



IF THE BRAND FITS...

A to Z of clothing and bags p16



BACK ON TRACK
THE MERCHANDISE GROWTH STORY **P10**

INCLUSION MATTERS
THE INDUSTRY SUPPORTS IWD **P32**



WINNING WAYS
WHO CLAIMED THE BPMA PRIZES? **P4**

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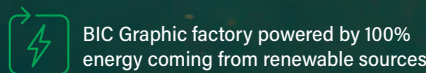
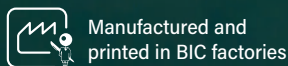
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WRITING INSTRUMENT
PRODUCT
OF THE YEAR



 bpma

PRODUCT
AWARDS
2023-24





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MARCH/APRIL 2024

WELCOME



We're now deep into the swing of 2024 and with many changes ahead for the year, this is the last issue of *Product Media* I will oversee as CEO following announcement of my departure in March this year. Looking back over the last few years and editor introductions, we have covered the full gamut of celebration, world changing events, politics, royalty and more! It has been a great privilege and honour to look after *Product Media* magazine since 2020, wonderfully supported by our Editor Stuart Derrick, and the BPMA team to produce the magazine.

Many of you know our Editor, Stuart Derrick and I'd like to take a moment

here to thank him for his time, patience and guidance over the last few years. Not only are his prose and his journalism skills exceptional, he has also curated great content for our readers and tirelessly sought those nuggets of insight and inspiration which mark every special feature. Thank you Stuart for all you do for the magazine, helping us articulate those big questions for the industry and report developments we all need to know about.

As with every issue, we've been working away to provide useful and insightful articles and topics plus of course the review of this year's Merchandise World in Coventry (the busiest one yet!) plus the spectacular BPMA Awards Dinner, where we had the opportunity to celebrate BPMA members and their achievements too.

You will have also noticed a

streamlining of news and articles in the last few issues so we can focus on the big questions of the day. In this issue we have an Apparel & Bags special feature. An area of the industry packed with innovation and product development, look out for insights galore in this issue alongside our regular contributors, dates for your diary and more.

The next edition is focused on Sustainability 2024 and beyond... in the run up to the BPMA's much anticipated June conference, we look at what's next, why we need to keep pace with local and global developments and where the right information will come from.

If you want to get in touch with Stuart with your contributions, please email editor@productmediamagazine.co.uk.

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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Celebrating OUR WINNERS

The 2024 BPMA Awards put the spotlight on the many great companies and individuals who make our industry what it is

More than 500 people from the UK, Europe and the US promotional merchandise industry packed themselves into the CBS Arena ballroom for the BPMA Awards Gala Dinner on the evening of Day One at Merchandise World.

The awards are the industry's opportunity to provide a pat on the back for those that are regarded as the best of the best. Voted for by fellow BPMA Members, the prestigious awards recognise both suppliers and distributors in

promotional merchandise.

A packed evening saw a drinks reception and a beautiful three course meal, interspersed with the awards which were hosted by BPMA Chairman Haydn Willetts and Vice Chairman Clive Allcott.

The industry was also provided with a reminder of this year's winners of the BPMA Product Awards, which were celebrated at their own special event at London's St Pancras Renaissance Hotel in December 2023 (see the January/February edition of *Product Media*).

The winning products were on display throughout the evening, with the Grand Prix award for best product due to be presented on the evening at the CBS Arena.

As well as awards for suppliers and distributors, there were a number of special awards, including for member marketing campaigns and 'the best of British' Briman Award judged independently.

The dinner was followed by a live band as people danced and celebrated into the evening and beyond.

BACKING OUR INDUSTRY

Like all events, sponsors and supporters are a huge part of the success. The BPMA extends its thanks to the generous category sponsors: Geiger, BIC Graphic, Impression Europe, Preseli, PF Concept, Direct Textiles & Bags, XD Connects, and Briman Group.

The BPMA partnered with WCM&A for the supply of the stunning trophies and event supporters, Laser Crystal provided the Board's Recognition Award. Victorinox

sponsored the winners' fizz on the night to help winners celebrate in style.

The evening had a particularly delicious note thanks to The Sweet People who supplied the vegan chocolates for the dinner. The company also picked up the Product Grand Prix for its Treat Box (right).





Allwag won the £5-10m Distributor award



Big Bear Promo - £1-3m Distributor award winners



Products of distinction - the BPMA Product Award winners

A team effort from Bizz Badge, winning the £5-10m Supplier award



Ellenell smashed it in the small Distributor category



Get Yourself Noticed certainly did winning the £500k-1m Distributor award



Tech experts Desktop Ideas got the plaudits in the £2m Supplier category



The Outdoor Company won the Supplier Marketing Campaign of the Year



Product Grand Prix went to The Sweet People

Haydn and Clive - the hosts with the most



SUPPLIERS AWARDS

BPMA Chairman Haydn Willetts and Vice Chairman Clive Allcott kicked off the evening with thanks to all attending to get the evening off to a roaring start.

The first category up was **Supplier of the Year up to £2m**, and the finalists were Logobugs Plus, Desktop Ideas, Just Pads and Bio Laboratories with Desktop Ideas landing the winning vote for this category.

Next up was a new category, **Supplier of the Year £2-5m**, with a strong line up of finalists: Preseli, WCM&A, Juniper Trading and Keramikos with Preseli scooping this Award.

The next category was **Supplier of the Year £5m-10m** category. Finalists in this category were Impression Europe, Listawood, The Bizz Badge Company and Castelli Milano 1938, with The Bizz Badge Company taking the category award.

Supplier of the Year over £10m category was sponsored by Geiger. Finalists included Laltex Group, Midocean, PF Concept and XD Connects with Laltex Group heading to the stage to collect their award.

