

SUCCESS STORY

J.R. Cole Industries and UPM Raflatac help Three Olives® bottle up successful flavored vodka launch



Flavored liquors have been keeping spirits – and sales – high for distilleries and importers alike.

From 2007 to 2012, these products rose to constitute 26 percent of all volume sales in the U.S., according to Euromonitor International. So when Three Olives® cherry and grape vodkas developed cult-like followings, it was an easy decision for parent company Proximo Spirits to expand its line-up of flavored vodka products. Proximo is a fast-growing spirits company that also owns the world's best-selling tequila line, Jose Cuervo.

To capitalize on U.S. tastes, Proximo developed another 24 unique flavors for Three Olives® and launched a \$20-million advertising campaign with Clive Owens in 2013. From Dude and Loopy, which appeal to consumers' sense of fun; to pomegranate and triple-shot espresso, which savvily exploit market demand for unique, au courant tastes; to celebrity-themed Marilyn Monroe Strawberry and Elvis Presley Coconut Water, the company offers refreshing spirited beverages for everyone.

Putting a new label on an industry innovator

Obviously, Three Olives®' packaging had to reinforce its reputation as a super-premium vodka maker. Proximo takes great care with this product line, distilling British winter wheat four times before it is bottled. Hence, it was always clear that its new flavored products would be branding all-stars. The vodka line's glass bottles are tall and sinuous, etched for an arresting frosted appearance. So product labels would need to accentuate the bottle's modern, elegant lines.

Proximo turned to its label converter partner, J.R. Cole Industries, for help crafting a winning label solution. J.R. Cole had already helped Proximo make the transition from silk screening to pressure sensitive labels with Three Olives® three original flavors – classic, grape and cherry – in 2012 when the company acquired the brand from White Rock. Many spirits manufacturers have implemented pressure sensitive labels because of their branding potential, ability to create production efficiencies with inline decoration and application cleanliness. In addition, using pressure sensitive labels enables companies to consolidate bottle inventories, using standard-sized forms for all of its product varieties.

“Pressure sensitive labeling has really helped reinvigorate the liquor industry,” says Joe Richards, Vice President, Sales, J.R. Cole.

“You can do so many things with these labels. You can use films and specialty papers and really pack in the ink. It enables distilleries to get extremely creative with their packaging.”

Spirits labeling leader helps brands stand tall

J.R. Cole was ready to take on the flavored vodka challenge. The company, which boasts a \$30-million annual book of business, had deep experience with spirits converting, as it works with the majority of U.S. distilleries. J.R. Cole provides its spirits clients with exceptional printing expertise and aggressive pricing, enabling companies to meet their business and branding objectives.

In addition, J.R. Cole already handled the majority of Proximo’s label converting needs for the Three Olives® brand. The company’s in-house creative and production team works closely with Proximo and other clients to design or fine-tune label art, make recommendations on suppliers, run samples and facilitate the journey to product launch. “It’s our job to make sure our clients achieve their desired effect, and so we tell them what substrates, coatings and inks are available. There’s a good bit of research and planning that goes on behind the scenes to give clients different options and help them decide which way to go,” says **Justin Cole**, Account Representative.

The shine of marketplace success

This wasn’t any ordinary branding assignment. The base label would need to gleam, just like the bottle showcasing the brand. It had to wrap 360-degrees around the bottle, with varnishes killed at the ends to provide a seamless overlap. It needed to accept inks well and resist scratching and smudging if bottles touched during shipping, handling or presentation on retail shelves. And the adhesive needed to provide short-term repositionability, in the event labels needed to be reapplied.

The J.R. Cole team, which included Justin, Joe and **Phong Nguyen**, Creative Director, knew that there were just two or three suppliers who could provide the pressure sensitive metalized paper they needed for a base label. And one of them was UPM Raflatac.

“We have a really good relationship with UPM Raflatac,” says Joe. “To be frank, the company has the best full product line in the spirits industry.” Agrees Phong: “If we have a new product, even if it’s just an idea, the UPM Raflatac team will sit down with us and say, ‘Hey, we can make it happen.’ So when we got the Three Olives® opportunity, we talked with the team. We got samples that we tested that worked perfectly and that the client loved. Proximo picked the UPM Raflatac material for the Three Olives® launch, because it was the most attractive metalized paper, beat out all the competitors and gave them the visual effect they desired.”



