigns are often more complicated than the original design; getting a designer involved early can make the redesign process smoother and quicker.
- One of the first steps in redesign is determining which components of the current design—colors, styles, features, fonts—are static, flexible or should be excluded.

- * Brand hierarchy creates confusion between tiers/offerings of wine within the brand.
- * The winery desires or plans to introduce a price increase.
- * Packaging production requirements have changed, or new SKUs are being added, and it provides an opportunity to revisit the packaging in conjunction with production changes.
- * There has been a change internally that they want to signify externally. For instance: increased quality of the wine via sourcing, winemaking or new ownership.

David Hanson-Jerrard at 4Parts Design in Sausalito, Calif., added his take on the major decisive issues:

- * Adjustment of brand focus, due either to a change in channel focus or a change in FOB pricing because of changes in grape sourcing.
- * Expansion of a brand by adding line or tier extensions.
- * Updating a design due to the current packaging being outdated versus the market, and the desire to stand apart from the competition.

You've got the itch: Now what?

Taking the experts' advice to heart, if you've got legitimate reasons to revise your packaging, what should you do—or not do?

Schuemann cautioned, "Generally speaking, we find it easily as challenging to transition an existing brand's packaging and branding as creating a new brand from scratch." His firm must learn if the current packaging is performing correctly among the various channels through which it is sold.



Distributors and retailers reacted positively when J. Pedroncelli Winery traded its dated packaging (left) for an elegant look (right).

Some wineries, he noted, may have an established "house look" that may not be appropriate for all situations. "Since we build our brands and designs based on strategy versus pure aesthetics, our solutions and designs are as varied as the personalities of the brands themselves."

Interestingly, he commented, “The larger the brand, generally the smaller the changes that can be made responsibly. For other cases where the market conditions/results require more drastic action, more aggressive changes are often requested.”

Obviously, there can be certain advantages to a house look. “The primary difference between a redesign and a brand new design is that the canvas we get to work on tends to have more components already in place that are deemed to be

core to the integrity of the design versus a new design, where the canvas is less defined.”

But, he added, “We find that there are usually more sacred cows when approaching a re-design versus a com-

MAKE SURE THERE'S A REASON

Hahn Family Wines of Soledad, Calif. (400,000 cases)

Starting with the 2012 vintage, the labels of Hahn SLH Pinot Noir and Hahn SLH Chardonnay will promote the Santa Lucia Highlands appellation, where the wines are grown,” according to **Joshua Cairns**, director of marketing. He termed the packaging change “bold and elegant,” with the initials “SLH” the predominant feature.

“The driving factor of the redesign was to visually differentiate our Hahn Winery tier (our core tier) from our Hahn SLH tier,” he said. Clear difference in appellation and price point were not readily apparent prior to the redesign, Cairns said.

In the language of redesign
“evolution vs. revolution” is a
consistent differentiation.

“Growers and winemakers in the Santa Lucia Highlands have earned recognition for producing exceptional Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. We wanted to emphasize the appellation,” Cairns said.

The design brief outlined several key objectives. “We wanted to create a brand package for the Hahn SLH tier that was distinct from the Hahn Winery tier. At the same time, we wanted to make a connection between the new Hahn SLH tier packaging and the Hahn Family Wines corporate identity, specifically by using the current rooster icon in a non-red color. (Hahn means “rooster” in German.) Also, we wanted to create a brand identity for the SLH tier that showcased the quality of wine within the bottle.

“Finally, we wanted the design of the Hahn SLH tier package to help raise awareness of the Santa Lucia Highlands appellation. To most consumers, this AVA is a still a hidden wine-producing gem. We wanted to increase the profile of the area as a whole and spread the word that Santa Lucia Highlands produces top-notch Pinot Noir,” Cairns explained.

Cairns drafted the initial creative brief, won approval from the rest of the winery team and presented it to design firm CF Napa, with which Hahn has worked for a decade. Despite lots of consultation, there were no subsequent changes to the brief.

In the language of redesign, “evolution vs. revolution” is a consistent differentiation. “The Hahn SLH tier straddles that line and strikes a balance between evolution and revolution. There are evolutionary elements—like the rooster icon—that tie the Hahn SLH tier to the Hahn Family Wines corporate brand. Then there are revolutionary changes—the prominent “SLH” initials—that give the Hahn SLH tier a distinct identity,” Cairns said.