DISTRIBUTORS AWARDS

The next Awards focused on distributors and this year, further turnover categories were recognised. **Distributor of the Year up to £500k**, had finalists Promo2u, Ultimate Incentive and Ellenell on the edge of their seats. Ellenell landed this first distributor award.

Distributor of the Year £500k-£1m, sponsored by BIC Graphic saw contenders Manic Merchandise, Hambleside, Get Yourself Noticed and T King Associates as finalists, with Get Yourself Noticed winning this category.

Sponsored by Impression Europe, **Distributor of the Year £1-3m** finalists were Ross Promotional Products, Big Bear Promo, The Purple Company and Printed4you with Big Bear Promo taking the award home.

Distributor of the Year £3-5m,

sponsored by Preseli, hailed finalists Pellacraft, Pinksheep Marketing, Initial Incentives and TC Branding Group. TC Branding Group jumped on stage to accept their Award for this category.

PF Concept, sponsoring the **Distributor of the Year £5-10m** category, were on stage as finalists LSi, Firebrand Promotions, Allwag Promotions and Premier Print and Promotions waited to hear who had won. Allwag Promotions landed this category to cheers and applause.

With the final **Distributor of the Year Award over £10m**, sponsored by DTB, contenders Total Merchandise, Fluid Branding, Brand Addition and 4imprint waited nervously for the gold envelope to reveal Fluid Branding as the winner for a second time in a row.

SPECIAL AWARDS

Taking a short pause for dinner, the room was buzzing with excitement for the final awards of the evening including the long-awaited Product Awards Grand Prix and BPMA Recognition Award.

The Distributor and Supplier Marketing Campaign of the Year Awards were next. Clive Allcott shared the judge's feedback and talked of the industry's love for a great creative idea before naming this year's winners.

Judged by an independent marketing judging panel, the **Distributor of the Year Marketing Campaign** finalists were Event Merchandising with its Eurovision entry, Wild Thang for Asahi Super Dry the Official Beer of Rugby World Cup 2023, and Fluid Branding with its Planet Positive entry. Fluid Branding came up trumps for the second time of the evening for its Planet Positive entry. Judges also awarded Event Merchandising's entry Highly Commended.

The **Supplier Marketing Campaign of the Year** saw three finalist entries from The Outdoors Company with its Eco Range, First Editions with its Loop Bottle, and Kingly's 'Let's Sparkle and Shine this



... and the winner is...



Total Merchandise were lauded for supporting British manufacturing



TC Branding took the mid level Distributor category



Preseli triumphed with the £2-5m Supplier award



Double whammy for Fluid with awards for large Distributors and Marketing

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Christmas'. The winner of this category was The Outdoors Company's Eco Range. First Edition also received Highly Commended from our judging panel.

The **Briman Award** was a further opportunity for distributors to show off the best of British. Judged by Briman members looking for distributor members who had promoted British made and finished promotional products. Total Merchandise walked away with this Brit-centric accolade from the Briman group.

The **Product Awards Grand Prix** was also awarded at the dinner. The Grand Prix was awarded at the final judging panel and selected from all Platinum Product Award winners. The Sweet People's The Bespoke UK Manufactured Treat Box was voted Grand Prix winner by the panel and a delighted team received the award to a huge round of applause.

Last award of the evening was the **BPMA Recognition Award**, awarded by the BPMA Board. Now in its second year, this Award recognises outstanding contributors to our industry. The Board selected previous BPMA Chair and President, Graeme Smith for this year's BPMA Recognition Award, for his tireless work to ensure the reputation and position of the industry was upheld during his time on the Board.

As well as the awards, Haydn Willetts made the announcement that BPMA CEO Carey Trevill would be standing down after four years at the helm of the Association, in order to concentrate on new opportunities.

As the CEO during one of the most turbulent times for the industry, and indeed the country, he invited all of those in the room to extend their thanks to Carey and wished her good luck in her future endeavours. She won't be lost to the industry as she is continuing with some projects for the BPMA.

The evening concluded with conversation, music, dancing and fun and whilst we are sure there are few sore heads for Day 2 of Merchandise World, this fantastic event marked another

exceptional year for promotional merchandise and the sector.

The BPMA would like to thank everyone who attended and supported the event and we look forward to many more fabulous events in the coming year.



Outgoing BPMA CEO Carey Trevill received a bouquet and the thanks of the industry



Laitex took the large Supplier award for the second year in a row



BPMA stalwart Graeme Smith was presented with the Recognition Award



The industry gathered for drinks before the Awards





Go for it!

Merchandise World gets bigger and better with more exhibitors, visitors and great ideas for promotion



The story of this year's Merchandise World was one of growth. With the UK's overall promotional merchandise market up by 4.2% to £1,182m, according to the latest UK Market Report from Sourcing City, the industry is clearly buoyant.

This was reflected in the show, held in its traditional start of the year slot over 24-25 January at the CBS Arena in Coventry. There was a clear enthusiasm from distributors and exhibitors as they looked forward to the UK industry's biggest annual event.

Merchandise World in January 2024 had about 1,500 visitors from around 600 distributor companies. This was an increase of 7% in visitors compared with last year and was just 134 visitors short of the best-ever visitor year in January

2020, which was pre-Covid.

Organiser, Sourcing City points out that since then, the number of people working in the industry is less due to distributor companies becoming leaner.

NEW FACES

The exhibition featured 40 new suppliers to the show and a total of 173 exhibitors, which was more than 7% up on the exhibitors in January 2023. Among the new faces in Coventry were A Good Thing, which helps companies donate excess merchandise to charity; marquee and flag specialist, Bee Noticed; business gift company, Calverley; sporting apparel supplier, Fanbase; matting company, Kleen-Tex; logistics specialist, Your Cargo Contact, and more.