Service that's Engineered with the Raflatouch

Not only did UPM Raflatac deliver a beautiful label stock, SILVERVAC RP48AT 1.2 mil PET, that provided exceptional quality and performance, but the company could guarantee the volumes J.R. Cole and Proximo needed for the Three Olives® flavored vodka launch and ongoing sales. "About a year ago, we experienced a metalized paper shortage," says Joe. "So it was really important that we could ensure a good supply of this product, because we use a lot of it with our spirits clients. UPM Raflatac is extremely reliable and dependable, whereas some of our other providers were not able to guarantee adequate supply." UPM Raflatac's reliability, adds Joe, isn't just limited to providing high quality label stocks: The manufacturer also provides strong sales and technical support and fast shipping.

J.R. Cole staff worked with UPM Raflatac to create a beautiful brand image that performed well under pressure on the bottle. J.R. Cole uses screen printing and dome coating to create an image that has a satin feel and raised image, which ranges from conceptual images of fruit and chocolate to pop art-style imagery to instantly recognizable celebrity shots.

Positioning perfectly for the big buy

Equally importantly, the base label provides short-term repositionability and clean removal. If labels emerge from applicators askew, they can be reapplied perfectly to the bottle without any tearing or wrinkling. "We went through a learning curve when we applied the labels," said Justin. "They needed to have an aggressive tack, but we were having difficulty removing misapplied labels so we could reuse the bottles. UPM Raflatac suggested a different spec that gave us about a minute of tack time so we could remove the label easily and apply another one. And removing a label doesn't leave any residue on the bottle, which is important for brand appeal." After that minute, the adhesive seals permanently, ensuring that the label won't flag or fall off the bottle in the liquor store.

A race to a photo-quality finish

Once the UPM Raflatac material and label art was approved, J.R. Cole employees kicked into high gear. Its design and production team worked closely with the client to lock down back, base and neck labels for the 24 flavors, which came in five sizes. Thus, the team needed to get press approval for 360 items from the Three Olives® brand team, which occurred on a rolling basis, enabling J.R. Cole to begin production.

The Three Olives® flavored vodka launch was extremely successful. Not only has Proximo strengthened its market position in the U.S., but it gained significant media coverage and plaudits from consumers eager to try something new. The company continues to invest in its Three Olives® line, which is not just good sense: It's good business. According to the Distilled Spirits Council of the United States, vodka is the "backbone of the spirits industry," accounting for a third of all-volumes and generating \$5.6 billion in revenue for distilleries in 2013.

With the Three Olives® flavored vodka line, Proximo is raising a glass to ongoing marketplace success – and its future.



About J.R. Cole Industries

The quality of your packaging speaks volumes about the quality of your products. Each and every one of your employees works diligently to preserve customer trust in your products, and, as a member of your team, we do the same. J.R. Cole Industries commitment to excellence starts with our own full service, in-house prepress plant. The excellence extends to our system for managing orders in our print facilities. It flows through to the technicians who operate the equipment that makes every product we run reflect a quality image. We are an integral part of your team, ready to offer ideas that make the package production process better. Our hallmark is quality packaging, produced on time, at competitive prices. We do everything in our power to enhance our working relationship and increase your ability to protect your brand. It's been that way since Bob Cole founded the company in 1979, and it continues today. More information can be found at www.jrcole.com.

About Proximo Spirits

Proximo is a privately owned, premium spirits importer based in Jersey City, New Jersey. With just over five years of business, the company's portfolio has already grown to hold twelve premium brands including: 1800® Tequila, Three Olives Vodka®, The Kraken® Black Spiced Rum, Gran Centenario® Tequila, Matusalem® Rum, Azul™ Tequila, Maestro Dobel® Tequila, El Zarco® Tequila, Agavero® Liqueur, Boodles® Gin, Hangar One® Vodka, and Stranahan's® Whiskey. Proximo, translated as "next" in Spanish, is the next major producer of innovative spirits marketing and new product development. The company continues to develop strong relationships with distributor partners in the US and internationally, while accelerating the growth of their high-profile portfolio of award-winning, premium brands. They remind consumers to please enjoy their products responsibly. More information can be found at www.proximospirits.com.

About UPM Raflatac

UPM Raflatac is one of the world's leading producers of self-adhesive label materials. We supply high-quality paper and film labelstock for consumer product and industrial labeling through a global network of factories, distribution terminals and sales offices. We employ around 2,900 people and made sales of USD 1.6 billion (EUR 1.2 billion) in 2013. UPM Raflatac is part of UPM – The Biofore Company. Find out more at www.upmraflatac.com.

