



PRODUCTS TO BE PROUD OF

The BPMA Product Awards winners p4

THE INDUSTRY GATHERS

WHY YOU SHOULD BE AT MERCHANDISE WORLD **P10**



THE YEAR AHEAD

WHAT TO EXPECT IN 2024 **P14**

YOUR BRAND IN THEIR HANDS

COMMUNICATING EXCELLENCE **P17**

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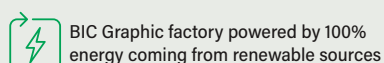
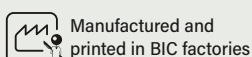
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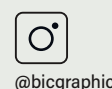
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JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2024

WELCOME



The start of the year is always exciting, not least in our industry where it's the beginning of the buying cycle, heralded by the sector coming together at Merchandise World.

According to show organiser, David Long, it's looking like another strong showing from the industry, although he admits that there is not a universal picture going into 2024. Some businesses are seeing growth, while others are plateauing or even seeing a dip.

It was ever thus that some companies will thrive while others struggle.

However, pulling the camera back slightly reveals a more encouraging bigger picture for UK merchandise.

According to a study by ASI, the

American trade association for merchandise, the UK is Europe's second largest market, behind Germany, and is worth \$2 billion. Data from Sourcing City has indicated that merchandise companies have largely recovered from the pandemic and that those who made it through are in good fettle. Even a possible recession could be more beneficial to our sector than others, with the IPA Bellwether Report for Q3 2023 noting that advertisers were shifting spending from media into shorter term sales promotions.

As a BPMA presentation to UK traders during International Trade Week made clear, such trade offs are no longer essential. Smart marketers are learning how to integrate both advertising and merchandise in their communication strategies – getting the most from each.

There will be plenty of innovation on

show at January's Merchandise World, where the winners of the BPMA's Product Awards will also be heralded. The winners were announced at a ceremony at the glitzy St Pancras Renaissance Hotel in London, but the Grand Prix will be revealed at the BPMA Awards in Coventry.

This is simply the tip of an iceberg of creativity that the industry is using to tackle the challenges it faces, not least that of sustainability.

The BPMA has revealed the latest developments for its StepForward Pledge, which from this year is a requirement of membership. The Association is providing lots of support for members as they embark on this important journey, which should make 2024 a landmark year for our sector.

Carey Trevill
BPMA CEO

Product Media Magazine is available to the whole promotional merchandise industry. It is the official magazine of the British Promotional Merchandise Association (BPMA).



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Product media shows its winning ways

The 2024 BPMA Product Award winners were presented to the sector's most innovative and best quality products

The waiting is finally over. This year's BPMA Product Awards were unveiled at a special event held at London's impressive St Pancras Renaissance hotel.

Winners of the 2023 awards received their trophies at the special lunch during a day that also featured a networking event for BPMA members and a sustainability workshop (see report on page 9).

This year's BPMA Product Awards continue to include the entire promotional merchandise industry to celebrate the exceptional innovation, expertise and quality available in the market today. Entries were also required to disclose sustainable product credentials to allow industry judges to assess each product's impact on the planet.

All entrants were asked to answer key questions around price, product and sustainable credentials together with the chance to provide supporting evidence to complement entries.

Judging took place across two rounds, involving senior industry distributors, guest judges including PPAI, APPA, PPPC, Sourcing City and Sourcing Machine plus catalogue heads who met to agree final winners in each category in December 2023. The coveted Product Award Grand Prix, awarded by our final panel will be revealed at the BPMA Annual Awards Dinner in January 2024.

A hard-fought competition left our panels of judges thoroughly impressed by the extensive variety and high calibre of entries. The BPMA will be displaying all the winning products at Merchandise World in January 2024 on its stand.

The BPMA would like to congratulate everyone who entered and won this year, including the fantastic judging panels and Awards Chair, Brian Hayward for overseeing proceedings.

APPAREL PRODUCT OF THE YEAR

PLATINUM

PF Concept – Kai unisex lightweight GRS recycled circular jacket

GOLD

XD Connects – Iqoniq Abisko recycled cotton zip through hoodie

SILVER

The Outdoors Company – Circaloft hooded jacket



AWARD & GIFTING PRODUCT OF THE YEAR

PLATINUM

WCM+A – real wood trophy awards

GOLD

WCM+A – bamboo photo frames

SILVER

Desktop Ideas – ZENS 3-in-1 modular recycled wireless charger with iPad charging stand





BAG & FOLDER PRODUCT OF THE YEAR

PLATINUM

XD Connects – Dillon AWARE RPET lightweight foldable backpack

GOLD

Tancia Ltd t/a The Pen Warehouse and Snap Products – anti theft backpack

SILVER

Oldeani - Shield Plus RPET bag



DRINKWARE PRODUCT OF THE YEAR

PLATINUM

XD Connects – Soda RCS certified re-steel carbonated drinking bottle

GOLD

Oldeani – Akaw 600ml insulated stainless steel bottle

SILVER

First Editions – Loop sports bottle

HIGHLY COMMENDED

PF Concept – Brite-Americano recycled 350ml spill-proof insulated tumbler



EXHIBITION PRODUCT OF THE YEAR

PLATINUM

Preseli – paper lanyard

GOLD

Everything Seeds – bee-shaped wildflower seed bombs

SILVER

Tancia Ltd t/a The Pen Warehouse and Snap Products – seed cell



FOOD & DRINK PRODUCT OF THE YEAR

JOINT PLATINUM

The Sweet People – bespoke UK manufactured treat box

Impression Europe – tube giftbox with wine & chocolate truffles

GOLD

Eat My Logo – 330ml branded alcohol can

HIGHLY COMMENDED

Tancia Ltd t/a The Pen Warehouse & Snap Products – prestige Christmas hamper



HEALTH & TRAVEL PRODUCT OF THE YEAR

PLATINUM

midocean – Tricpower handwarmer & power bank

GOLD

Bio Laboratories – 4-piece mood balm collection in a printed box

SILVER

Baby USB – universal travel adapter





INNOVATIVE PRODUCT OF THE YEAR

PLATINUM

Oldeani – Nomad wireless folding charger

GOLD

Goldstar – Reborn recycled aluminium pen

SILVER

PF Concept – HidrateSpark PRO 620ml vacuum insulated stainless steel smart water bottle



TECHNOLOGY PRODUCT OF THE YEAR

PLATINUM

The USB Group – Concertina phone stand

GOLD

Juniper Trading – AirTag RFID slimline wallet

SILVER

Desktop Ideas – Xoopar ZERO 2-in-1 wireless magnetic charging station

HIGHLY COMMENDED

Oldeani – solar watch



WRITING INSTRUMENT PRODUCT OF THE YEAR

PLATINUM

Senator Pens – Evoxx Duo

GOLD

Tancia Ltd t/a The Pen Warehouse and Snap Products – Oriel wheatstraw ballpen

SILVER

BIC Graphic Europe – Super Clip Origin ballpen



STATIONERY PRODUCT OF THE YEAR

PLATINUM

Adco Products Ltd (Adpads) – Geo², Eco², Root² books

GOLD

Castelli Milano 1938 Limited – the Apeel 'Ortisei' notebook

SILVER

Juniper Trading – student wellness planner



UK MADE PRODUCT OF THE YEAR

PLATINUM

CHX Products – rHIPS.b ice pop, ice scraper trolley keyring

GOLD

WCM+A – real wood trophy awards

SILVER

PF Concept – H2O Active Eco Vibe 850ml spout lid sport bottle



WORK & PLAY PRODUCT OF THE YEAR

PLATINUM

Desktop Ideas – Xoopar BOY wireless speaker X-R



The Grand Prix will be awarded at the BPMA Awards at the CBS Arena on 24 January.



bpma

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CBS Arena, Coventry

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Eyes on the road ahead

The BPMA's latest sustainability event outlined how members can move forward in their collective journey to transform the sector

BPMA members gained a unique insight into the future of the promotional products industry at the association's member network event, Sustainable Future.

