

Retail Merchandiser

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50
1961-2011
Years

retail-merchandiser.com STRATEGIES FOR GROWTH

License to Brand

JLG leads the way in food & beverage licensing.



Licensing:
Saban Brands Powers
Up New Properties

Retail:
Pilot Flying J Gets
Fresh With Its Food

The Design Plus Difference

Atlanta-based licensing boutique Design Plus has been successful for 30 years by staying ahead of market trends and keeping a close connection with brand clients.



drink maker ICEE, has more than 11 million downloads and ranked as the No. 1 earner for kids' games in the last half of 2011.

Since then, Design Plus has licensed apps for its other clients, which include Superpretzel. "We are recognized as an agency that is forward-thinking when it comes to apps and digital development," Carol Janet says. "It's a pretty big deal for us that after all these years we are still relevant and on the cutting-edge."

Such forward-thinking is a necessity in a crowded marketplace for food-related products. "Our biggest

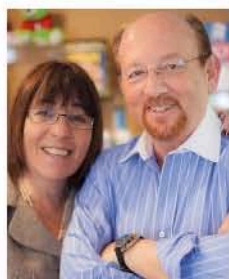
challenge is the dynamism of the marketplace – it is always changing," Meyer Janet says.

"You can't have an ivory tower mentality; what worked today won't work tomorrow, and you have to stay ahead of the game."

The company's ability to stay ahead of market trends helped it reach a major milestone this year, its 30th anniversary. Design Plus has served a number of notable clients in its history, including names such as KFC, Anheuser-Busch, Taco Bell and Coca-Cola. In addition to ICEE and Superpretzel, the company's other current clients include Slush Puppie and Post Cereals.

Taking an Active Role

Design Plus will soon apply the licensing talents and forward-thinking philosophy that have guided it during its 30-year history to another notable brand: Kikkoman, which it added to its portfolio of brands in early 2013. "We're very excited about Kikkoman, because if one looks at the flavor preference profile



Carol Janet and Meyer Janet,
CEO and President
www.dplicensing.com
Atlanta

For Design Plus, there's more to successfully licensing a brand than simply placing a recognizable name on a product and going to market.

"We have always stayed close to the consumer and what the consumer wants, because at the end of the day, that's who we serve," says Meyer Janet, the president of the Atlanta-based licensing boutique, which he co-owns with his wife, Carol, Design Plus' CEO. "We are successful because we've stayed relevant to consumers while maintaining relationships with brand owners."

One example of the company's ability to stay ahead of consumer trends is its use of social media and mobile apps in licensing efforts. Design Plus was one of the first licensing companies to appoint an app developer – Sunstorm Interactive – to develop digital properties for its clients. Sunstorm's first such effort, the ICEE Maker app for frozen

of Generation X and Millennials, it's clear that ethnic food is trending up," Carol Janet says.

As with all of its clients, Design Plus is working closely with Kikkoman to develop a look and brand aesthetic while identifying categories the brand will work well with. Those could include food items, kitchenware and other products, she adds.

Aside from being recognizable names in the food industry, all of Design Plus' brand clients have one thing in common. "We work with best-of-breed brands," Carol Janet says.

"We won't take on a brand we're not passionate about, and since we are so passionate, we will hold our clients' hand all the way through the licensing process, and that makes all the difference," Carol Janet continues.

Both Meyer and Carol Janet take an active role during product development. "Usually, with larger licensing firms, it's the account representatives handling the brand," Carol Janet says. "With our company, clients have access to the principals 24/7, and we get involved in developing products and working with manufacturers."

'Bright and Creative'

One of Design Plus' biggest advantages when it comes to product licensing is apparent from its name. "We differentiate ourselves through design; we have an accomplished creative arm that's able to interpret the brand in graphic terms," Meyer Janet says. "We don't just look to take existing logos and put them on products; we get involved in packaging, flavor, design and product development."

Design Plus encourages its clients to regularly develop new style guides and artwork, and works closely with them to update their looks. The company says it maintains an "enormous" database of freelance artists who help clients keep abreast of the latest trends.

"Usually the style guides that licensees receive from brand owners are very bland," Carol Janet says. "When we give licensees a style guide, they're very bright and creative."


'Getting Results'

Another part of Design Plus' hands-on approach involves research by the Janets and their staff into consumer trends. This can include talking directly to retailers and consumers alike while representing

brands. "For us, it's all about being in the marketplace and getting results," Meyer Janet says.

Design Plus has been getting results ever since the Janets founded the company in South Africa in 1983. The company entered the U.S. market in 1994, when Coca-Cola contracted it to participate in licensing efforts related to the Summer Olympics in Atlanta.

Before forming the company, Meyer Janet worked as an executive for the Suzuki Motor Corp., owned a sportsclothing franchise and served as CFO of a large retail chain. Carol Janet's experience includes design and brand building and product extension roles with Mattel and Crayola in South Africa. She is also the former CEO and owner of a design company.

Design Plus' latest product launch is ICEE Zero Liquid Flavor Enhancer, now available in Publix, Meijer and K-Mart stores. The flavor enhancer, produced by Heartland, will be available in all major retailers later this year. Brandgenuity Consulting helped facilitate the licensing deal, according to Design Plus. 

- Jim Harris

DESIGN PLUS
CELEBRATING
30 YEARS
OF BRAND BUILDING
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