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Tracy Deer/Connecticut Post

Looking good: Product Ventures President Peter Clarke, left, shows a prototype for one of the firm's packages.

## PACKAGING IS PART OF THE PRODUCT

Fairfield company designs innovative, recognizable looks

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FAIRFIELD — There's something exciting happening on the shelves of America's stores and homes, and Product Ventures Ltd. is one of the reasons why.

The design and engineering firm has worked with some of the most recognizable retail brands, creating products and packages that meet the needs of consumers while satisfying the manufacturers' bottom lines.

"There's a renaissance going on in the design of packaging," said Peter Clarke, president and founder of the Fairfield office Friday. "Peter Clarke is very passionate about what he does and the people there seem to have carried that on. They're very challenging and edgy and they really roll up their sleeves and deliver excellent results."

To illustrate, Clarke held up a bottle of Mr. Bubble, a bubble bath product. He said that when Playtex Products Inc. acquired the brand, it came to Product Ventures to give the packaging a more exciting look to compete with newer products on the market.

"The old bottle had been

around for about 25 years," Clarke said. "It had a generic bottle structure. ... The idea is to use the package as well as labels to communicate the essence of the product."

The result was a container whose bubbly shape echoed that of its contents. Clarke said the result not only provided Playtex with a more evocative package, but it was distinctive enough that it became an "ownable design" for Playtex, protecting it from generic look-alikes.

Arriving at that solution required a multi-disciplinary approach, one that Clarke said makes his company unique in the industry. Described by Clarke as a "cross-

functional team of product professionals," Product Ventures' staff of nearly 30 people includes mechanical engineers, multi-media designers, strategic marketers and consumer insight professionals.

To complement the talent, the company has onsite all the facilities it needs to not only render a prototype of a product, but to also make it available to consumer test groups and respond to their feedback. Clarke said prototypes are adjusted and fine-tuned to meet a test group's suggestions while the group's members wait.

"We move quick. We're all about prototyping fast," Clarke said. "Henry Ford brought the work to the worker. We've



Testing it out: Product Ventures Ltd. industrial designer Jesse DeGigante models a foam prototype bottle shape in the company's workshop. The ability to deliver quick results has led to a number of long-term relationships with some high-profile brands.

brought the consumer and business decision-makers to the creative agency."

That ability to deliver quick results has led to a number of long-term relationships with some high-profile brands, according to Clarke. Product Ventures' list of clients includes Kraft Foods, Procter & Gamble Co. and the H.J. Heinz Co.

Carrie Russell, a mechanical engineer for Procter & Gamble, said she immediately comes to Product Ventures when presented with a new project.

"They are very innovative,

and working with them is very much a partnership," said Russell, who was working at the Fairfield office Friday. "Peter Clarke is very passionate about what he does and the people there seem to have carried that on. They're very challenging and edgy and they really roll up their sleeves and deliver excellent results."

The company's Web site is [www.productventures.com](http://www.productventures.com).

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