The event was held on 1 December in the majestic surroundings of London's St Pancras Renaissance Hotel, which also played host to this year's BPMA Product Awards.

The aim of the morning conference was to set out the association's roadmap for sustainability, following on from its successful member conference in June.

SUPPORTIVE SPONSORS

Before getting down to the main business of the day, distributor members were invited to enjoy breakfast and network with suppliers who were supporting the event. The sponsors were Bio Labs, DTB, Kingly, Midocean Brands, XD Connects, Juniper and BIC Graphic.

Opening the conference, BPMA membership director Tom Robey welcomed delegates and emphasised the significance of coming together to discuss the path forward in the evolving landscape of sustainability.

Board director Melissa Chevin then introduced the StepForward Pledge and explained that the overall goal of the BPMA led-initiative was to develop, promote and share best practices to drive sustainability while setting clear targets for industry-wide progress.

ACTION TO TAKE

This activity will initially focus on three main areas where the industry can make the most impact:

- 'Better Together' policies – the collective actions the industry can take, partnered with association-wide performance monitoring
- Education and networking to provide members with the guidance and tools they need to effect change
- Supporting and celebrating success in the drive towards sustainability.

Chevin outlined plans for supporting members throughout their sustainability journey, including research, collaboration with strategic partners, new modules for the BPMA's education programme and an annual sustainability-themed conference.

ACCELERATING THE JOURNEY

The next speaker was Steve Malkin, CEO of Planet Mark, the BPMA's certification partners. Steve offered members an insight into how they can accelerate their journey towards 'net zero', including exactly what's involved in certification and how to create a credible transition plan.

Following a brief break for refreshments, Tom Robey explained the StepForward Pledge in more detail. Although currently voluntary, from next June every BPMA member will be asked to take the Pledge as a condition of continuing membership.

"We'll give everyone time to complete this, of course, but today we want to inspire you to pick up the Pledge now and get ahead," he said.

Robey then presented the findings from the latest member survey, sharing statistics and insights from across the supply chain. The findings served to reinforce the industry's commitment to sustainability. For example, insights into

the role of sustainability in businesses highlighted that 89% consider it a central role, with a balanced response from both suppliers and distributors.

CHALLENGES AHEAD

Acknowledging the challenges, particularly in Scope 3, the session delved into the understanding of Scope 1, 2, and 3. Most companies demonstrated a good understanding, providing valuable insights for the BPMA to tailor information and support efforts accordingly.

Highlighting the BPMA's increased focus on end-user engagement, Robey showcased initiatives such as the publication of helpful buying guides. This three-part series reached over 43,000 end users with marketing responsibilities, achieved through a partnership with The Marketing Meet Up. The primary objective was to educate end users on buying and best practice – and importantly to promote the StepForward Pledge.

Chevin then returned to the stage to set out the next steps, divided into 'quick wins' for the remainder of this year, medium-term goals for 2024, and longer-term objectives for 2025 and beyond.

Finally, the room was split up into three consultation groups, which addressed a series of questions about sustainability goals and priorities.

Business concluded, delegates headed into Hansom Hall for the Industry Networking Lunch and BPMA Product Awards presentation. They were joined by colleagues, guests and friends from the wider promotional scene in a celebration of the best the industry has to offer. **PM**



Reasons to be cheerful

How many reasons do you need to get along to Merchandise World?
Here are 10 for starters

Merchandise World is almost upon us. The annual opportunity for the industry to get together at the start of the year is a must attend for those in the know.

For those who don't know why they should hot foot it to Coventry on 24-25 January, *Product Media* presents 10 reasons to be at the industry's leading show.

1. IT'S WHERE THE INDUSTRY GATHERS

Suppliers and distributors have other opportunities to meet during the year but Merchandise World is the biggest dedicated UK show.

A joint venture between the BPMA and Sourcing City, it has been running since 2017 with this January's event being the 12th iteration of the show.

The one-day September edition of the exhibition was the biggest version of the show, coming on the heels of the post-Covid comeback version in February last year which saw 1,354 quality distributors through the doors.

As BPMA chairman Haydn Willets said:

"We continually strive to raise the bar even higher to host an event that delivers maximum value and benefit to both suppliers and distributors, particularly in retaining a focus on the quality and professionalism of those attending this exciting and must attend event. We look forward to the forthcoming, and highly anticipated, show with huge enthusiasm and believe it will be an event to remember."

2. IT'S ALL UNDER ONE ROOF

The CBS Arena in Coventry is the traditional home of the merchandise industry's start of the year event. Visitors to the trade-only show arrive knowing that they will meet the most established players in the sector.

Companies such as PF Concept, Listawood, Midocean, Senator, Castelli, Keramikos, and many others will be showing their wares and renewing acquaintances with colleagues.

This year's show has 163 exhibitors booked and the signs are good for another great event.

3. TIMING

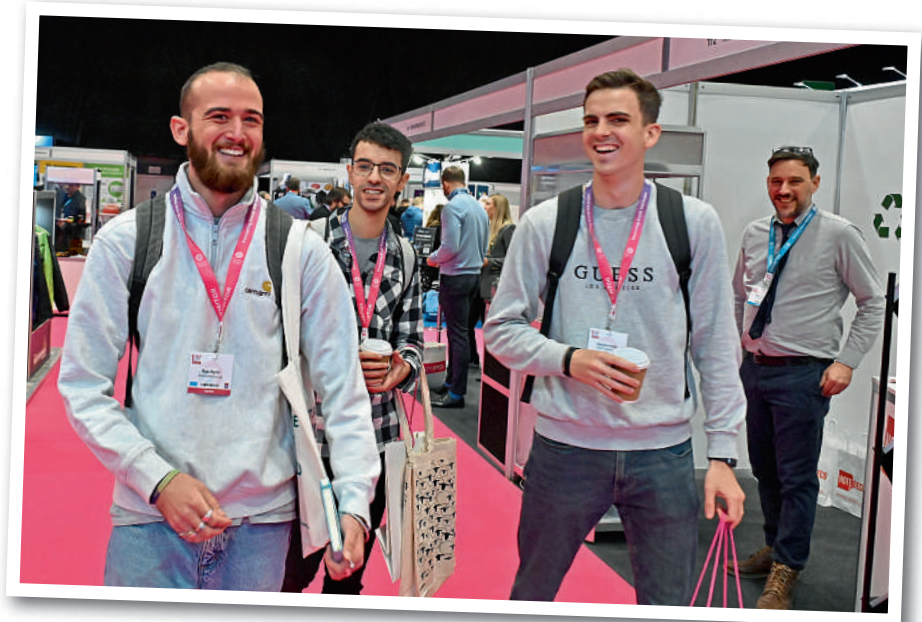
The start of the year is the perfect time for everyone involved with sales in professional distributor companies to meet suppliers to discover the new and best-selling promotional products for the new selling year.

It's time to plan for the year ahead, and with 2024 featuring such high-profile events as the Olympics and the Euros, product media will be front and central for companies' advertising efforts, and they will be researching now.

4. IT'S A GOOD USE OF YOUR TIME

Speaking of time, Merchandise World makes best use of yours by gathering together all of the businesses you need to see in one central location.