Visitor companies predominantly

attended from the UK and Ireland, however there were also distributor visitors from the EU and the US.

Overseas exhibitors represented 20% of all exhibitors. Several of these exhibitors' presented products or services not readily available through UK suppliers. Others offered EU based services enabling distributors to order and deliver directly within the EU.

INTERNATIONAL FOOTPRINT

Dutch social enterprise, treebytree is one of a growing number of businesses that helps companies fight climate change by gifting trees through planting programmes in countries in Africa. Sweden's Softybag brought its innovative and fun air-filled seating to the show. Neutral clothing from Denmark was on hand to inform visitors





about its sustainable apparel. Longstanding supporter of the show, Germany's Kalfany had its latest range of sweet treats available to sample.

Many exhibitors now have a focus on environmentally friendly products, and this was evident from the new products presented in their ranges. The continuing move towards sustainable products was clear and ECO World proves an efficient way for visitors to identify the top environmentally friendly products in the show hall.

POSITIVE VIBES

There was a clear air of positivity as people were pleased to meet both familiar and new faces. Everyone enjoyed the free breakfast and a real buzz could be felt throughout the show hall. The free lunch was a hit, as were the ever-popular Massage Angels. The Roving Tea Trolleys were also appreciated when people needed a quick refuel.

Show organiser, Ella Long said: "The exhibitors were delighted with both the quality and volume of the visitors, which was exceptional. We were delighted that everyone left the show with a smile and now we start planning for next time hoping to see everyone again – and some new faces are always welcome."

One new face was environmental charity, A Good Thing, which featured at the BPMA Sustainability Conference last year and was working with 30 BPMA members



ahead of the show, helping them find ways of diverting excess merchandise to charities that could make good use of it.

"Just taking a minute or two to share something surplus via the platform has had monumental results," said Anna Rose Bowler, digital marketing consultant of A Good Thing. "Hundreds of thousands of things have been saved from landfill in just six months."

RECYCLING INITIATIVE

North Wales-based trade supplier Preseli again provided a lanyard recycling programme for all lanyards returned at the show. A similar initiative at September's show saw more than one-third of lanyards being returned.

The lanyard repurposing initiative is part of its commitment to the BPMA's StepForward Pledge – a programme of sustainability-driven initiatives set to take place in 2024.

Merchandise World saw dedicated lanyard recycling bins in place at the exits, encouraging visitors to return their lanyards for onward use or recycling. The initiative was developed by Preseli with the support of the Merchandise World team at Sourcing City and the BPMA.

"This is a simple and effective step to help reduce event waste at Merchandise World – we all tend to take lanyards home after events and

we're delighted to support Preseli, one of our first members to take the StepForward Pledge, with this initiative," said BPMA CEO Carey Trevill.

However, it wasn't all worthiness from Preseli. The company was also in celebratory mood for the 50th anniversary of the Rubik's Cube, which it supplies for promotional use.

A large and suitably multi-coloured cube cake was portioned up on the Preseli stand – one Rubik's Cube that everyone could manage.



EDIBLE EXHIBITOR

If that wasn't enough, Eat My Logo was on hand to discuss its myriad of options for feel good treats, including cupcakes, biscuits, brownies and more.

Marketing manager Daniel Clarke and colleague Amy showed off new products and ranges, discussed product inspirations, and how its website and marketing technology could assist clients in making the coming year a success.



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One of the sponsors of the show, Eat My Logo also supplied plenty of samples helping to fuel the hundreds of visitors to the show.

Other sponsors supplied a groaning swag table with samples aplenty to take away and show to their customers. These included Senator, Biolaboratories, Kingly, CHX, Promo Seeds, Just Pads, and Prodir, to name just a few.

BRITISH MADE

British manufacturers were out in force with stalwarts of the Briman group putting their best foot forward. Briman chair and managing director of First Editions, Mark Alderson lauded a "fantastic couple of days exhibiting at Merchandise World. Thank you to the visitors, organisers, fellow exhibitors and everyone who made the show such a success."

As well as presenting the Briman Award to distributor Total Merchandise at the first evening's BPMA Awards, Alderson said there had been a great deal of positive feedback from visitors to the exhibition, including for its new and improved Aqua Hydrate water bottle with its upgraded grab-and-flip top spout.

Fellow Briman member, Sow Easy use the show to launch its latest new product, Rainballs. Each box contains three of these easy to grow multi-colour seedballs. Simply soak, scatter under the soil and watch them grow.

The seeds are a wildflower mix of around 20 different seeds, such as Alyssum,



California Poppy, Candytuft, Lobelia, Virginia Stock, and Sunflowers.

The Rainball Seedboxes are a sustainable choice and can be branded with a full-colour label with your client's logo, message or promotion. The box is made from recycled card.

They are also available as Rainball Seedtins which are black screw top tins engraved on the lid with your client's logo, message, promotion and more.

Sow Easy also expanded its Essentials Range and enhanced its Express Service, shortening the lead times to just three days, with a lower cost.

MULTIPLE PRODUCTS


Elsewhere at the show, a cornucopia of products was on display. As well as its usual selection of merchandise, including a sustainable Made in Europe range, the Midocean team was able to talk about its Sol clothing options.

Merchandise supplier Oldeani called Merchandise World "one of best shows



we've been to. Lots of excitement around new products".

It noted particular interest in its Grande 880ml insulated cup made from recycled stainless steel which got everyone talking. While visitors also loved other new models, including some a bit smaller, Oldeani noted that "going large seems popular".

