



THE KITCHEN IN PRINT [PACKAGE DESIGN MAGAZINE, 2006]

THE KITCHEN COLLABORATIVE WAS FEATURED in *Package Design Magazine*, a top industry trade, in the November/December issue in its Health & Beauty Spotlight. The article titled “The Kitchen Collaborative Has Systematic Approach to High-End Teen Skincare Line” detailed the Kitchen’s creative process for developing the identity and packaging for TESS (Teen Everyday Skincare System).



The TESS line of skincare products communicates directly to teenage girls in a fun and accessible way that does not patronize them.

The Kitchen Collaborative Has Systematic Approach to High-End Teen Skincare Line

It is hard to imagine that there might be an underserved niche in the health and beauty market, but the founders of TESS skincare products believe they have found one. Having teenage daughters themselves, they saw an opportunity because they felt that high school aged girls did not have a line of high-end skincare products made just for them.

The TESS founders both had successful backgrounds in women's ventures—Susan Shand was marketing editor of Teen Magazine and director of the National Miss Teenage America Pageant and Sheri Poe was founder and CEO of Ryka, an athletic footwear company designed exclusively for women. To launch the colorful, fruit-scented products and packages correctly, they sought the help of the Kitchen Collaborative design group, an affiliated group of women designers in Los Angeles who were already well-versed in marketing to female consumers.

Aniko Hullner, CEO of the Kitchen Collaborative, remembers

the early goal was to establish a “personality” for the brand. The founders also knew that they wanted to communicate in a few positive ways directly to their teenage girl consumers. The Kitchen did a great deal of exploratory research and developed positioning boards to discover the most direct way to communicate to 13- to 17-year-old teens without talking down to them or patronizing them.

“There’s a lot of variety within this audience,” says Hullner. “They’re a lot more sophisticated than their parents were.” The strategy was to be essentially transparent with the message and the packaging. “We wanted to be very honest about the product,” says Hullner.

Building an honest brand

TESS is actually an acronym standing for Teen Everyday Skincare System. The system is designed to be implemented throughout a normal day, in a six-step process. The system exploration included color-coding, numbering systems, and

icons to help the consumer navigate the system as easily as possible.

The target TESS girl is one that is struggling with adolescent issues of individuality and self-esteem. The logo, product names, and brand messages had to be both accessible and entertaining. Hullner summarizes the final packages as achieving “a little ‘wink-wink’ approach,” to let the teens have some fun.

The names of the products had to have a personality but also reflect the differences in strength in the products. The Kitchen developed two complete product name approaches—one called the “To Do List” and the other the “Honest” approach. The TESS founders went more with the playful “To Do List” names such as “This is your wake-up call” and “Time for some zzzs.”

The Kitchen developed a number of versatile word mark logo solutions to explore how the TESS identity could be flexible enough to accommodate a wide range of products with varying components and sizes. The logo exploration included

clean word marks with a hint of personality, hand-written marks that mirrored the individuality of the market, and expressive letter form marks that broke down the TESS acronym with a playful twist. The final logo is mix of upper and lower case letters with clean, feminine letter forms that is slightly reminiscent of the Facebook logo.

Organizing a system

The final TESS system took the form of three skincare categories and was expressed through a color system—green for “Almost Normal” (combination skin), orange for “Skin with Attitude” (problem skin), and “Mix and Match” (all skin types). The color system made for faster recognition on the shelf, an easy step-by-step numbering system made the system accessible, and supplementary booklets helped educate the consumer about product benefits and usage.

The component exploration included the shapes and materials of the bottles and exterior packaging solutions that provided mobility and ease of use for the on-the-go teen girl. The tube for blemish and lip gloss, for instance, is a popular packaging form right now.

A cornerstone of the TESS launch was to have a six product system, individually numbered, that could be contained in single skincare kits that could be used throughout the day. The Kitchen designed the custom secondary packaging so the packaging walks the user through the system, and the packaging arranges the products single-file.

The TESS founders told Hullner that they really wanted to communicate to the teens in a positive way since poor self-esteem is such a negative force in their lives. It was a challenge to find a delicate balancing point where the packaging could speak encouragingly to

teens without being perceived as pedantic or silly.

The 30+ different “affirmations” on the labels and secondary packaging strike a good balance because the lack of space between words achieves a sort of wallpaper effect. They do indeed communicate a number of positive messages, and they are sepa-

rated by—what else—positive signs, which could be read as “and” signs. A sample passage reads: “Take Time to Dream + Never Settle + Follow Your Heart + Speak Your Mind.” The affirmations remind teens to embrace their individuality while creating an interactive experience during product use. ■