Visitors can also ensure that they have the appointments they need by using Merchandise World's booking systems. It can be hectic at the show and lots of companies stands will be heaving with distributors, so ensure that you have the meetings that you really want at the times that are most convenient for you.



Seeing and feeling products up close also brings them to life in a way that just doesn't happen online or in a catalogue, important as these channels are.

6. FIND OUT WHAT'S NEW

The most asked question at the show is probably 'what's new?' Our sector thrives on innovation, creativity and novelty, and Merchandise World is the place where all of that is on show.

New exhibitors this year include 1Click Print, A Good Thing, Beenoticed, Calverley, Lanyard Planet, Regal Toys, and Sock Club, to name a few.

Established exhibitors are also keen to show off their new products, and speak about how they can help businesses achieve their objectives.

7. BPMA AWARD WINNING PRODUCTS

Coventry will also be the first chance to see this year's BPMA Product Award winners gathered together.

The winners were announced at a glittering ceremony in December at the St Pancras Renaissance hotel – see the full

list of winners on p4.

There are awards covering 13 categories which were judged by more than 60 industry experts to ensure they represent the best of the best.

8. AND EVEN MORE AWARDS

The evening of the first night of the show is given over to the BPMA Awards which recognise and reward the distributors, suppliers and industry figures who make up our industry.

It will also see the Grand Prix awarded to the best overall product from the BPMA Product Awards.

All of this, and the opportunity to put on your glad rags and put your best foot forward on the dance floor. We can't wait.

9. SUSTAINABLY BETTER

With more and more end users specifically asking for merchandise that doesn't cost the earth, Merchandise World is a reliable event to find out how suppliers can help.

The industry has come a long way in recent years in its journey to show how merchandise can be sustainable. As well as individual companies' efforts, the show's Eco World showcase has long been a platform for sustainable merchandise. Now, in a new digital format, it's easier to get more information on products.

The BPMA team will also be on hand to explain how its StepForward Pledge is setting members on the path to an even more sustainable future.

10. BRITISH MADE PRODUCTS

Since its inception, Merchandise World has had a strong representation of British made merchandise through the Briman Group, which has supported the show since its first edition.

Companies including Bio Laboratories, Eat My Logo, CHX, Sow Easy, and First Editions are part of Briman and will be extolling the benefits of using British made products. These include cutting down on carbon footprint, supporting the economy, and fast turnaround times compared with global alternatives. Find out more at the show.

5. PRESS THE FLESH, AND THE PRODUCTS

The tangibility of exhibitions is a key reason why they deliver so much value. Networking is so much more effective on a face-to-face basis, and decisions can happen more rapidly with a conversation as opposed to an exchange of emails.



THE ESSENTIALS

Where - CBS Arena, Judds Lane, Coventry CV6 6GE

When - 24-25 January 2024.

Show opens from 8.00 and closes 17.00 on Day 1, and 15.00 on Day 2.

There's free lunch, tea and coffee, and breakfast is served on both days from 8.00-10.00.

Why - The start of each year is the main time when everyone involved with sales in professional distributor companies wish to meet suppliers to discover the new and best-selling promotional products for the new selling year.

How - visitors can register at

merchandise.world.co.uk. There is a free station transfer shuttle bus to and from Coventry station every 30 minutes between 08.00-17.30 on Day 1 and 08.00-15.30 on Day 2. Free airport transfers from Birmingham International are available by prior arrangement.

Check this out

There are thousands of great ideas at the show. Here are just a few you should look out for.

BIC Graphic Europe will be showing off its new 4 Colours Bicolor pen designed for sectors that prize innovation, such as entertainment and pharmaceuticals, it claims.

Meanwhile, its 4 Colours Gradient pens are targeted towards the entertainment, toys and textile industries, bringing a unique touch to every project.



Textiles company **Kingly** has a reputation for embracing sustainability and its latest range is no exception, using upcycled denim offcuts to create new products, including aprons, bags and purses. It will also be delighted to talk about how its product design makes for greater longevity, and other sustainable touches including



its ethical sourcing, and certification approach.

Another garment company, **Screenworks** is taking the lead in plastic free packaging, which for so long has been an issue for the sector. A retail-standard tissue paper bag exceeds industry standards, boasting FSC certification and curb-side recyclability. It comes in six available sizes, and the transparent paper design allows for easy visibility of designs, labels, and barcodes, simplifying product identification and labelling while reducing time and costs.



Screenworks' commitment extends to a complete suite of eco-friendly solutions, including standard paper packing tape and paper pallet wrap, ensuring that every shipment is plastic-free.



Gadget gurus, **Oldeani** will have innovative tech and trendy water bottles to delight visitors. Its Nomad charger is the latest 'I want one of those' products, it claims, while the Piccolo powder coated bottle is a cute pocket-sized drink container. According to Oldeani, buyers are looking to invest more in longer lasting products.

Hat specialist

Product Zone

has increased its range to include a wool mix 6-panel baseball cap in two colours and a sports fabric polyester/spandex mix in three colours. In-house embroidery has also expanded both in staff and in embroidery machines to increase capacity. Not to be confused with those embroiders that "hate embroidering caps", Product Zone is set up 24-7 for this service.



Meanwhile, **CHX** will present its latest range, the 'Always Recycled Name Badges', designed and manufactured in Cornwall from both 100% recycled plastic and CHX's exclusive rHIPS.b plastic, which is made from 100% recycled polymers and features a biodegradable additive. The badges have been created with various attachment options and offer reusable name badges, directly printed personalised name badges, and fun chalkboard style badges.

First Editions is launching the new and improved AquaMax Hydrate bottle which features an upgraded grab-and-flip top spout with an integrated drinking straw. The re-usable 'bottle for life' offers a 360-degree wrap print branding area and full-colour. They are 100% British-made using Tritan - a durable, BPA-free material - using an energy-efficient machinery and a 'no waste' moulding process. The streamlined production process makes the new model more cost-effective, resulting in savings for the customer.



Sustainable bag specialist, **Jutebag**, offers customised packaging solutions rooted in sustainability, to bring any concept to life. The in-house team of product designers will run with your idea and produce a choice of bespoke designs and materials. This can include reimagining a retail bag, pouch or accessory to truly wow customers.

To meet sustainability goals, Jutebag uses materials which are organic, recycled, upcycled, closed-loop and Fairtrade-certified. Latest innovations in the range include hemp, linen and cotton fabrics which are sustainable and can be used for luxury packaging. 

FROM BOTTLE TO BRANDING

RPET is making good use of aspects of throwaway culture, says **Clive Allcott**



Once upon a time, in the bustling world of fashion, a new hero emerged on the scene – RPET clothing. The story began with a humble material, recycled polyethylene terephthalate, derived from discarded plastic bottles.

The journey of RPET clothing started with the collection of post-consumer PET plastic bottles. These bottles, once destined for landfills or oceans, found a new purpose. They were carefully gathered from recycling programs, embarking on a transformative adventure.

In the heart of recycling facilities, the plastic bottles underwent a thorough cleansing. Labels, caps, and any impurities were stripped away, leaving only the raw

potential for something greater. The cleaned bottles were then shredded into tiny flakes, their original form lost but not forgotten.

The shredded plastic is then melted down and skilfully extruded into fibres and yarns, weaving a new tale of sustainability. RPET emerged as a textile superhero, possessing all the qualities of its traditional polyester counterpart – durability, wrinkle resistance, and moisture-wicking capabilities but with sustainable credentials.