Now, if that's a metaphor for 2024, we can all look forward to great year of business. 



SEE YOU IN MK

If you didn't manage to get to this Merchandise World, the next show is on 11 September in Milton Keynes. Find full details at merchadiseworld.co.uk.





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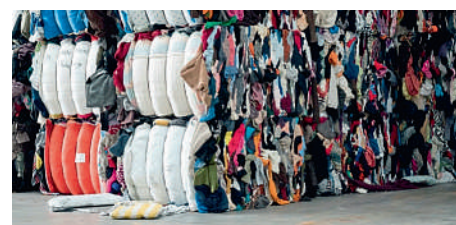
WASTE NOT, WANT NOT

There can be lots of new life in post-consumer clothing, says **Clive Allcott**



With sustainability at the forefront of our industry I thought I would take a look at the process of turning post-consumer garments into new garments. This typically involves recycling and reusing the materials from the old garments. So, what's involved?

1 Collection: Post-consumer garments are collected through various channels, such as clothing donation centres, recycling programmes, or textile collection bins.



2 Sorting: The collected garments are sorted based on factors like material

type, colour, and condition. This helps in determining the appropriate recycling processes for each item. It is critical and will limit what item can be made from the recycling process.

3 Cleaning: The sorted garments are thoroughly cleaned to remove any dirt, stains, or contaminants. This step is crucial to ensure the quality of the recycled material.

4 Shredding or mechanical processing: The cleaned garments are then mechanically processed, often through shredding or cutting, to break them down into smaller pieces. This is especially true for materials like cotton or polyester.

5 Chemical Processing: In some cases, the shredded material may undergo chemical processes to break down fibres further. For example, cotton may be dissolved into a pulp using the process.

6 Spinning: The broken-down materials are then spun into yarn or thread, creating a new raw material.

7 Weaving or Knitting: The newly created yarn or thread is used to produce fabric through weaving or knitting.

8 Cutting and Sewing: The fabric is cut into patterns, and the pieces are sewn together to create new garments following a similar process to traditional garment manufacturing.

9 Finishing: The newly created garments undergo finishing processes, which may include washing, dyeing, and any necessary treatments to ensure quality and appearance.

10 Distribution: The recycled garments are then distributed for sale or further use, closing the loop of the recycling process. All aspects of the recycling process are traceable enforcing the benefits of recycling.

The specific processes can vary based on the type of material being recycled and the intended end product. With advancements in technology and sustainability practices, this will lead to improvements or variations in the recycling process over time making it the first choice when choosing garments or material-based items.

Happy Selling
Clive the clothing and bag guru 🧐

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A-Z of apparel and bags



Well worn merchandise has the potential to get a brand in front of a huge number of eyes effectively

A **AWARE** As with other areas of merchandise, sustainability is a hot topic, and being able to back up claims is important.

One way of doing this is through the use of a digital passport like Aware, a tracer particle that can be mixed with recycled material and then tracked through the blockchain. The result is a digital paper trail that proves that a product is what it says it is. XD Connects is using Aware in a number of its products including backpacks (see BPMA Product Awards p21).

B **B CORP** At a time when buyers are increasingly looking for evidence that their suppliers are serious about issues around ESG, B Corp status is one way that companies can illustrate that commitment.

Promotional textiles business Mantis World was recently accredited a B Corp, which CEO Prama Bhardwaj said solidifies everything the company has been working towards over its 20-year history, such as supply chain transparency and use of organics in textiles.

"At a time when there are so many challenges facing the planet, it shows that there is a future for business that can be more considerate, more collaborative, more transparent and the successes can be more equitable. We really hope to encourage others to join us in this journey," she said.



C **COLLECTIONS** The ability to choose the product that is right for your client or campaign is central to effectiveness. Simply Bags, the new collection from Goldstar, aims to provide that. Launched initially in the US, the collection of 15 distinctive styles is now available in Europe.

Options include premium travel bags and backpacks, cotton and jute totes, coolers

and shoppers. Each bag offers ample space for branding opportunities, through customisation and decoration. These include all-inclusive pricing to ensure a seamless and transparent ordering process, eliminating any hidden costs.

D DTG Direct-to-garment printing – or DTG – has expanded hugely, as it offers high definition digital image reproduction and low cost set-up that allows for low minimum order.

T-shirts, sweatshirts, hoodies and bags are well-suited to DTG, with the smooth finish of the fabric allowing great colour reproduction. The water-based ink system means there's no waste when printing and only a very thin layer of ink is used, making it eco-friendly too.



E EMBROIDERY One of the oldest forms of adorning a garment, embroidery has been brought right up to date thanks to modern technology. Embroidering machines can produce 1,000 stitches a minute meaning it is possible to recreate logos and crest incredibly accurately and tastefully.

Embroidery can provide a longer lasting image than printing and is highly durable. It can be applied to almost any garment, but is probably not suitable if you want to cover a large area with design.

F FAST FASHION

It's not just the high street that responds to the changing pace of consumer demand. Merchandise has also put its skates on to deliver promotional clothing at the speed of culture.

The latest example is Laltex, whose Fast Fit Promo division claims to be able to provide hassle-free promotional clothing with a streamlined service from order to delivery in as little as five days from artwork approval.

It claims trade customers can also take advantage of large UK stock levels; introductory prices; minimum orders from as low as 10 pieces, and a range of personalisation techniques.

G GREENWASHING

There is no denying that textiles are a multi-billion global industry that can be associated with a lot of practices that clients may want to avoid, whether that is exploitative labour relations, environmental impact of production processes, or the cost of transportation in terms of carbon.

It is a complex supply chain and wherever you look there are implications for sustainability and any claims you hear. There are no easy answers but that doesn't mean that you shouldn't ask the questions of suppliers.