Again, more than the label can be changed. “In addition to the label, we also changed the capsules. We added the SLH word mark on the top of the capsule to emphasize the tier. We also changed the capsules’ colors. Previously, the capsules on both the Hahn SLH Pinot Noir and Chardonnay were black. Now, the capsules (from Amcor) are a rich burgundy and gold, respectively. We made this change specifically with our on-premise accounts in mind.”

Hahn SLH is primarily sold on-premise, according to Cairns.

“With the previous black capsules, it was impossible to identify the Hahn SLH Pinot Noir versus the Hahn SLH Chardonnay—if the bottles were stored properly—without pulling out the bottle (from a wine rack). Now, it’s effortless to differentiate between the Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. Simply look at the top for “SLH” and then pick the wine based on the capsule color.”

The entire rebranding process took some seven months, “which fell in line with my expectations,” Cairns said.

Press checks of the design and materials are vital, he emphasized. “The new labels have a foil component, which we selected based on a series of foil swatches. But when we looked at the printed labels at the press check, the foil didn’t match up with our expectations based on the swatches we saw earlier in the process. It’s like picking a paint swatch at Home Depot and realizing the color isn’t what we’d envisioned on the wall—same concept,” he said.

With the entire team—Hahn, CF Napa, label supplier WS Packaging—on hand at the press check, we were able to

work through and resolve the issue. Whether you’re including foil, using special die cuts or simply re-printing a label, the press check is the last stop before the point of no return.”

Hahn has received an overwhelmingly favorable reaction to the new design. “What I hear consistently is that the quality of the package showcases the quality of the wine in the bottle. That’s the best compliment we could receive,” Cairns said.

Lessons learned, per Cairns: “Make sure there’s a reason behind the rebranding. It’s a mistake to make a branding change on a whim.

“Don’t rush into a rebranding project just because you or your staff thinks a look is old or tired. You look at your brands every day and have a very different perspective than the outside world. Know what your consumers and trade partners think about the look. Your consumers might love it. When you change it, you lose all that brand equity. Change for the sake of change is not the route to go.” ❖



Hahn Family Wines sought design help to rework its old packaging (left) in a way that highlighted its Santa Lucia Highlands wines (right).

BUILD AWARENESS, INCITE TRIAL

Wente Vineyards of Livermore, Calif. (750,000 cases)

Celebrating its 130th vintage, “We understand the need to maintain a fresh and relevant brand in the market, said **Amy Hoopes**, chief marketing officer at Wente Vineyards. The winery’s most recent redesign focused on its estate-grown portfolio and also differentiated tiers with the addition of single-vineyard designates.

“Our objective was to build awareness and incite trial through two visual identities that are easy to remember, immediately recognizable, differentiated between tiers and aligned with Wente Vineyards’ brand positioning,” Hoopes said. CF Napa, with whom the winery had a previous working relationship, created the designs.



Wente Vineyards’ redesigned label (bottom) differentiates tiers with vineyard-designated wines.

As determined in the original brief, the new design included bottles and capsules. The project, to be released this spring, took nearly a year to develop and produce. “Distributors and retailers are excited,” Hoopes said.

During a redesign, she said, “It’s important to set a strong vision and strategy that serve as guiding principles throughout the process.” ❖

pletely new design. Clients tend to have broader brushstrokes of styles that they may like in regard to a new design, whereas with a redesign the client tends to want to maintain a greater number of defined elements.”

Given that the end-goal of any redesign is to increase profitability, consumer perception is vital. “The consumer is looking for consistency and authenticity in winery

packaging that not only reflects the price point but also the brand owners and their wine’s unique personality. Our goal is to reflect those core characteristics based upon their target audience,” Hanson-Jerrard said.

Smoothing the process

“Most brand owners have an already set idea about what they are looking for. We

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take those standards and develop concepts that will challenge their assumptions as to the direction they want to look at. This may be in fairly large-scale form (e.g. silkscreen vs. paper), or it may be in usage of colors, textures or imagery,” Hanson-Jerrard said. Frequently, clients have positive reactions toward concepts they had not considered.

Schuemann advised: “If you choose to redesign, hire an expert. This is not the place to experiment with DIY.” Check designer references and insist on case studies showing a firm’s success in accomplishing similar projects.

Hanson-Jerrard supplied specific recommendations for creating a smooth process, with emphasis on the first meeting between designer and client. It’s key, he said, to ensure a fully engaged and comprehensive pre-design meeting occurs with the client decision-makers, allowing all to understand:

- * All the reasons for the redesign—from the commercial environment (on- vs. off-premise, DTC components, etc.) to internal reasons,
- * The brand owner’s ultimate goal with the brand,
- * Which components of the current design are static, flexible or to be excluded: Colors, style, features, font, etc.

