

one teacher's fight against germs

Disposable paper towels story

In 1907, a mild epidemic of colds hit the Philadelphia area. A local teacher blamed the outbreak on the fact that all her students used the same cloth towel, which she believed was the source of infection. To protect her students from spreading any more germs, this resourceful teacher came up with the novel idea of cutting heavy copy paper into squares and using them as individual towels.

Arthur Scott of the Scott Paper Company heard about the teacher's ingenious solution and it gave him an idea. Around that time, the company had purchased several parent rolls of a new type of creped tissue for product experimentation. One carload delivered to Scott was so heavy and thick that it couldn't be cut into rolls of toilet tissue, Scott's dominant consumer product at the time. Scott ordered the paper to be made into rolls of towels and perforated into individual 13 inches by 18 inches sheets. The paper towel was born! Originally called Sani-Towels, the new product was later renamed ScotTissue Towels.



Promoting Sanitary Uses of Paper Towels

To educate the public as to the purpose, use and proper standards of personal hygiene of the paper towel, Scott conducted an advertising campaign which created a large market for ScotTissue Towels. One of its popular advertising slogans was "For use once by one user." Over the next few years, rolled paper towels were sold to commercial, institutional and industrial users. The product became an important part of Scott's business, helped by many state legislatures that outlawed the use of cloth-roll towels because of spreading disease.



Scott Targets Home Market

In 1931, Scott expanded its papertowel business to the home market with the introduction of rolled ScotTowels, creating a whole new grocery category. Critical to the success of ScottTowels was the creation of the towel holder, which Scott also sold. Paul Brown, a Scott salesman in the 1930s, compared trying to sell towels without a holder to selling razor blades without a razor.



Roll towels were targeted for use in the kitchen. They were advertised as attacking illnesses acquired from the use of linen towels and even referred to the threat of "social diseases." Scott changed this approach in 1933 to stress economy, multiple uses and eventually absorbency - described as "wet strength." The advertising strategy worked and over the next several years the Scott Paper Company became the world's leading manufacturer of paper towels. In 1995, Kimberly-Clark acquired Scott Paper.



Evolving to Meet Consumers' Needs

Over the years, there have been many improvements to the Scott Towels brand including designer prints, revolutionary ridges that absorb faster, mega rolls and licensing agreements and partnerships with Disney and NASCAR.



Kimberly-Clark has come a long way from the initial Scott Sani-Towels product. Today, in addition to Scott Paper Towels the company also manufactures and distributes several other well-known disposable paper towel brands in more than 25 countries. A few of these global brands include Viva, Scottex, Page, Fiesta, Velvet, Tela, Sopalin, Petalo and Vogue.

To learn more about Scott Towels products, visit www.scottbrand.com.

Source: *Shared Values: A History of Kimberly-Clark*