The reputable ones will be able to provide back up for the claims they are making, as well as explaining the various certifications that they use and what they do and don't prove. If they can't then you have every right to be suspicious.

H HATS

Headwear is in now in year round demand, from toastie beanies in winter to cool bucket hats for summer events. Due to this demand, supplier Product Zone has increased its headwear range, staffing and machinery. It now provides a wool mix 6-panel baseball cap in two colours and a sports fabric polyester/Spandex mix in three colours.

New members of staff have boosted the growing company's capabilities in administration, embroidery and print team, while an expanded embroidery section now includes 3 x 6 head Happy Embroidery machines and a single head one as well, for fast sampling and small runs.

I IMPRESSIONS

According to a study by the ASI, promotional clothing is among the most effective ways of getting your message across to audiences. It found that promotional outerwear was kept for an average of 16 months, well above the time that other promo items were retained.

Promotional T-shirts were kept for 14 months, polo shirts for 13, bags for 11,

and headwear for 10. With such a lengthy promotional lifespan, the cost per impression (CPI) of these items is very low – often fractions of pennies per impression.



J JUST IN TIME

Lead times are an issue for all types of promotional merchandise, and because lots of clothing comes from overseas, this can be a concern.

Samedaybags does exactly what it says on the tin. The Monmouth based company can turn round bags in 24 hours, for when a delivery is mission critical. It has found great success supplying for events such as film and product launches. As life gets faster, lead times get shorter, so its service is in ever greater demand.

K KNICKERS

Believe it or not, but you can have your logo or brand on underwear, although who knows how widespread the views are likely to be.

Companies can offer a range of custom and personalised underwear, which is ideal as a novelty gift or part of a humorous marketing campaign. This could include boxer shorts, thongs, or briefs in various styles and colours to match exactly what you're looking for if your promotion is pants.

L LYCRA

The elasticated material was invented by Dupont in 1958 and was originally used in underwear. However, its use has expanded hugely and it can now be found in garments from shirts and trousers to socks and sportswear, allowing a pleasing elasticity that means clothes fit more easily.

M MATERIALS

Choosing the correct item for your campaign is important and the type of material used will also determine your decoration options.

There are plenty of materials that can be used. The in-house team of product designers at bag specialist, Jutebag can develop an idea and produce a choice of bespoke designs and materials. It can help businesses meet their sustainability goals, using materials which are organic, recycled, upcycled, closed-loop and Fairtrade-certified.

Among the latest in the range are Hemp, Linen and Cotton fabrics which are sustainable and can be used for luxury packaging.



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an artistic touch

NO LOGO

It used to be that clothing brands steered well clear of the merchandise market and focused on consumers which they saw as their primary focus.

However, promotional clothing, workwear, sporting uniforms and the rest is now such a massive opportunity that many are happy to get involved.

The Outdoors Company recently announced it had added Adidas to its portfolio of brands that were available for corporate buyers.

Paul Morley-Smith, director at The Outdoors Company said: "We are really pleased to announce our new partnership with Adidas, it really strengthens the sports brands we offer. They are a global brand, with a great range available to co-brand, so they are a perfect fit for our brand portfolio."



O OUTDOORS

Performance clothing

has been one of the great growth areas in promotional apparel in recent years with organisations eager to show their brands on premium garments such as insulated jackets, gilets, fleeces and waterproof coats.

Companies such as the Outdoors Company act as distribution partners for recognised upmarket brands such as Rab, The North Face, and Stormtech.

They also have products that can be accessible to those with smaller budgets, such as Buff, the leading neckwear and headwear brand which can be fully customised and is produced by a family company which is also a B Corp.



P PLASTIC FREE

Many clothing companies place great importance in their efforts to offer more sustainable choices. As well as garments themselves, with greater use of organics and ethically sourced materials, attention has shifted to other areas of production such as use of plastic bags and excess packaging.

Textile decorator Screenworks is making waves by championing plastic-free packaging across its entire product range. Following extensive research spanning Europe, it has unveiled a family of paper-based products designed to cater to all packaging needs.

At the forefront is the retail-standard tissue paper bag, a flagship product that exceeds industry standards, boasting FSC certification and



curb-side recyclability. With six available sizes, customers can find the perfect bag for every product. 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.

Q QUOTATION

Promotional clothing companies can work with you to ensure that your budget works hard for you. Price does not always equate to quality but they are related – you get what you pay for.

Having said that, there are ways of making your budget go further. For instance, printing a logo is generally cheaper than embroidering. Changing the spec of a garment can lower the unit cost. In some cases, it may be worthwhile to opt for a fewer and better approach to what you are buying. Your clothing expert can guide you through the options.

R RETAIL

Where there was once a sharp distinction between high street fashion and what organisations and brands could access for their promotional needs, the lines are now more blurred.

Buyers now look to the high street rather than a catalogue for inspiration and the speed at which fashions become available for companies is now much shorter with many promotional clothing suppliers helping their customers get closer to the cutting edge of fashion with their own designs.

S SUSTAINABILITY

It is the hottest buzzword in promotional clothing, and there are lots of ways that the right choice of clothing can demonstrate sustainable credentials. However, it's a complex area.

Using organic cotton means that

chemicals have not been used in production, and less water too. However, it still has a carbon footprint associated with processing, transport, and the wider supply chain.

RPET is increasingly used in clothing and has the benefit of not using virgin plastic, but (there's always a but) it is still plastic, not biodegradable, and difficult to recycle. This doesn't mean it isn't suitable for merchandise, but it does mean you should be aware of issues surrounding it.

