**Crayola Brand: The Color Purple - or Red, or Green, or...**

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Remember when you were a kid? At this time of year we would be excited to go out with Mom and get our school clothes and supplies for fall. Even though the summer months were filled with fun and swimming (in my case), the anticipation of getting new stuff for school made the waning days of the season worth it. What I’m speaking of here is the big box of crayons I’d HAVE to get EACH year. Gone were the days of the 8-pack of Jumbo Crayolas when going to kindergarten. When getting into the big grades, say 3rd, it was time to get the 64-pack (or larger if Mom let me) that contained all the colors I could ever imagine using. I know I never used all of them, but I absolutely loved the crayon sharpener which was built right in the box! Why was Crayola so popular? Why were they the only choice we had? Why didn’t we get the “no-name” colors or some other brand? Other than causing us to look like the “out” kids, there really wasn’t any other real choice. How did Crayola do it?

Well, back in the early 1900s, a couple of cousins who were in the business of making red and black pigment chemicals for things such as tires and barn paint, came up with the idea of producing slate pencils for schools. After some research and protoypes later, they came up with the wax-based “Crayolas” of today. (The brand came from the wives’ names of the two cousins.) The brand was formed and the rest is history, as they say.

Why is the brand still the most recognized, used, and colorful writing utensil today? It seems not only that the founders had great marketing accumen, it was passed down to the future “Crayolas” that kept it all coloring along. The clever and creative names of the many colors were enough the keep the brand unique for many years, although not changed too many times as to compete with the brand itself. Crayola has also maintained the same yellow and green box colors and container design from Day One. They also reach out to parents and children alike in their marketing stategies.

Crayola got itself into television with “Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood”, Royal Caribbean cruise ships feature “crayola-themed” classes and workshops for the kids, and Crayola even has celebrity names for some of their newest colors, including Britney Spears, Tiger Woods and even “W” Bush (I’d probably melt that one down). Due to these tactics and more, they have been able to keep the brand fresh and updated throughout these 100+ years.

So what does this all mean to you? Other than being an interesting story of a fun product from your youth, it’s a great case study on how naming and branding can, and does, work through the course of time. There will be many times in your graphic design or marketing careers when a naming or branding project comes up. They’re really fun, but they’re also really difficult to nail. Other than the typical art and design classes that are part of the education in creative classes, I’d consider enrolling in a marketing class or two to get the nuts and bolts of promotion and PR under your belt. I went for a business and marketing degree in my younger years so I had the luxury of taking many of the fun classes involved in that major. (The case study classes were the best!) Of course, many of you go straight into design school and won’t get the basic marketing classes, for better or worse. My strong advice is to take one at your local community college, extension classes, or by attending the various studio tours offered by industy associations, such as the AIGA. At them, you can ask the experts how they do it and possibly even get some valuable tips on what will help you.

The Crayola brand story is just one of many successful ones out there. There are just as many stories of failure, which are just as important to study. The bottom line is, we don’t get the art of naming and branding through osmosis, it’s something that has to be learned and practiced. So, get out your crayons and start working.

http://artbistro.monster.com/education/articles/6519-crayola-brand-the-color-purple---or-red-or-green-or