RPET clothing is not just a material it is a beacon of environmental responsibility for clothing suppliers as it contributes to the conservation of precious petroleum resources, reducing the demand for new polyester production. The discarded plastic bottles, once an environmental villain, has now found redemption as stylish garments and accessories.

In the ever-evolving landscape of fashion, RPET clothing has become a symbol of change with the fashion industry, recognising the need for sustainable practices, embracing the trend. Brands, both big and small, have also joined the movement, incorporating RPET into their collections. Promotional clothing is also trading the same boards with distributors and end users looking for a



sustainable solution.

Consumers have become more than mere spectators and the driving force behind the narrative of sustainable products. This heightened awareness of environmental issues has fuelled the demand for eco-friendly and recycled materials. RPET clothing is now not just a choice, it's a statement – a commitment to a greener, more responsible future.

Happy Selling
Clive the clothing and bag guru 🍷

BACK TO THE FUTURE AT PSI

A museum of merchandise aims to inspire in Dusseldorf

This year's PSI show is set to include a historic look at promotional merchandise in the form of a Museum of Promotional Articles.

PSI and its partner, Cybergroup International, have been collaborating with leading European associations to produce a pop-up exhibition that is intended to inspire people across Europe.

The 170 sqm pop-up exhibition 'MoPA Museum of Promotional Articles' invites visitors to take a journey through the past, present and future of promotional products.

Under the motto 'Tradition meets Transformation', 11 time capsules show how the promotional item was created, where it originated, what its original purpose was and what the future of this marketing tool could look like.

Cybergroup CEO Steven Baumgaertner, said the goal is to curate a globally unique collection that recognises the history and complexity of the industry.

"It's about the synthesis of the most important contemporary witnesses since the beginning, which were sometimes always seen as evidence of a period of civilisation:

sacrifices, election campaigns, advertising, branding or employee recruitment and retention are all art forms in applied arts and all crafts locked in," he said.

A six-person team from Cybergroup International has been working for 12 months to bring the history of the promotional product to life. Research was carried out all over the world, looking for unique pieces and linking up with other museums in order to curate a unique exhibition.

The MoPA app, developed by partner Musivus, provides an interactive digital museum guide with images, stories, films and sound to accompany the exhibition.

PSI, which runs from 9-11 January in Dusseldorf, is set to have 565 exhibitors this year.

Special sections of the show are dedicated to finishing technologies, edible promotions, and textiles, among other topics.

Trade visitors will be able to witness finishing options including UV printing, embroidery, laser engraving and various textile printing processes.

For more information about PSI, go to psi-messe.com. 🍷



Bigger, better and with purpose

Promotional merchandise suppliers can make a big impact for brands in 2024, if they are in on the conversation earlier and deliver what end users need, says **Carey Trevill**

As we reflect on what 2023 delivered, we've certainly seen a shift back toward the 'normal' trading patterns in the year.

January kicked off a very busy year and whilst 2022 saw the upward acceleration of orders as we climbed out of the pandemic, 2023 didn't reach quite the same stratospheric heights for everyone. Our end users still want what they want but has there now been a fundamental shift in the assessment of why they need goods, what they need and where it comes from?

Depending on your client base, it will be a resounding 'yes' or a tentative 'not sure'.

We know the behaviours of the larger B2B community is driving forensic examination of supply chains and our industry can cause them big headaches on Scope 3 emissions. This is resulting in some interesting reaction as we wade our way through complex asks for measurement or worse, the vague requests for box ticking. We're going to need to brace ourselves to not only be asked for more but also to be well prepared to provide the information needed to evidence upfront. Easier said than done we know but the product origins and footprint have actually always been an ask of our industry, we've just not always been equipped to do it well.

MEASUREMENT ASIDE, WHAT ARE END USERS THINKING ABOUT IN 2024?

Here is one truth I know. Marketers will always keep spending as companies need promoting, sales need to be landed, brands need to be developed and importantly, connections with their audiences need to be forged for immediate and future success. Yes, there has been a budget shift –

expected with the current climate however it's happened before and we're still here. So, what do we need to do to send those budgets to us?

THE GROUND FLOOR

The challenge our industry has is that we are not part of the conversation early enough in many cases. Coming from an end user industry, I can say hand on heart the number of conversations which include branding goods is exceptionally high at the moment (in fact I've seen three briefs this month alone which all include merchandise for events and campaigns as a key part of the execution and measurement of success). But the brief is considered at the same pace as every other part of marketing – without the knowledge or experience (probably) to know this is the first thing to brief out, not the last.

We all know how many briefs come in with much shorter leadtimes and tighter budgets than we'd like. The online enquiries with the big ask and a deadline that doesn't match.

As an industry, and listening to our end user audiences, it's clear they want what they want now and don't understand leadtimes but importantly, they don't know what they don't know.

MAKE IT EASY

I've long rattled out the mantra of the fact we are the experts and need to bring that experience and expertise to the customer before they know they want or need it. In 2024 this is going to be even more important to secure the budgets out there and remain front of mind as the essential

ingredient in their world. I was always taught as an agency head that you're less than 1% of your client's week so the time they spend looking or thinking about spending money with you needs to be simple, straightforward and easy to sign off.

We're an incredibly proactive bunch and know the immense effort we make to promote and secure those sales. Thinking about how we look ahead this year, it reminds me of the debate we hosted in the House of Commons in March 2023 – and won – recalling the dialogue amongst the assembled and distinguished guests. The points raised by our community centred on the time needed to deliver great work and being part of the conversation at the start, not the end. The response was firmly put – get in the room earlier and make sure what we're sold is sustainable.

This is exactly where the BPMA is focusing efforts next year; connecting, educating and inspiring our industry to do more, supporting and promoting our sustainable and effective position whilst we encourage end users to plan for the amazing merchandise they need. We know we have work to do to ensure everyone can get in the room earlier... but I'd encourage you not to just knock on those doors or hope they'll open, kick them down and put your expertise front and centre where it makes the biggest difference in 2024.

THE BEST YEAR YET

The industry's leading show, Merchandise World, is a demonstration of a sector in good health, says organiser **David Long**

"Most years it is relatively simple to have a clear feeling for the coming year. However, the market has conflicting messages at the moment. Some businesses are experiencing a plateau or slight decline, other are reporting growth. Whilst both may be true, it is often difficult for companies to declare things might not be as strong as they wish.

Merchandise World shows a clear enthusiasm from across the whole trade to grow their business. Stand bookings are strong, and the indications from distributors are that the show could be the best attended ever. As the industry's biggest event, this is where people will generate new ideas, see the latest products and reinforce relationships, all of which will be critical to starting 2024 in the most positive way possible.

The blue-chip buying market is clearly

influenced by concerns for the climate, and this results in a backlash against traditional 'plastic products'. Our industry has moved fast and the focus on environmentally friendly products is evident. This is combatting the negative vibes to an extent, and it remains important that our industry continues to promote the use of promotional merchandise as a positive element of the marketing mix when companies are promoting their brands, products, and events."

LET'S TALK-UP OUR INDUSTRY

BPMA chairman, **Haydn Willetts** calls for a positive approach in the year ahead

"As we close a very positive 2023 for our industry it is time to plan and prepare for the year ahead. It is a blank canvas as we don't know what the economy or governments may throw at us, and what other challenges will emerge.

As an optimist and based on my day job, I would like to see more of the same in terms of the customer retention and growth in the number of orders and customers. But we hear from the market already some mutterings of uncertainty as to how 2024 will pan out. Will there be an

early general election? What will happen with interest and currency rates?