T T-SHIRTS

T's are still the number one pick for promotional clothing. One survey found that on average they are in our wardrobes for four years, and recycling charity WRAP says that we have an average of 12 T-shirts each.

Brands love them because they are relatively low cost, popular with recipients, and give a massive branding area for messaging.

U UPCYCLING

Kingly has introduced a collection of upcycled denim products – aprons, bags, hats, earrings, table cloths and more – combining creativity and eco-consciousness. Each piece is crafted with care, transforming discarded denim into beautiful, functional brandable items.

All of these items can be impregnated with the Polygiene Stays Fresh Technology for an even greater sustainability impact. This allows garments to stay fresh and odour-free, so they can be washed less frequently.

V VALUE

According to research by the ASI, the American network of promotional businesses, sales of wearables, including shirts, headwear and outerwear, account for 46% of promo industry sales. In comparison,



the UK and European market is less than half this at about 20% of total promotional market sales, ASI claims.

The ASI surmises that one reason could be cultural differences with a more casual clothing culture in the US and the tendency to associate with a team, school, organisation and business through decorated apparel.

WORKWEAR

A distinct area in its own right, workwear is a massive market as companies have discovered the value of presenting a smart image that is on brand through the uniforms of their staff.

According to a report by Allied Market Research, the UK industry is worth £13bn and employs 50,000 people. Corporate and office wear makes up 46% of the market, with industrial and protective clothing at 37%, and the remaining 17% accounted for by uniforms and customised apparel.



X eXperts, like *PMs* own Clive Allcott who provides his textiles knowledge every issue in his Ask Clive column. It's also for XD Connects, the supplier of the Iqoniq range of apparel, with which DTB has formed a supplier relationship to offer all forms of decoration.

Allcott, commercial director at DTB said: "The new supply partnership with XD Connects highlights exactly what both companies stand for in our environmental goals and standards with every item carrying a digital product passport and environmental footprint data."

YOU

Personalisation can be a great way of making a piece of clothing more valued. Whether it is a company logo, club badge, or an individual's name, the appropriate personalisation does wonders for the brand image of your organisation.

ZIPS

Where would we be without these ingenious fasteners?

Swedish-American engineer Gideon Sundback is generally credited with inventing the modern zipper as we know it, registering his first patent for the device in Germany in 1909. In 1917 he received a patent for a device called a 'separable fastener'.

They quickly became used in footwear before cropping up in children's clothing, and finally adult fashion, and the rest is history.

BPMA PRODUCT AWARD WINNERS



The ingenuity of promotional textiles was rewarded through the BPMA's most recent Product Awards where PF Concept picked up the Platinum award for Apparel Product of the Year.

Its Kai unisex lightweight GRS recycled circular jacket impressed judges with its performance as both a garment and in terms of its environmental performance. PF Concept claims that each jacket reduces carbon footprint by 17%, and can be returned via a take-back programme detailed on a QR code.

Part of the Elevate clothing range, the jacket is designed for branding, however because permanent branding can shorten the lifespan of garments, the Kai has been designed with a removable logo sleeve patch.

The Gold award went to XD Connects' Abisko recycled cotton zip through hoodie made from 50% recycled and 50% organic cotton. Its environmental impact claims are guaranteed, by using the AWARE disruptive physical tracer and blockchain technology and 2% of proceeds of each product sold will be donated to Water.org.

Silver in the apparel category went to The Outdoors Company for The North



Face Ciraloft hooded jacket, which is made from recycled polyester and designed to minimise waste and pollution.

In the Bag & Folder Product of the Year category, XD Connects picked up Platinum for the Dillon Aware rPET lightweight foldable backpack, made with 100% recycled polyester embedded with the Aware tracer.

Tancia's Anti-Theft Backpack from its carbon-neutral Chili range was Gold winner. Also made from recycled PET, it has a built-in USB plug and charging cable as well as three compartments carefully designed to protect your valuables from theft.

Silver went to Oldeani's Shield Plus rPET laptop bag which is made from recycled post-consumer plastic.



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GROWTH AHEAD

Despite a challenging year, the merchandise sector grew last year and is back on track following the Covid years

The past year has been a tough one for many businesses, not just merchandise. The list of challenges faced are enough to trigger anyone who has struggled through them – pandemic, supply chain problems, raging inflation, cost of living crisis, skills shortage...

However, better days are ahead, in merchandise at least. Sourcing City's annual look at the sector found that in 2023 the overall promotional merchandise market grew by 4.2% (£47.5m) from £1,134m to £1,182m.

This represents a complete recovery to 2019 levels, after which the sector really hit the skids with a massive drop as the industry all but shut down and was forced to furlough staff, reappraise business plans, and find alternative products to sell.

The report backs up the most recent IPA Bellwether report into the health of the wider marketing sector which found that for Q4 2023, UK marketing budgets were revised up to their strongest level in almost a decade.

Slightly over one quarter (26%) of panellists saw total marketing budgets rise, more than double the proportion registering cuts (11.3%). The resulting net balance of +14.7% was up sharply from +5.3% in the third quarter of last year and its highest since Q2 2014.

Good news for merch providers was the state of two

segments of marketing spend that are traditionally aligned with them – events and direct marketing. Both of these saw strong growth.

Events was the best-performing sub-category of marketing in the final quarter, recording a strongly positive net balance of +15.9%, its highest in a year-and-a-half. Direct marketing saw its greatest upturn (net balance of +12.6%, from +4.3%) since the opening quarter of 2005.

Sourcing City's report claims that the industry now contains more distributor and supplier companies than seen before with 2,737 professional distributor companies, the greatest number recorded. Overall, distributor companies have increased by 43% since 2007.

