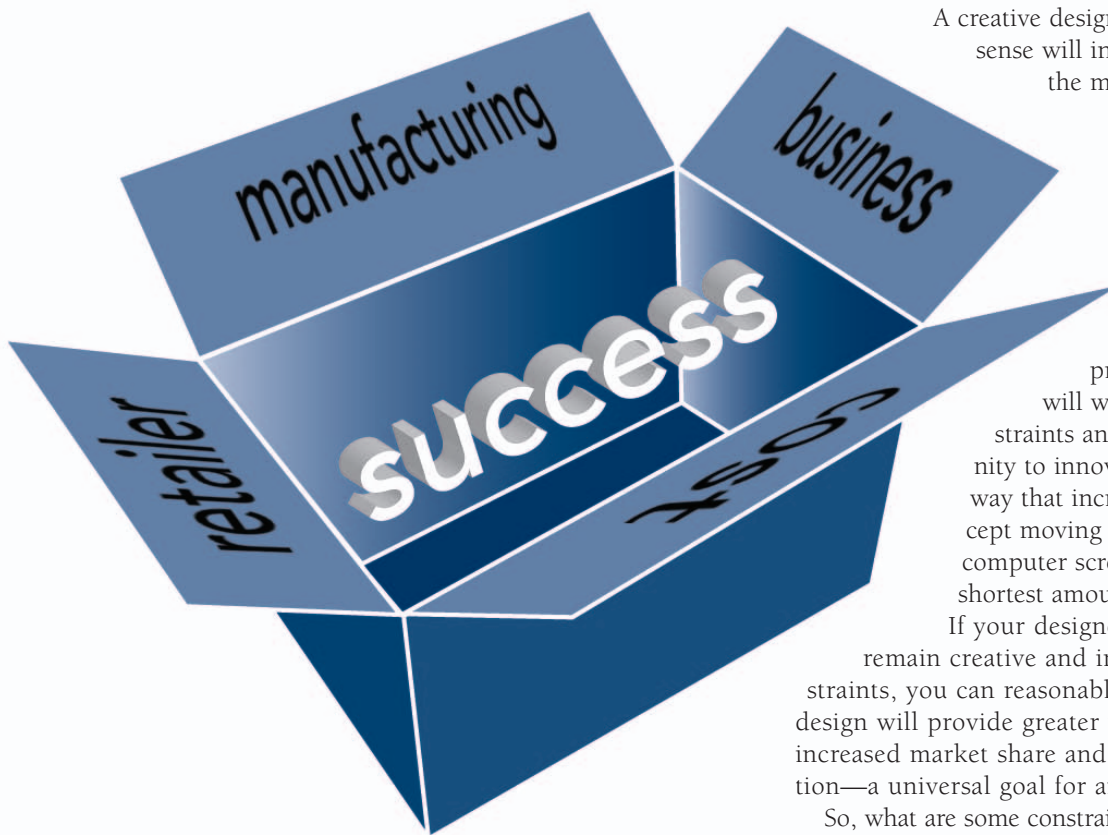


# SUCCESS CAN HAPPEN “INSIDE” THE BOX

*If your designer can adhere to, yet remain creative within, the constraints of your business model, the end result can be an innovative—and manufacturable—package.*

BY JAVIER VERDURA



Some designers will tell you they won't work within the “shackles” of business constraints. In fact, many will *insist* on it. They will tell you it hinders their creativity and their ability to think “outside the box”.

I say *nonsense*. What's the benefit of a beautifully designed product that cannot be manufactured? Or a product that can be manufactured, but costs so much that margins are reduced? Or, worse yet, one that does not meet consumer needs and, as a result, leads to sales and market share erosion?

A creative designer with a practical business sense will insist on being informed of the manufacturing capabilities and assets dictated by your business model. With an understanding that capital spending, cost of goods, and retail price thresholds are all key factors in designing a financially sustainable product, a creative designer will welcome your so-called constraints and view them as an opportunity to innovate effectively—and in a way that increases the chances of a concept moving from drawing board (or computer screen) to store shelves in the shortest amount of time.

If your designers can adhere to, yet remain creative and innovative within, your constraints, you can reasonably conclude that the new design will provide greater net margins through increased market share and overall consumer satisfaction—a universal goal for any business.

So, what are some constraints that a designer might face over the course of a project?

**Consumer needs.** Manufacturers strive to make products that are relevant to consumers. Success equals a “lift” in sales and, potentially, increased margins. However, a concept that fulfills a consumer need might not be in line with what is possible to manufacture or produce for a profit. But, a product designed to solve a long-time consumer frustration—and designed within the manufacturing and cost thresholds—will, at the very least, generate more sales, or, in the best case scenario, generate more sales at a higher price point.

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**Existing equipment.** Companies frequently have invested in certain technologies and equipment that afford them a degree of efficiency. It is critical that your designers know how much you are willing to invest in new equipment; otherwise, they won't be focusing their creative energies on ideas that will yield the best results for your particular situation.

**Retail environment.** Imagine designing a product that consumers loved and that your business could manufacture effectively, but finding out that it won't fit on Wal-Mart's shelves. What now? If your designer had known the shelf height constraints up front, you wouldn't have to re-loop and potentially compromise an otherwise "successful" design.

Great designers are like inventors who embrace constraints and business-sensitive boundaries. They adapt.

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They cleverly circumvent a seemingly impassable obstacle. And they are capable of driving toward the unified goal of creating something desirable, tangibly useful, profitable and meaningful.

In the final analysis, designing within constraints saves time and money, and it increases accuracy by focusing the design team on a target, and, as a result, providing a greater rate of success, which, in this case, means getting a consumer-relevant, manufacturable, retailer-accepted product on the store shelves.

Next time a designer tells you to keep your constraints to yourself because it will hinder his creativity, realize that you may ultimately end up with a beautiful (yet useless) piece of art rather than a product that will increase your margins and market share...and isn't that why you're in this business to begin with? **BP**



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*The author, Javier Verdura, is vice president of design and development at Product Ventures, a packaging and product design and development agency. Contact him at [jverdura@productventures.com](mailto:jverdura@productventures.com).*