What we do need to do is move forward with positivity. Talk-up promotional merchandise and the benefits it brings to the marketing mix. Focus on the hot topics of sustainability and compliance. Educate yourself more in all these areas and engage with the BPMA on them. Submit your StepForward Pledge as this will really help give you direction in your business and a great topic of conversation with customers also.

Engage with your customers and suppliers to develop stronger understandings of the benefits you

can bring to each other. The BPMA will continue to support its members and to preach the mantra about what a fantastic industry we are. But we also need greater member engagement and support for the events and training that we offer to our membership.

My gut feeling is 2024 will be a positive but a tough year. Work hard and smart and evolve with the needs and demands of the market and the buying customers. You just may need a few more tools in your armoury to win the fight.

Good luck to you all and we look forward to working and engaging with you in and throughout 2024."

BE GREEN, BUT BE CREDIBLE

Sustainability is a growing pressure on businesses, but also a potential advantage, says **James Shorey**, Planet Mark

"Businesses today are increasingly acknowledging the vital significance of embracing sustainability to gain a competitive edge. Incorporating sustainability into core business strategies offers clear and practical advantages, from growth in profitability through to future-proofing your business.

Additionally, a tightening global regulatory landscape underscores the need for compliance to avoid legal penalties, fines, and reputational damage.

As scrutiny increases, telling a credible green story has never been more important. Greenwashing can harm your brand position, but communicating credibly about your sustainability commitments can strengthen it.

Your organisation can establish trust and lead by example through honest and accurate communication of your sustainability journey. Sharing a clear and transparent message with stakeholders, supported by data, serves your organisation's best interests, empowering stakeholders to make informed decisions and build advocacy.

Accurate messaging can also help your organisation attract and retain the best talent. Brands embedding sustainability into their strategy and messaging are better positioned to attract and retain top talent.

Looking ahead to 2024, companies must prioritise climate data to meet the growing demand and adhere to the Scope 3 climate disclosure regulations. Although Scope 3 emissions make up to 90% of organisations' carbon output, they are often ignored in footprints due to their complexities. Regulation will make this non-negotiable.

Companies wanting to optimise their low carbon transitions in 2024 should see data as an opportunity, not challenge. Accurate emission tracking will inform successful net zero strategies and effectively direct investment towards long-term cost savings. Fleet and travel, waste management, and power usage are areas where businesses should be taking advantage of data driven insights in 2024." 

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YOUR BRAND IN THEIR HANDS

The BPMA got involved in explaining why communication strategies play a vital role when it comes to exporting.

The BPMA jumped at the chance to get involved in the Government's International Trade Week webinar series. This saw seven days of packed digital offerings for businesses all over the globe to promote 'UK plc' and meet the target of trillions in exporting services, goods and creativity.

As part of its Advertising Association membership, the BPMA is involved with UKEAG, the home of British creative talent and focused on the crucial role communication strategies play when exporting. Pitching to the International Trade Department the opportunity to talk about the value of branding, the BPMA and the Advertising Association put together two exciting speakers to represent both the advertising and the promotional goods side to explore the topic of 'Your Brand in Their Hands'.

Representing digital merchandise from independent creative agency, St Lukes London, was Leanne Silman. St Lukes is renowned for work with brands including Beaver Town, Butterkist, NHS and more. For the promotional merchandise industry, the BPMA invited long-standing Board Member and President, Angela Wagstaff of Allwag Promotions to outline the role of merchandise to the international audience listening in.

Setting out to inspire and educate the audience listening live on 9 November, host Carey Trevill set out the context of how brands can harness the benefits of tangible, branded merchandise and cutting-edge digital innovations to extend a brand's reach, creating a memorable

impact on its target audience.

Explaining that a brand is more than just a logo, the conversation set out the transformative experience the right branding experience can have, making a lasting impression. The questions explored both the immersive and the physical presence brands can create. Silman used examples of product to digital through Beaver Town's AR links where consumers could find themselves battling Beaver Town aliens, which linked to branded merchandise to further extend the experience. Wagstaff used the unintended publicity from a brilliantly branded bag from UCL London, sported by film star Sarah Jessica-Parker in New York earlier in 2023.

BRINGING THE CHANNELS TOGETHER TO IMPRESS END USERS AND CONSUMERS

The discussion moved to how innovation was working across the digital and physical spaces. Both speakers explored how tangible, branded merchandise and digital innovations could extend the brand's reach and create a memorable impact. The two channels are most powerful when they integrate exciting, user friendly solutions such as a water bottle with an integrated app which tells you to drink more, or an AR linked pack to gamify the merchandise experience.

THE S WORD

Like every angle of business, sustainability was a key part of the discussion. Allwag's Angela Wagstaff explained the absolute priority of every business to promote

the right goods for the right solutions – sustainable sourcing must be front of mind and few briefs don't cover this topic. Wagstaff concluded that even if you're not being asked to provide a sustainably sourced solution, it is the responsibility of the industry to provide the answers.

MEASUREMENT AND EFFECTIVENESS

Both speakers agreed that without the appropriate measures in place to prove effectiveness, it will always be a space where the intangible success points are not captured. Allwag noted the need for more sharing of success stories to drive greater investment into this successful medium. Promotional merchandise works as returning customers demonstrates, and Trevill concluded this point with news the BPMA is investing more in this area.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Wrapping up the fast-paced session, the speakers emphasised their key, and cited the old adage of 'just because you can, it doesn't mean you should' as the pace of digital innovation accelerates. They encouraged everyone to take stock of the outcomes and to carefully evaluate the experience they wanted end users to have. Rounding off the critical point of evaluation, both speakers expressed the need to prove ROI.

You can watch the webinar and the accompanying series for International Trade Week at [UKAEG.com/international-trade-week-marks-ukaegs-most-successful-yet/](https://www.ukaeg.com/international-trade-week-marks-ukaegs-most-successful-yet/)

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Visit bpma.co.uk/events to find out more.

Booking terms and conditions apply. Discounts available for Charter members and groups of 10. Last bookings: 23rd February 2024.



BOXING CLEVER

When it comes to communication, a direct personalised approach can cut through the clutter

Despite the plethora of communication channels now open to us, it has never seemed harder to start a conversation.

Emails go unanswered, voicemails never receive a reply, and social media prompts are seemingly ignored.

We spoke to one end-user about how they have broken through the wall of indifference with merchandise.

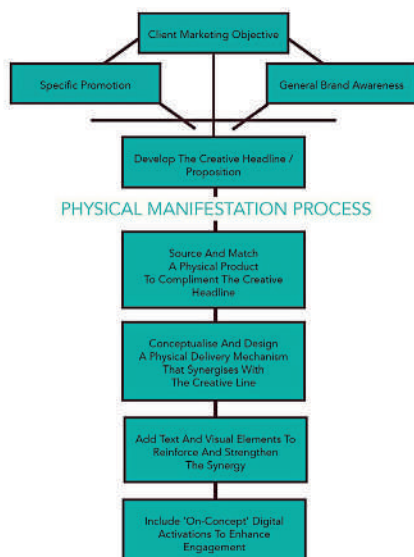
David Blackler, founder of the Desk Drop Company says the allure of receiving a well chosen, personally targeted item should not be underestimated, driven by campaigns with the likes of Channel 4, Bauer and BBC.

CAMPAIGN IN A BOX

It's no secret that people enjoy receiving nice things from companies, but The Desk Drop Company takes a more sophisticated approach putting each project through a 'physical manifestation process' that starts with considering the client's marketing objective in order to develop a creative proposition.