Larger distributors, with a turnover above £1m, continue to have a significantly disproportionate share of the entire market spend. Just 5.6% of distributors have 59.2% of the market, equating to about £700m.

The remaining 40% of the market spend is shared across 2,583 distributor companies.

The number of suppliers in the UK & Ireland marketplace has also been climbing once again following a drop during the pandemic.

Some suppliers are now operating with fewer staff, with reduced resources,

and less stock purchased or manufactured. Combined with staffing issues, and wider business concerns such as an increase in interest rates, cashflow, import barriers and rising material and transport costs, it is hardly surprising that Sourcing City notes that customer service levels have been challenged in some cases.

However, David Long, Founder & Chairman, Sourcing City remains optimistic. "Despite the UK political uncertainty and turmoil, high interest rates, a cost-of-living crisis in many households, and inflation taking too long to get under control, the UK promotional merchandise



David Long

industry still grew last year. This is a testament to the entrepreneurial lifeblood in the companies throughout our industry. In 2024 we will see the Olympic Games, Euro Championships, and a likely General Election – all will boost our industry. So, there is every reason to expect another year of growth to come." ²⁷⁴

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

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dbarker@directroute.co.uk
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Midlands and East Anglia

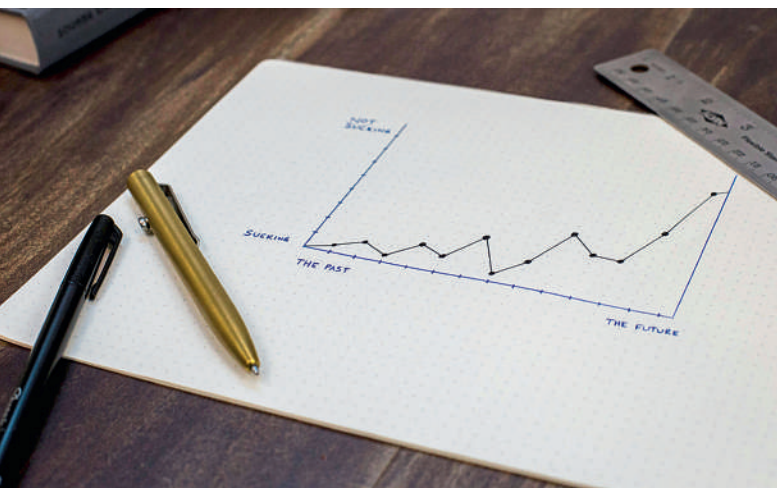
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FORWARD FOCUS FOR TOTAL MERCHANDISE

Changes are afoot at the major distributor following a management buyout

Esssex-based distributor, Total Merchandise is looking towards its twentieth anniversary this year with a new ownership structure after founder Jason O'Connor bought out his two fellow founders.

Announced at the beginning of the year, the deal saw O'Connor acquire sole ownership of the business following the decision of former business partners David Stoddart and Michelle Rae Stoddart to retire.

The business, which the three founders started in 2004, has grown from a start-up to one of the UK's most respected distributors of promotional merchandise, employing around 50 staff.

It is five times winner of the Sourcing City Distributor of the Year award, as well as a past BPMA Distributor of the Year award winner.

"Looking at the journey Michelle, David and I have undertaken since the distant days of 2004, I am extremely proud of what we have all achieved in this time, not least going from three to 50 staff and achieving countless awards along the way," said O'Connor.

'MORE TO DO'

"I still have a passion and hunger for the business and there is a lot that I want to do with the business to put my stamp on it," he added.



The first example of change was an end user expo that Total Merchandise held at nearby Colchester United football stadium in January – the first time it had held such an event. It followed on from a successful supplier showcase Total Merchandise held for staff last summer.

"An end-user show felt like the next obvious step, even though we'd never done it before and it's not directly in-line with our business model. But once the idea took root, we couldn't shake it off," said O'Connor.

The company invited 20 of its suppliers to the expo and was blown away when more than 100 people attended on the day.

"The feedback from suppliers and attendees has been incredible, as have the enquiries, and I think it's all a very positive indicator of how the market is looking for 2024. We'll definitely look at making this an annual event," said O'Connor.

TAKE CONTROL

Elsewhere, he says that the company is looking to streamline its internal processes to take more control over the service it offers to clients.

An example is the launch of pre-approved artwork in-house, which will have the benefit of ensuring greater consistency of branding across merchandise.



"At the moment, most people in the industry rely on the art room at the supplier which means that for five different products you can end up with five different interpretations. Bringing this in-house will massively improve the quality of the branding and eases the burden on our suppliers who are busy people," said O'Connor.

More broadly, the response from the industry to the change has been pleasing, said O'Connor. "We wanted to make the announcement before Merchandise World in case people needed reassuring, but in the event, we have been welcomed with open arms. We've been in the industry a long time and people are happy with what we are doing."

O'Connor said that the industry as a whole was buoyant at the minute and that he was confident that there was growth potential. The company will stick largely to the markets that have made it successful until now.

"There's a lot of business out there if you can take a good product to market. Some things are always outside of your control but if you put your best foot forward then you can succeed," he added. **PM**



SUSTAINABILITY CONFERENCE 2024

5th June 2024 | Crowne Plaza, Marlow

The BPMA Sustainability Conference returns to Marlow this year for the next chapter in the industry's sustainable approach. Hosting a range of expert speakers, topics and member discussions, the member-only event aims to equip members with inspiration, actionable insight and business critical information. Secure your place today.

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BACK ON TRACK

Merchandise professionals were PSI bound for the traditional start of the year in Germany

Despite hiccups caused by demonstrations by German farmers and a national rail strike, PSI, Europe's main trade show for promotional products, kicked off 2024 on 7 January.

