

**Case Study:**

# Sharpie Spinner Pack

Newell Brands and Rohrer Reinvent the Wheel...for a Blockbuster Holiday Promo!

*“A lot of times they say to ‘not reinvent the wheel’.....this time we literally had to with Rohrer’s expert help.”*

TREY  
Newell Brands

*“We needed Rohrer’s engineering support, passion and partnership to help us make the Sharpie® Spinner Pack a success.”*

RANDEL  
Newell Brands



**Specifications:**

**Market Segment:**  
Specialty  
**Format:**  
Custom Thermoformed Tray Blister (knob)  
**Materials:**  
Tray: 24mil RPET  
Blister: 20mil PVC

We’ve all heard the term “reinventing the wheel”. It means that someone is wasting their time trying to create something that already exists. Right? But what if you had to invent a new kind of retail package...a wheel configuration with a unique feature? Specifically, it needed to have a circular shape that could hold thirty Sharpie® markers, fit inside a certain size box, meet tight budget and time constraints, use some curbside recyclable materials...and bring a new innovative feature to this pack. That would be a tall order for any packaging manufacturer, right? But that’s exactly the kind of ‘out-of-the-box’ challenges the combined design and engineering teams at Newell Brands and Rohrer like to tackle. And the Sharpie® Spinner Pack is a perfect example. Together, they created a blockbuster of a package that blew the socks off their key customer’s decision makers.

**The Black Friday Holiday Promotion**

Newell Brands is a leading global consumer goods company with a strong portfolio of well-known brands, including Rubbermaid®, Paper Mate®, Sharpie®, Dymo®, EXPO®, Parker®, and Mr. Coffee® to name a few. They are committed to enhancing the lives of consumers around the world with environmentally responsible, innovative, and attractive products. Every year,

Newell Brands creates Black Friday Holiday promotional packs. Certain packs become so popular; it sells out within minutes after customers opens their post-Thanksgiving doors. Each year has fun themes such as zoo animals or spaceships, with the added bonus of coloring pages – a perfect gift for the Sharpie® marker fan. However, each year forces Newell to brainstorm yet another creative theme for the next holiday Sharpie® marker promotion.

It all started back in the summer of 2019, when Newell brought together key stakeholders for an aptly named “Innovation Session”. This is where brainstorming and creative ideas were presented for the 2020 Black Friday Holiday Sharpie® marker Promotion.

**The interactive Sharpie® Spinner Pack**

They wanted to do something different from previous years, so the idea of an interactive package started to take shape – quite literally with the markers configured in a wheel. And then, for that store display pizzazz – why not make it spin? If they eliminated the window film, any shopper would be lured into spinning the colorful Sharpie® wheel on the shelf just for fun. And with colorful graphics supporting the tag

line, “Spin the Tray” and “What’s your favorite”, the concept not only gained acceptance but created excitement in both Newell’s and the key customer’s leadership.

Although the Innovation Team had a ‘sky’s the limit’ freedom on creativity, there were strict production mandates to be followed in terms of the number of markers, budget, box dimensions and curbside recyclable materials. And with the open box feature to spin the wheel on the store shelf, theft deterrent was yet another consideration. Given these constraints, the Newell packaging engineering team of Randel Canlas, Kaila Sparkman, and Trey Good drew up a preliminary blueprint that looked good on paper but knew that they faced major technical issues from the start; fitting markers in a circular fashion, securing them in place, and having the wheel spin.

**Newell’s Initial Design**

The design had two large trays, however the addition of the second tray added more material cost from the start. The top tray – the actual spinning piece that held the markers, was layered over the bottom tray. The top tray couldn’t be pared down in size, but the bottom tray could. Newell packaging engineering team



redesigned the bottom, the solution was a 4-inch knob. This iteration not only cut down on the plastic material but allowed the top tray to be suspended and rotate on a single point. But this version presented more problems in terms of 1.) securing the knob to the box and 2.) having the tray spin smoothly. That was still a major hurdle in search of a solution.



#### The winning “spinning” collaboration

Newell had already partnered with Rohrer to create the inner thermoformed plastic pieces for their holiday promotions in the past. (The corrugated box holding the Sharpie® Spinner Pack would be produced elsewhere.) If anyone could make the Sharpie® Spinner Pack come to life – it was Rohrer. It’s no wonder that this ‘high concept’ project landed with Rohrer’s custom plastics thermoforming team in Huntley. They are a specialized department of multi-disciplinary conceptual artists and design engineers uniquely qualified to tackle complex projects – and the spinning tray was certainly one of them. The first major challenge was how to fit the 30 markers in a circular fashion with a locking feature to secure

them. By applying intricate geometry angles and math dimensions to design the markers’ cavities and channels, Rohrer came up with a solution. Configure the top tray with two tiers to accommodate more markers and then design the markers cavities with a male to female snap function securing them in place. The Newell team then focused on how to keep the knob centered in pack allowing the top tray to spin. Newell figure out how to secure the smaller piece knob in place within the outer corrugated box, securing it into the box by trapping it between a corrugated layer.

#### Prototypes, testing and transit – oh my!

Next, initial prototypes were developed to test the fit/functionality of the markers and transit strength. At the 11th hour prior to full production, the rPET knob fractured during testing – it wouldn’t stand up to both the weight of the top tray and the rigors of transit. There was no turning back for a redesign at this point, as one change in an interactive product would have a domino effect. After all, this was a holiday promotion with production and shipping deadlines set in stone. Another plastic for the knob needed to be found – and quick. Newell

worked with Rohrer to understand and test different material options, including an up-gauged rPET. That passed the initial drop tests but not the transit ones. The clock was ticking. So, another plastic for the knob needed to be found – and quick. Rohrer helped drive quick action by producing a ‘one up’ production tool to run all material options to re-test in parallel with each other.

With Rohrer’s help, the more pliable PVC plastic was chosen as the optimal choice and production could proceed - on time...and on budget!

#### ‘Black Friday’ and Tik Tok fans

A large quantity of 600,000 Sharpie® Spinner Packs were produced in Rohrer’s Huntley facility with a fast turnaround time. In prior years, the Black Friday Packs have sold out within minutes of doors opening post-Thanksgiving. By end of November, it was difficult to find a pack. The Sharpie® Spinner Pack was such a hit, that a Tik Tok user has created a channel around it. The Sharpie® Spinner Pack reinvented itself as an interactive fun pack and not just a box!

