

DESIGN

Chasing the Dragon Through Design ABCs

Dragon software drops real people and the industry-standard red from its packaging and finds a broader audience, higher sales. **BY VANESSA L. FACENDA**

What is it? Nuance Software markets the Dragon Naturally Speaking line of voice-recognition software, which lets consumers voice commands to their PCs, rather than use a keyboard or mouse.

The idea: Dragon needed a package makeover to drive awareness of the product (MSRPs: \$99 and \$199.99) and better visually communicate what its software does. "Dragon wanted to capture the attention of consumers who didn't go into the store looking for the product and quickly tell a visual story before getting into [verbal] details," said Scott Knudsen, director of brand strategy at Murray Brand Communications, San Francisco, which handled the redesign. The company also was introducing significant updates to the software and wanted to stress these were bold and unique.

Who will buy it: Male baby boomers (ages 45-64) are the target audience along with techies and early adopters who have a specific need for the software. "There was a key strategic shift with the redesign to attract females and younger audiences such as college students and families with children," said Tom Kane, senior design director at Murray.

How it was created: Murray wanted to communicate how the product lets consumers interact with their computers in a more natural, comfortable and efficient manner. "We recommended using illustration to tell the story conceptually by placing people in lifestyle situations, focusing only on those elements of the story that were relevant and avoiding literal interpretations that are inherent with photography," said Knudsen. Facial details were minimized to focus attention on the relaxed, gesturing body poses and to make the models more ethnically neutral to appeal to an international audience.

Challenges: While the company wanted packaging that was a clear departure from the current look and feel, Burlington, Mass.-based Nuance was nervous about reducing the copy, and abandoning what it believed to be brand equities (red packaging, the Dragon logo).

The results: Red dragons became extinct on packaging; soon, retailers that used to carry only one or two Dragon SKUs were carrying the full line because various products communicated their appeal to different audiences. Mark Erwich, Nuance's senior marketing director, said sales increased significantly in the U.S. and Europe once the new packaging launched. vfacenda@brandweek.com

THE FINAL DESIGN

What's behind it: Balance was key. Murray aimed to create a consistent look across the entire line while better differentiating each item and its particular benefits. (Dragon markets home and business products as well as specialized SKUs that recognize medical and legal terminology.) The company added a product descriptor ("Turn talk... into text!") to the top of each package, which is now blue. The detailed product info graces the bottom against a green background. The color of the space between these two areas varies to reflect each individual SKU. The new color scheme distinguishes Dragon products from competing ones, and the green communicates a more relaxed and natural brand association than the aggressive red. Dragon pared back on elements of the original package that did not contribute to the brand's positioning, such as the dragon illustration.



THE ORIGINAL DESIGN

Problems: Packaging did not stand out among competitors in a sea of red on shelves. Also, it did not tell a visual story of what Dragon's software actually does.

