

## Is this love, that I'm feeling?

I am writing this, the third installment of my blog, from a rainy Milan. I love it here – the landscape, the food, the people and, of course, the business that we undertake here for our customers. Those of you who know New Vision well, will know that we have held the UK-agency for Scatolificio Cristina for over five years now and I am here at Cristina once again for what has proven to be yet another successful print pass.

Cristina is, without doubt, the finest manufacturer of transparent cartons I've ever seen in the world, bar none, and as we enter our sixth year with Cristina, I've been considering the primary factor that make the bond between our two companies so strong.

It is a shared belief; a belief that we should strive to hit the highest standards in everything we do. From the quality of our designs and clarity of our quotations, right through to the printed cartons that our customers receive. Cristina are over 40 years old and have always held a belief that quality is something that cannot and should not be sacrificed; New Vision is very much a younger business, but I too hold dear the belief that striving for quality means that our businesses will continue on a path of constant improvement.

It's said that General Motors, the ailing American car giant, purposely dulled the paint on its cars so that it wouldn't show dust in the finish and other defects. Now I'm not suggesting that this is the sole cause for the demise of a once-great business that eventually had to go cap in hand to the Fed, but it surely says something about the management of a business when it is prepared to offer a sub-standard product because it appears to be too difficult to put the problems right.

Quality is a perceptual, conditional and somewhat subjective attribute and may be understood differently by different people. I'm afraid all too often quality is a word that is easily thrown around in sales presentations (see Blog Number 1 – 'service' and 'quality' must be the two most over-used words in professional sales today) and, as with most things, it can mean different things to different people.

In the case of Cristina, their approach to quality means that they are now able to self-certify the quality of their own packaging to some of the largest prestige fragrance companies in the world. This is no mean feat, and they have worked over many years with their customers to be able to guarantee that, when their packaging is delivered, their customers already know that it meets a pre-agreed standard (a standard which most packaging businesses could never achieve).

In the case of New Vision, quality has to mean something different, as we are proud to be a non-manufacturing business. But it does mean that we will only work with other suppliers who can guarantee us the same quality that Cristina offer, and it means stretching ourselves to make sure that our creativity and service offer such quality that our customers grow to rely on us. With this in mind, we will be launching an exciting new extension to our design service shortly that will take our 3D design solutions to a new, higher, level. But in the end, quality in a product or service is not what the supplier puts in. It is what the customer gets out and is willing to pay for.

You see, if any business is willing to cut corners (even if it these corners are cut for good reason), it demonstrates a general malaise within that business that will, eventually, be found out. This is not something we are ever willing to consider.

So, in the end, maybe we can all only know quality when we actually find it. Like true love, perhaps we can only appreciate real quality once we have it in our hands. Certainly I hope that our customers associate the New Vision name with a feeling of quality, which I hope will bring a level of loyalty and retention. In return, I can promise that we will continue to improve our service (that word again) and offer, to give our customers the best quality and true value-for-money.

Best

*Steve*