This most important first meeting, he said, sets the stage for the entire client/designer relationship. “The best advice I could give to smaller wineries that are thinking of updating or redesigning their packaging is to engage with the designer earlier than you would envision.

“We find that many attempt to shorten the process by spending too much time internally tinkering with the current label prior to calling (a professional). We try to take the fear and cost away by offering to

meet and talk through the process extensively prior to any commitment of engagement.”

During the initial meeting, clients should express their ideas and goal, while designers can explain their process and approach to the project.

Watch the clock

As with every aspect of wine packaging, timing is essential and delays can be costly. Winery clients tend to start by looking at an upcoming bottling schedule and then backtracking. To design, print and win approval of a new label, though, “The process can run anything from six weeks to nine months,” according to Hanson-Jerrard. That’s not including essential elements like TTB approval, which are, of course, “out of our control.”

Timelines for established wineries that have accomplished previous redesigns
(Continued on page 46)

RESPOND TO CUSTOMER FEEDBACK

Clos LaChance Winery of San Martin, Calif. (60,000 cases)

In 2012 we recognized that the market was changing significantly (distributor and account consolidation), and that Clos LaChance needed to some help in the sales department,” said marketing VP Cheryl Durzy. Aveniú Brands handles the winery’s wholesale sales nationally. Aveniú’s staff recognized that a previous redesign had not been well received.

Durzy worked with Aveniú’s in-house designer, who used feedback from the sales team and developed various prototypes. “We needed to keep certain colors assigned to certain varietals, because a significant amount of money had already been spent on custom capsules,” Durzy said.

“I initially wanted our original logo included on the label as well. However, in looking at some of the options I recognized that our outlined logo, developed 20 years ago when we were a 1,000-case winery, was pretty hard to read, especially on the shelf of a fine wine store.”

The new design “is pretty different from our last two designs. Our first one had a hummingbird painting on

it; the description on the back kept getting longer and longer based on what our sales people wanted on it. We made it more contemporary and simple...but it wasn’t quite right. Aveniú really cleaned it up, determined what parts of our brand we should showcase. They made it what it is now, which is working really well for us.”

Clos LaChance not only changed the label, Durzy said. “We also decided to go screwcap for all our wines that are ready for drinking right away. It just made sense. I have been wanting to go to screwcap for all our wines for the past five or six years. For our Estate Series, it was the right thing to do.”

The entire process, including lots of back and forth, took about three to four months, not including TTB approval. Labels come from Cork Supply; bottles from Diablo packaging, labels from Trysk in Seattle, Wash.

With the new look on the market internationally since 2013, “I have heard nothing but positive remarks,” Durzy said. One Canadian market didn’t like the new design at first, she said. Durzy was willing to customize labels for it, but the Canadian customers came to embrace the label, and the redesign remains on the shelves.

“Getting feedback from customers is important. I believe it is important to think outside of the box and not constrain your ideas with traditional ideals—i.e., the logo,” Durzy concluded. *



A hummingbird painting graced Clos LaChance’s first label (left), and the simplified version (right) was not well-received. In 2013 the winery debuted new packaging (center) that pleased distributors and consumers alike.



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Terra d'Oro/Montevina of Plymouth, Calif. (220,000 cases)

Montevina is a brand of 18 million-case Trinchero Family Estates of St. Helena, Calif. **Andrew Rice**, creative director for Trinchero, described the new look as “crisp, clean and contemporary, with the “M” being the distinguishing characteristic. It is easily recognizable on the shelf of retailers or on the tables of an on-premise account.”

Why redesign? “It was time for a change. Montevina is a great quality wine, but the label didn’t do it justice,” Rice explained.

The process came relatively easily: “Ironically the design we chose was the first one that was presented, and we knew it was right. It offered a refreshing approach, and we were all happy. It was a team decision,” according to Rice.

The process was also a team effort, utilizing Trinchero’s in-house designers and design consultants. The result is, Rice said, “a total departure from the current label or other labels, exactly what the brand needed.” It is similar to the new package label for Trinchero’s iconic Sutter Home package, he said, “Clean, bright and contemporary.” Colotype provided printing and label stock: Classic Crest.

