

Chanel reduces environmental footprint



IN 2007, when Chanel assessed its carbon footprint, it transpired that packaging accounted for half its CO₂ emissions, followed by transporting finished products to shops or warehouses, while travel ranked third. Based on these findings, Chanel drafted a plan of action.

This interview, resulting from a presentation at PCD (Perfumes, Cosmetics & Designs) 2011 in Paris, with Chanel's Michel Dupuis, packaging development and purchasing strategy director, and Pascale Marciniak Davoult, packaging innovation and research director, explains the company's strategy to reduce its environmental footprint.

How did you go about tackling the issues identified by these findings?

Michel Dupuis (MD): First we decided to take action to reduce carbon emissions at product development stage and in 2008 we undertook to create a tool for our development engineers. This was completed in June 2009, and has been used ever since.

Tell us more about this tool to better control the environmental impact of your packaging.

MD: The tool provides evaluation, or an approach, that's both qualitative and quantitative as it uses a system of questions to create dialogue between marketing and developers. Qualitatively it challenges the marketing brief to ensure nothing has been overlooked, such as recyclability or product reuse, while quantitatively it automatically provides the carbon equivalent of the packaging and an aggregate value for other criteria depending on the materials and process used.

In conjunction with the main cosmetics suppliers, we refined generic data available in the plastics, glass, printing and metal processing industries which has enabled us to obtain specific values for our sector of cosmetics in relation to the technologies used.

In other words this is a decision-making tool?

MD: When we develop a new product we include all the materials and components used and compare them with benchmarks chosen from our existing products. The goal is not to say 'I am going to reduce my CO₂ emissions by 50%' but simply to do better than last time. The idea is to improve with each new product development. This forms part of the decision-making process.

Did you develop this tool solely for Chanel?

MD: Initially yes, in light of the compulsory environmental labelling being introduced in 2011.

However, we've since decided to provide this tool to the industry to get things moving.

Since launching this, now generic, software tool at PCD 2011, it's available free of charge to our suppliers, customers and colleagues.



▲ Discussing the tools to reduce Chanel's environmental footprint are Pascale Marciniak Davoult and Michel Dupuis.

What do you hope to achieve by sharing this software with the other players in the cosmetics and perfume sector?

MD: Giving this tested and practical tool to people who will find it useful on a daily basis is reassuring. It avoids senseless expenditure and saves time. Finally, working towards sustainable development also calls for a degree of generosity and one should not consider that having this kind of tool is a competitive advantage – it needs to be shared.

Consumers take account of the environmental impact of the products they buy. Can you tell us about the difficulties involved in integrating functionalities and making them compatible with the environment?

Pascale Marciniak Davoult: It's true that this isn't easy. But the paradox is that far from acting as a brake, it's a factor that enables us, both now and in the future, to open new avenues for innovation.

It's by thinking differently about the environment that one can create new packaging designs and these new concepts will steer us along uncharted paths.

The way is, therefore, not easy but it will be a factor of innovation for the future. It is very often the challenges flowing from these paradoxes that enable companies to excel.