"It's like a marketing campaign in a box," says Blackler, and this differentiates the company from more traditional gift houses.

"The actual piece of merchandise is only considered in the light of how well it helps the organisation get across its message. The premium has to be part of the message," he says.



BREAKING NEWS

Engaging advertisers can be hard so finding ways to cut through is welcome – the more creative we get around occasions can make the difference.

The example of a breakfast pack to Metro advertisers with engaging headlines drove a conversation starter for Metro sales teams, armed with a croissant to talk over the results.

UNCOMMON APPROACH

For the launch of Channel 4's Married at First Sight, journalists received a pack with the six male and female contestants as a jigsaw plus a bottle of celebratory prosecco in a wedding style gift box. This approach has been popular with media and adtech clients as a highly impactful and cost-effective medium. With the rise of home working, we can expect to see this type of creative approach continuing.

VIRTUAL PRESENCE

Looking at how pandemic activity has continued, Blackler commented on how publisher Bauer sent 'virtual viewing packs' to their key advertising clients in trendy metal album box with snacks and champagne. Repeating the exercise the following year, they asked them to vote for their album of the year and rewarded them with a vinyl copy.



But it doesn't stop there. Creativity can extend from merchandise and experiences. Citing an example for a software company which enjoyed a branded virtual champagne tasting experience, this tailored event drove sales.

Capturing the attention of hard-to-reach audiences is the essence of desk drop activity, says Blackler.

"Often you just can't get in front of these people, but with a creative approach you can capture their attention in a way that other communications don't manage."

Each desk drop, or home drop, is a highly targeted 'personalised marketing campaign' with all elements from the brand messaging through to graphic design, packaging and the premium item fully aligned.

Working with a wide range of suppliers, many in the promotional industry, Blackler is keen to point out the way to leverage merchandise is to ensure the medium is used in a unique and engaging way, with a strong commercial message which is delivered with an outstanding corporate gift.

Delivering the message for their clients, this company has also teamed up with Brite Box to help every desk drop deliver more.

Our thanks to David Blackler for sharing his insight with PM readers.



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TIME TO SHINE

The Printing Charity's Rising Star Awards help emerging talent build a successful career

Everyone aged between 18-30 working in any sector of the print industry is eligible to enter the Printing Charity's annual Rising Star Awards. The Awards provide grants of up to £1,500 to invest in career development and grow future potential.

AN AWARD FOR EVERYONE

The award is for winners to invest in the learning opportunities they know will help their career progress in the right direction, while also benefiting the industry through new skills development.

As one of 2023's winners said: "Being a winner means I can advance my own knowledge and hopefully teach my team something new too."

Courses could be for personal skills such as problem solving, resilience or confidence; practical skills to deepen knowledge and capability, or increasingly a combination of both, helping build valuable skillsets for today's working world.

Previous award winners are building careers in a diverse range of disciplines including technical roles, production, administration, HR and finance. They've requested an equally wide range of courses to build their skills that encompass personal

development, leadership and management training, growth of core capabilities, and profession-specific knowledge.

CAREER PROGRESSION


Among this diversity of disciplines, winners have two clear points in common: they know what training they need to achieve their personal career ambitions, and they are passionate about building a successful career in the industry in which they work. 2024's Awards open at the end of January and applications close at the beginning of April. Businesses with potential Stars in their team, and those potential Stars themselves, are encouraged to subscribe to the Printing Charity's newsletter to find out more.

THE PRINTING CHARITY

The Printing Charity provides practical, emotional and financial support to people working in, or retired from, print, paper, packaging, graphics and the allied trades.

How the charity helps has changed beyond all recognition since it was founded in 1827, but the need for its services is as great as ever.

Today, the Printing Charity is proud to provide a free, confidential employee helpline, available 24/7 and year-round. It helps with financial assistance; signposting to specialist services; two almshouses for people in retirement; and, through initiatives including the Rising Star Awards, support for training and development to inspire young people to build a fulfilling career within the industry.

BPMA members who want to learn more about how the awards can help develop their staff's skills should go to theprintingcharity.org.uk to learn more, and follow @printingcharity on social media. 



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IGNITE EVENT REMAINS AN INDUSTRY FAVOURITE

Suppliers and distributors were in Warwick for the Ignite Incentives end of year get together

The Ignite Incentives family gathered once more at Warwick Racecourse for its traditional Ignite Exhibition and race day.

The weather remained calm after an early morning of blustery showers, but that didn't dampen spirits of those in attendance. The turnout from Ignite members was as spectacular as ever with 39 supplier companies attending and 81 visitors in total, all intent on enjoying a day at the races.

Exhibitors on the day included such industry stalwarts as BIC Graphic, PF Concept, Gafros, The Sweet People, and Desktop Ideas, who presented a range of their products.

With The Ignite Incentives Handicap Steeple Chase topping the schedule, there

were plenty of opportunities to place a flutter on the favourites at the same time as networking with industry colleagues.

This year, the Ignite race was won by Engarde, ridden by jockey Charlie Hammond, who received his trophy from Ignite's Richard and Collie Pettinger.

Richard and Collie extended their gratitude to all attendees for orchestrating such a fantastic event, and commented that it was an absolute delight to see everyone and feel the collective optimism about moving forward together through 2024.

Ignite Incentives was set up in 2006 and



has been a BPMA member since 2010. It produces product catalogues and its hard-backed, uniquely square-shaped versions have proved a success with end users.

With 33 distributors within the Ignite Incentives membership, the group is going from strength to strength. **PM**

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Whether you are an employer looking for tailored, specialist knowledge for your team or you want to increase your specialist knowledge, the BPMA Education Programme is perfect for promotional merchandise professionals. Written by the industry for the industry, courses are available online, 24-7. Places available now on the only recognised qualification for the sector from January 2024.

bpma.co.uk/education

The BPMA Education Programme is only open to current members.
Course intakes: January, April, July, October. Terms apply.

ARE THEY WORTH IT?

Don't assume that businesses' prospects remain static. The new year is a good time to consider credit worthiness, says **Mike Collins**

Hands up who promised themselves that in the New Year, they would look at their business practices and see how they could improve?

The good news is a BPMA membership can help you do exactly that... improve...and then some.

Running a successful business can be a drain on your time. Often the clamour to service clients and fulfil orders takes over the opportunity to really look at your business, including analysing your exposure and your risk.

2024 is going to be an ongoing challenge, meeting increasing expenditure with reducing cash flow so now is the time to study or analyse your customers payment habits.

PAYMENT LAGGARDS

Is there a particular customer who has taken longer than usual to pay?

If so, make a note on your accounts system and flag them up as a concern. Make them your priority when conducting your credit control and contact them first. The quicker you action a concern, the speedier you are going to get paid.

Is there a particular customer who has consistently ordered, or tried to order, more goods than your suggested credit limit should allow or you are comfortable with?

Now is the time to conduct some credit and proper diligence checks on that customer. Make sure that they are theoretically worthy of the extended credit limit that you have already granted to them. Bear in mind that these reports are always outdated by the nature of their source information, so be cautious in lending sizeable amounts against them. There are always questions regardless.

CHECK THEM OUT

If you're a BPMA member that has fully activated your credit management benefit Account Assyst package, you can consistently check whether the customer could be receiving a larger or smaller credit value.

Are they worthy of an increase, or indeed is a decrease worth thinking about? Consider amending their credit limit. If you decide to increase it though, your customer will appreciate the vote of confidence and may even provide further orders and profit.

Should your customer not be worthy of an increased credit limit, then what actions are you taking to protect yourself on future orders?

