

THE OWLCRATE STORY:

How Packaging Helps Brands Soar

BY MICHAEL RONEY

It was a leap of faith that took some courage. In late 2014, Korrina Ede and Robert Madden worked as managers in a Vancouver toy store, but they were looking to do something a little different. Armed with creativity and a passion for whimsical young adult literature—most particularly the Harry Potter series—they conceived OwlCrate, a monthly subscription box that includes a just-published hardcover novel, exclusive goodies from the author and several fun items built around the month's theme. Supported by some eye-catching packaging, this creative idea took flight, with the initial monthly shipment of 250 boxes in early 2015 growing in excess of 10,000 today.

It's All In The Presentation

When OwlCrate officially launched in February 2015, Ede and Madden had developed the brand's "Magical Monthly Reads" concept, a social media campaign and a compelling packaging strategy that gave a nod to the Harry Potter series. "In those stories, the owl delivers the mail, and we wanted our logo to have a bit of a magical feel to it," said Madden. "The box has printing on every side, including a short guide

to unboxing, and an owl printed on the bottom of the inside, so you get a fun little image when you finish unpacking."

There were other considerations as well.

While many subscription box startups often print their labels and affix them to the front of the package, from the start Ede and Madden opted for direct printing to convey a higher level of quality. They had their boxes further optimized for strength in the mail, with corrugated specifications upgraded after the initial launch. All of OwlCrate's primary materials are sourced from U.S. companies and assembled by a team based outside of Portland, Oregon.

This top-quality packaging doesn't go unappreciated: OwlCrate's customers often repurpose their boxes in creative ways. Afterward, the boxes are easily recycled. "Our subscribers have shared photos of the boxes incorporated in their bookshelves, or stacked as towers to show how many months they've subscribed," noted Ede. "They also use them to mail things to friends and family since they look so nice."

Ede and Madden have now launched a second subscription box called OwlCrate Jr. for children ages 8 to 12. They differentiate this product through carefully curated, age-appropriate books, a unique two-color logo and a custom-printed blue interior.

Creativity And Coolness Yield Success

Although OwlCrate's meteoric growth was a bit intimidating at first, Ede and Madden's courage, creativity and attention to detail in their packaging have served them well.



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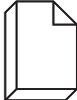
"On social media the OwlCrate logo is the most widely shared image of the box," said Madden. "I think it just evokes that sense of magic, building anticipation when a magical owl has landed at your doorstep with this month's goodies."

"It's fun and whimsical," said Ede. "Lots of people just receive bills and boring stuff in the mail, so I think when our box shows up they get really excited." ■



Photo by Jenna Clare

The OwlCrate team

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