It is also a complete packaging departure: “We completely redid the bottle and label. We also went to cork on the reds to reflect the quality. We kept the Stelvin closure on the whites,” Rice said.

The in-house project took only about three months. “There was not much back and forth on this design,” he said.

It has drawn positive reaction from the internal sales force, distributors and retailers, according to Rice. The team at the giant producer navigates 20-plus packaging jobs per year. “This one has probably had the most positive reaction to date.”

Trinchero creative director Andrew Rice said Montevina’s old label (left) “didn’t do it justice.” The contemporary design (right) took about three months to complete.



His advice to other wineries: If you feel your package is not working, ask a designer to take a look. “There are so many market variables when it comes to label design—price point is really everything. A value bottle of wine typically has all the bells and whistles on it, whereas a \$100 Napa Valley Cabernet can be extremely modern and minimalist,” Rice said.

“Then you have everything in between. Wine label design has changed significantly in the past 10 years. There are fewer and fewer rules than there once were. I have learned: Don’t let a few friends/family sway you too much when it comes to design. You have to go with your gut, and remember that you can’t please everyone. ❄



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(Continued from page 42)

tend to be shorter than for those that are new to the market or have not undertaken package alterations for many years, he said.

In general, CF Napa suggests a three-month planning process. Because re-branding involves more than just slapping on a new label, Schuemann said, "Many of our

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clients seek us out early in the process to leverage our knowledge of the wine market worldwide. We work through their brand positioning, brand essence and story before moving into design.” This brings a stronger point of reference to the new design.

Redesigning presents numerous options and decisions: “Introducing a revitalized package design is a wonderful time to review bottle shape, weight, etc.; cost implications of cold-glue labels vs. pressure sensitive; various cork and closure types,” Schuemann said.

“For instance, if a brand is trying to increase its price point—or perceived

price point—moving to a more premium-looking tapered bottle might be an opportunity.”

Create a design brief

Both parties must stay on the same page with a design brief. Hanson-Jerrard shared a design brief for the Michael Mondavi Family winery, which sought to create a two-wine tier, expanding its Emblem brand with a Napa Valley designate Cabernet Sauvignon and a single-vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon from Oso

Vineyard. The wines were to retail for \$35 and \$60, respectively.

“The goal was to develop design and packaging that:

- * Ensures that each individual wine projects its own unique character while maintaining an Emblem family feel.
- * Elevates the individual wine’s perception in the eyes of the consumer to reflect the wine’s style and unique vineyard sourcing.

DON'T CHASE TRENDS

J. Pedroncelli Winery of Geyserville, Calif. (50,000 cases)

This venerable winery, founded in 1927, went on a search for new markets and increased brand awareness. It wanted a “classically contemporary” design. The family winery’s marketing team, headed by marketing VP **Julie Pedroncelli St. John**, led the transition, supported by the winery principals.

After studying proposals submitted by designers, they chose to work with the Auston Design Group in Emeryville, Calif., which they felt was best able to communicate their new message and concept.

The new concept is similar in style to labels dating back to the 1950s, but with an entirely new design that maintains the brand’s singular aspects.

The new packaging includes a different bottle color from Encore Glass to complement the new label design (printed by TAPP), freshly branded cork, tin capsules (Ramondin) and polylam (Maverick), Stelvin screwcaps (Amcor) and case box artwork, according to St. John. The entire redesign took about 11 months to complete.

With a smooth transition throughout production and bottling, “We’ve had no problems with recognition,” St. John said. “Our distributors and retailers are very positive about the changes.” Even with almost a year to launch the package, when at times old and new design were simultaneously side-by-side, “No one expressed a desire to go back to the old design.”

St. John added, “We recommend that when there are requests to change the package, listen, weigh the validity of the request and proceed with caution. Do not chase current packaging trends.” ❖



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Emblem's new tapered bottle (right) reinforces its positioning as Michael Mondavi Family winery's flagship wine.

"The goal was accomplished through the following design elements:

- * An elegant 'cigar band' look ties the wines together while allowing design elements to provide each wine with a unique personality.
- * Reinforced focus on the Emblem brand name, with secondary focus on the Michael Mondavi Family and an "M" at the base of the package as an anchor point to the design.
- * Create a unique filigree that wraps the bottle as an invitation to explore the whole package.
- * Oso's package filigree color balance enhances the elegance and sense of "less is more" to position it as the brand's flagship wine.
- * Oso was repackaged into taller shouldered, tapered glass to reinforce the positioning of the wine in the brand. **W&V**

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