This is where a Personal Guarantee can help. A Personal Guarantee of substance provides a little bit more protection and security against a credit risk and allows a further avenue of pursuit against the individual, should the customer's business go through a tricky financial time in the future.

GUARANTEES

Why do we refer to a guarantee of substance? Well, obviously there can be quite a bit of stability difference between a 21-year-old guarantor who rents a flat, as say compared to a 50-year-old that has lived in the same own house for more than 25 years, and so has a fallback position should things go awry. Just consider carefully what happens to your money and business if this all goes wrong. This is the key point we are making – we are in uncharted waters.

The new and improved Account Assyst version 2.0 will help you easily secure Personal Guarantees. This innovative additional feature will become essential during the next 12 months.



The New Year is a time for fresh starts and new beginnings. Why not begin by putting best practices into your business to provide you with a stronger position for recovering your monies?

Still to activate your BPMA benefit package? No problem – simply contact your BPMA representative Ian Jenkinson on 07860 197476 to discuss

your needs.

If you are not yet a BPMA Member, don't worry as we are easily able to support you, just without the increased BPMA benefit package. Sometimes we can help in a few short seconds. Give us a call to talk about our helpful start up packages.

● **Mike Collins is managing director of Account Assyst**

Local Support Contact Details

Please contact a member of our local support team for advice on any matter related to debt and credit management.

London and South

David Barker
dbarker@directroute.co.uk
07766 545871

Midlands and East Anglia

Ken Brown
kbrown@directroute.co.uk
07795 214426

Wales and North West

Ian Jenkinson
ijenkinson@directroute.co.uk
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STAY SOCIAL IN 2024

Digital marketing is more important than ever but stay alert to its shifting sands, says **Melissa Chevin**



If your company is not up to speed yet with the vital role of social media in driving business, well, where have you been? Because these channels look set to increasingly dominate the marketing scene in 2024.

Perhaps the most prominent trend of the last couple of years has been short-form video, particularly on TikTok, which continues to lead the charge with 1.1 billion monthly active users.

Some of you may have briefly looked at – and as quickly looked away from – TikTok in the past. The truth is, it's no longer the preserve of miming teens and amusing cats. Over the past year, the platform has been the birthplace of some of the smartest video trends, and that looks set to continue.

THE REEL THING

Naturally, the other platforms want in on this action, in the shape of Meta-owned Instagram's Reels and YouTube Shorts.

None of the above means that long-form video is dead by any means. YouTube's flexibility helps brands develop in-depth campaigns, with the added advantage of Google's vast search engine behind it.

When producing video marketing, try to plan for all these different platforms when shooting to save time and money. For example, film in landscape for long-form but with one eye always on cropping and editing content for vertical consumption.

Don't forget subtitles, captions and descriptions. Oh, and remarketing is a biggie on YouTube too – talk to me if you've heard of the term but you're not sure how to set it up.

THE AI EFFECT

We can't come to the end of 2023 without mentioning AI, which seems to have inspired and terrified people this year in about equal measure.

AI has immense potential in creating content faster and offering some potential cost savings, particularly to smaller businesses.

However, many questions remain about its ultimate value. Many experienced marketers can detect the hand of ChatGPT and its ilk a mile off – and they believe consumers can spot the difference too.

I believe AI may be playing a more significant role behind the scenes, with platforms such as Facebook and Instagram increasingly relying on it to recommend content to users.

STILL 'TWEETING'?


No rundown of the latest social media trends would be complete without a nod to X – will 2024 be the year everyone stops referring to it as 'the platform formerly known as Twitter'?

Whether X remains as one of the top social media platforms remains to be seen. Meta's rival Threads has shown early promise and has racked up over

150 million users and 23.6 million daily active users. However, there are recent signs that growth may have stalled, with potential users fearing to spread themselves too thinly.

LinkedIn has traditionally focused on long-form content, but expect a few significant changes in 2024, with an increase in both audio content and live events. While you're over there, get yourself listed as one of LinkedIn's Top Voices – it does wonders for your personal brand.

Here's to a wonderful 2024 – and let's keep it social.

● **Melissa Chevin** is BPMA board director and marketing consultant with GF Consulting – mchevin@gf-consult.co.uk 





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NEW YEAR, NEW TECH

What's going to be hot in technology in 2024?
Matt Pluckrose reveals all



A very happy New Year to all readers – I hope you are fully recharged after the break. In this column we look ahead to what we believe to be trends for promotional technology in 2024.

The last year saw some interesting changes in consumer tech and consumers waking up to new ideas and product concepts that we believe will continue this year.

To put promotional technology into a global picture let's review the total picture. The global consumer electronics market size was valued at \$738.75 billion in 2022 and is projected to grow from \$773.4bn in 2023 to \$1,239.4bn by 2030, exhibiting a CAGR of 6.97% during the forecast period. This goes to show how much we all use electronics in our work and private.

WHAT'S TRENDING?

Some product trends from last year will grow in 2024. For example, Apple finally moved to USB-C for its iPhone 15 following the switch to this industry norm on its Macs, iPads and most other devices.

Smart phones reached a record 97% penetration of the population. This means an ongoing demand for good quality promotional technology to support this and brand recognition, which is a massive growth opportunity in 2024 after a few unstable years during and post-Covid.

E-PAYMENT

Electronic payment, which takes in Apple and Google Pay, was forecasted to be used by more than 700 million users globally. This technology uses NFC (Near Field Communication) to connect credit card details and a payment device.

As this technology grows, we see large marketing opportunity for it to be used to drive website traffic, create digital business cards and other marketing content distribution when contained inside the device. It's branding on the 'inside and outside' of the promotional technology. Watch this trend grow in 2024 and keep your clients informed about the marketing opportunity first.

ON THE MOVE

Travel is back on everyone's mind and with expected holiday and business travel arrivals in 2023 to be 4.35 billion and rising back



above 2019 levels in 2024 to 4.54 billion. Promotional technology for use when on the move is an obvious opportunity this year. Watch out for more complex and useful travel bags, solar back packs, anti-lost gear and of course travel adapters which will often charge all your devices whether laptops, phones or tablets.

LET'S CONNECT

Bluetooth is the leading technology for connecting devices whether headphones, earbuds, or car entertainment, and 2024 sees the introduction of a new phase in this technology.

This new generation of wireless headphones that are more power-efficient, sound better, and support novel new features like being able to connect an 'unlimited' number of devices to a single source, are coming soon. That's thanks to Bluetooth LE Audio, an umbrella term for a collection of new features for Bluetooth devices that the Bluetooth standards body has announced – watch this space for more detailed news on this in the next article.

TOP SELLERS

Let's look at some of the top selling consumer tech items last year: these included AirTags – Apple's anti-lost device,

Bluetooth earbuds and headphones, smart speakers, and smart wearables such as watches and health trackers.

There are also larger capacity power banks of up to 27000 mah to keep all your devices connected and Fast Charge powerful (60-90W)/micro/GAN USB-C driven AC power charging plugs. Now that Apple doesn't supply these free, the demand is growing.

Of course, coupled with this is continued massive sales of laptops, tablets, and e-readers. This is according to our own market sales and that of Amazon as the leading retailer of technology in the UK.

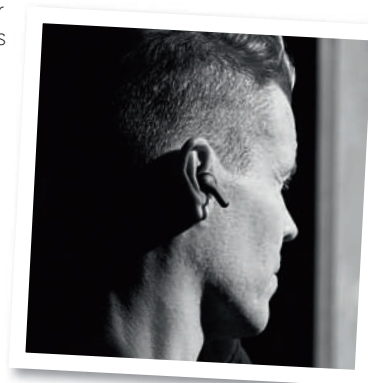
GREENING OF TECH

We see these items continue to be popular in 2024 and the switch to more environment friendly materials will follow. Look out for recycled aluminium, steel, plastics, leather and of course natural materials like cork, bamboo, cement and FSC managed wood.

