

YOUR PACKAGING P

Research now and avoid issues later

By Donna Marie

You have planned the perfect product. Your products have been tested by happy local friends and family members, and you are ready to start selling to complete strangers all around the nation — maybe even the world.

If you're like many people, you may have forgotten to test your packaging and shipping materials to see how they hold up in situations completely outside your control. Skipping this important step will almost always result in inconvenience for both you and your customers. But thanks to a myriad of options, there's almost no packaging and shipping problem that cannot be solved with a little creative ingenuity, a bit of

patience, and the willingness to endure a little phase of trial and error to get it right.

And what could be better than advice from other handmade business owners who have been inside the packaging trenches? The experiences here showcase how important it is to pay careful attention to how your products are packaged and shipped. The right packaging solutions can mean the difference between life and death for a small business that relies on online orders. Do your research up front — before the losses pile up. And even when you make a mistake, as these stories show, fix it quickly and move on. You can do it!

Good to the Last Drop

Fields of Ambrosia

North Conway, New Hampshire

Web: www.fieldsofambrosia.com

Owner: Deb Jasien

THE PRODUCT: Hand cream in two and four-ounce tubes

THE PROBLEM: Most women carry hand cream in their purse, so if you make a purse-sized hand lotion, you need to package it in a container that is sturdy and can withstand a lot of abuse.

Deb Jasien of Fields of Ambrosia in North Conway, New Hampshire, originally packaged her hand cream in tubes made of strong HDPE plastic. The tubes were rugged, but their toughness made it hard to dispense the last ounce of the product. Customer complaints about wasting good hand cream led Jasien to a softer plastic tube that was sturdy and made it easy for women to enjoy her hand cream down to the last drop.

THE SOLUTION: Jasien's solution was a mono-layer/ multi-layer tube that was flexible enough for women to squeeze out all the product. The tubes require heat sealing after filling, so she invested in a \$1,900 sealing system — a relatively significant investment for a small business.

The sealing system allows Jasien to seal 300 tubes of hand cream per hour. To recoup the costs, she raised the hand cream price by one dollar. Customers did not bat an eye about the increase, and her hard work and investment has been rewarded with satisfied customers who buy even more hand cream. She has more than made up for the



Above: Shown is the Roseline Collection of body products from Fields of Ambrosia.

Left: Fields of Ambrosia's crème scrub is packaged in a flexible, multi-layered tube allowing customers access to all of the lotion.

equipment investment, since people are more than willing to accept the higher price in exchange for the convenience of being able to easily use all the product.

Jasien also gave a free sample to every customer who complained that she could not get the last ounce of cream out of the original tubes. She estimates this cost her about \$2,000 over the course of six years.

THE RESOURCES: Tubes and airless bottles, APC Packaging, www.apcpackaging.com; sealing equipment, Sorbent Systems, www.sorbentsystems.com