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Simple Can Be Complicated

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By [Ron Romanik](#)

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We're all familiar with brands that can be represented by the most basic of forms. They represent an elusive goal of package design where all the quality expectations and consumer aspirations of a brand are contained in one wordless icon.

Imagine a paperboard box with a bow on it. Now imagine the box is pale blue with a white bow, or tan plaid with a red bow, or reflective gold with a brown bow. The brands immediately come to mind: Tiffany's, Burberry, Godiva. The questions that pop to mind: How did they get to that iconic place? Is it possible today to develop a brand from scratch with that ideal end goal in mind? Can a "mass-tige" brand transition into an iconic form?

Certainly, the brands mentioned above have decades of history and heritage that helped mold the brand into its present-day form. Nevertheless, there are some eternal lessons of iconic luxury brands that can be applied at any time, if implemented with purpose and care.

Getting down to basics

Robert Bergman, founder of Bergman Associates design firm, believes that if you want to make any brand successful, complication is always self-destructive. "It's a precise recipe combining consistency, cleanliness, and simplicity that reinforces any brand's strength," Bergman says. "And in the prestige market, it's in large part the branding that you're actually selling."

Marc Rosen, principal of the Marc Rosen Associates design firm, holds up Chanel as the timeless standard. "The black with the gold band is iconic," Rosen says. "The outer packaging is very important, even critical. A woman in the know, she doesn't have to be told what the brand is."

It's impossible to say how much consumer preferences guided the evolution of the most iconic packages, but there must be some latitude to experiment, explore, and evolve. Rosen explains that iconic brands carry with them many consumer expectations, but small package surprises can keep loyal consumers engaged. A plain white box interior where a pattern is expected can create a fresh, clean brand experience.

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