All in all, 2024 looks likely to be a bumper year for promotional electronics as this sector

bounces back with new innovation, sustainable materials and of course your client's branding at the forefront of designers' thinking. It's definitely not an area to ignore as the dawn breaks on another year of promotional marketing. Make sure your clients remain tech savvy.

● **Matt Pluckrose** is managing director of Desktop Ideas





ADVANTAGE TO PINKSHEEP AND LALTEX

Pinksheep Marketing and Laltex Promo took the top prizes at the Advantage Awards

At the recent Advantage Group annual awards dinner, Pinksheep Marketing won Group Member of the Year as voted for by the Group's preferred suppliers, and Laltex Promo won Group Supplier of the Year as voted for by Advantage Members. Laltex also won Best Customer Service Team of the year.

Other awards in the Group Member category went to Stay Sourced and Mojo Promotions who were both Highly Commended, while Commended

positions went to Impamark, Pinfold Promotions and Willsmer Wagg.

SUPPLIER AWARDS

In the Supplier category, Impression Europe and WCM+A were Highly Commended and midocean, Pencom, and PF Concept took the Commended positions. Cathy Anderson of Adco Products won Account Manager of the Year, with commended finalists being Alex Daniels of midocean and Sofia Montero of Impression Europe.

The Best use of Advantage Web Site was awarded to Branding 365. A new Award was also presented, Unsung Hero, which went to Lorraine Sarsby of Bushey Promotions, a loyal Advantage Member of some 20 years.

MEMBERS MEETING

The Awards dinner was preceded by the Advantage members meeting in the morning and a product showcase in the afternoon featuring 38 suppliers displaying many new and innovative merchandise ideas.



Laltex Promo - Group Supplier of the Year




Cathy Anderson, Adco Products - Account Manager of the Year



Pinksheep Marketing - Group Member of the Year

Advantage managing director, Lawrence Angelow said: "Many congratulations to all the companies who featured in our awards. I know much hard work and endeavour goes into achieving these coveted positions. I would also like to say a huge thank you to our members and suppliers who turned out in great numbers and made the event one to remember. I am already working on our 2024 event."

Advantage supplies marketing services to 75 professional promotional merchandise Distributor Members throughout the UK. Members have access to a worldwide range of brandable products through a verified supply chain. Group purchasing means that B2B clients receive cost effective pricing and the best possible solutions for their brand. 

BPMA NEW MEMBERS

The BPMA is delighted to announce the latest companies to become members of the UK's foremost trade association for promotional merchandise.



Unlike many other trade associations, the BPMA is a member-to-member organisation and requires references from other members as part of the joining process. This means a strong referral base and importantly, exemplary standards are maintained.

Together with this rigorous process which also includes BPMA Board approval, financial checks are also undertaken.

Like many good things in life, BPMA membership is reassuringly hard to secure, which means that when you see the BPMA logo displayed by our members, it is a sign that you are dealing with a quality merchandise company.

If you're interested in BPMA membership, visit bpma.co.uk or email membership@bpma.co.uk.

Latest BPMA members:

- Affinity Merchandise (Distributor)
- Bulk Branded (Distributor)
- USB2U (Multi-Channel Supplier)
- OnBrand Merchandise Limited (Distributor)
- 3Cube UK Limited (Multi-Channel Supplier)
- Swag Pack (Distributor)
- Inspirations (Distributor)
- Jiggle Limited | Promotional Merchandise (Distributor)
- Trade Embroidery (Trade Exclusive Supplier)
- Intygra (Distributor)
- Identity Merchandise Limited (Distributor)
- Summerhill Promotions Limited (Distributor)

CALENDAR DATES

2024

9 January – StepForward Pledge support sessions (via Zoom). Register here.

9-11 January – PSI, Dusseldorf

24 January – BPMA Awards, CBS Arena, Coventry

24-25 January – Merchandise World, CBS Arena, Coventry

13 February – StepForward Pledge support sessions (via Zoom). Register here.

6 March – The BIG Promotional Trade Show, Glasgow

8 March – International Women's Day lunch

20 March – BPMA Members Orientation seminar, Leatherhead

20 March – The BIG Promotional Trade Show, Dublin

26 March – StepForward Pledge support sessions (via Zoom). Register here.

5 June – BPMA Sustainability Conference, Marlow

11 September – Merchandise World, Milton Keynes



MEMBERSHIP HAS ITS BENEFITS

There are many ways that the BPMA adds value for its members, says **Kian Clews-Braddon**

As a Membership Executive at the BPMA, I'm thrilled to share the array of invaluable services and benefits we offer members at the many face to face events and webinars we hold. We take immense pride in being a steadfast support system, guiding every member through their journey in the dynamic world of promotional merchandise.

Our membership opens doors to an extensive range of resources designed to ensure members are equipped for every business scenario. One such acclaimed resource is our partnership with Quest Cover, a comprehensive support platform offering expertise in HR, health & safety, legal, and VAT matters.

SUPPORTING MEMBERS

Catching up with Quest and their services recently was a reminder that members enjoy complimentary access to a treasure trove of more than 800 documents across various business domains, tailored to meet specific needs. This is alongside Quest's dedicated BPMA member support helpline. Members I've been speaking to recently have used this benefit and have provided fabulous feedback.

CREDIT PARTNER

Another game-changer for our members is our collaboration with AccountAssyst. This partnership extends an incredible 600 annual credits, facilitating a multitude of benefits such as comprehensive credit reports, account openings, credit control chases, and more.

BPMA members receive top-notch support, including a complimentary credit management health check consultancy valued at £1,000. The set-up and service activations are free of charge, and extensive training is included alongside a dedicated helpline for guidance.

LET'S TALK IT THROUGH

These offerings are just a glimpse into the wealth of benefits and savings we




changes, and showcase our unwavering commitment to supporting our members. Plus, we provide a delightful breakfast and lunch spread. Keep an eye on the inbox for our next orientation seminar in early 2024.

GETTING TOGETHER

Uniting the industry is a primary goal for us at BPMA. Events like these not only offer networking opportunities, but also keeps everyone up to date on the latest industry updates. Stay in the loop with our upcoming events by visiting our events page.

Recently, I attended the Advantage Product Showcase hosted by Lawrence Angelow (see report on page 32). A day full of great businesses exhibiting and then a lovely three-course meal in the evening, followed by an awards presentation.

It was another great example of bringing the industry together and recognising success. This is also very important to us at the BPMA, and it is an honour to be a part of such a successful sector.

To arrange a meeting with Kian, contact him at kian.cb@bpma.co.uk 





StepForward
PLEDGE

Take an important step forward to a more sustainable future

Our industry is changing the way we work and the work we make. To support and represent the steps our members are taking on their sustainable business journey, every BPMA member can now take the **StepForward Pledge** as part of their membership. With over 41% of members already committed to the Pledge, we're on our way to making real change for the future of our industry.

Discover more at

bpma.co.uk/StepForward-Pledge

The StepForward Pledge is open to all BPMA members and is a voluntary programme for all current members. Visit website to see criteria. All new members applying from June 2023 will be required to take the Pledge. All current members will be required to take the Pledge from June 2024.





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- // Exhibitors from all product areas
- // International examples of best practice
- // Lecture programme
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www.haptica.live

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