The Düsseldorf show boasted sold-out exhibition space, a rise in visitor numbers and an optimistic mood, underlining the resilience and innovative power of merchandise.

Exhibitors were up from 463 last year to 567, and represented 29 nations, with the entire exhibition space available in Halls 9 and 10 fully occupied. There were 11,003 visitors from 69 countries, compared with 10,509 in 2023 – the figures would have been even higher but for the wider disruption according to the organisers.

"I am absolutely overwhelmed by our exhibitors' and visitors' positive response. It shows that we are on the right track with our vision of re-positioning promotional products," said PSI director Petra Lassahn. "This is only achievable with such an extraordinary network of PSI partners and friends."

Exhibitors included such promotional hitters as PF Concept, Midocean, Prodir and XD Design, and there were visitor delegations from the US in the shape of ASI and PPAI. The BPMA's Tom Robey attended the show representing the UK, alongside other UK companies including Sow Easy and Allwag.

SALES OPTIMISM

According to data revealed at the show, the European industry looks to the current business year with optimism. The results of the PSI Industry Barometer, an international



survey of the PSI network across Europe, found that respondents expect sales to rise by 4.5% on average for 2024.

It also flagged up issues with 70% of participants naming customer price sensitivity as their biggest challenge, followed by excessively high ancillary costs (61%), competition (49%) and supply chain and logistics difficulties (42%).

A MISSION TO EDUCATE

At the show PSI also helped its members to rise to these challenges with tailor-made education formats based around hot topics such as artificial intelligence, cyber security, counterfeiting prevention, the new EU Product Safety Regulation, the EU Toy Safety Regulation, and the Digital Product Pass.

Petra Lassahn announced the foundation of the PSI Sustainability Academy, which she said served an ongoing need.

"The topic of sustainability will continue to shape the future of the promotional products industry. We will support the



industry in this endeavour."


PSI plans to offer exclusive masterclasses and workshops for members with international speakers from all over Europe. The PSI Sustainability Awards will also return in a new guise next year, said Lassahn.

BACK TO THE FUTURE

As well as thousands of current product trends on show, inspiration from the past was also available in the shape of the Museum of Promotional Articles, which had been collated by Cybergroup International and opened on the eve of PSI by Düsseldorf's Lord Mayor Dr Stephan Keller.

The special exhibition showed, among other things, historical football fan articles and items bearing political messages such as replicas of the suffragette umbrellas.

"MoPA is a testimony to the development of marketing and the influence of promotional items in our culture," said Mayor Keller. "PSI testifies to the resilience of the industry, which has overcome the challenges of the pandemic against all odds. The commitment to sustainability and initiatives such as the MoPA reaffirm the industry's determination to recover."

The next edition of PSI will take place from 7 to 9 January 2025 in Düsseldorf. 



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PACKAGING – *who is responsible?*

Merchandise companies may need to take greater heed of packaging under Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) for Packaging regulations

Under EPR, 'packaging' is defined as any material that is used to cover or protect goods that are sold to consumers, and may also be designed to display a company's logo or branding. It includes goods that are designed to be filled at the point of sale, for example, a reusable water bottle.

You will need to take action if all of the following apply:

- you're an individual business, subsidiary or group
- you have an annual turnover of £1 million+
- you were responsible for more than 25 tonnes of packaging in 2022
- you carry out any of the 6 'packaging activities' listed below

Packaging Activities:

1 You are **supplying packaged goods to the UK market under your own brand**, which includes a name, trademark, or any distinguishing marks. Regardless of whether you are a manufacturer, importer or distributor – the company in the supply chain that puts its branding on the packaging may need to take action.

Therefore, businesses hiring another company to do any of the following may still need to act:

- producing goods that will be sold under *your brand name*
- packing goods that will be sold under *your brand name*
- placing *your branded goods* on the UK market

2 You place goods into packaging that is unbranded when it is supplied, this includes both packaging for your own organisation or another organisation.

3 Your organisation imports products in packaging from outside of the UK, to be supplied on the UK market, even where the packaging is discarded before selling on the goods.

This does not apply when importing filled packaging that is:

- branded, and you've imported it on behalf of a brand owner that is established in the UK

■ unbranded, and you go on to supply it to a 'large' organisation (annual turnover of £2m+ and supplies or imports more than 50 tonnes of packaging) that applies its brand before supplying it on.

4 Your organisation owns an online marketplace that allows non-UK businesses to sell their goods into the UK.

5 Your organisation hires or loans out reusable packaging such as wooden pallets.

6 Your organisation manufactures or imports empty packaging, for supply to 'small' organisations with annual turnover between £1-2m, and you supply or import more than 25 tonnes of packaging into the UK.

IF YOUR BUSINESS MEETS EPR REQUIREMENTS, WHAT DO YOU NEED TO DO?

This will depend upon whether you are classified as a small or large organisation. You're classed as a small organisation if either of the following apply:

- annual turnover is between £1-2m and you're responsible for supplying or importing more than 25 tonnes of empty

packaging or packaged goods in the UK

- your annual turnover is over £1m and you're responsible for supplying or importing 25-50 tonnes of empty packaging or packaged goods in the UK

Small organisations must:

- record data about the empty packaging and packaged goods you supply or import from either 1 January 2023 or 1 March 2023.
- create an account for your organisation from January 2024
- pay a fee to the environmental regulator from 2025

If you miss the deadline, you may need to pay a penalty.


You will be classed as a large organisation if **both** of the following apply:

- you have an annual turnover of £2m or more
 - you're responsible for supplying or importing more than 50 tonnes of empty packaging or packaged goods
- If you're a large organisation, to comply with the regulations, you may need to:

- record and report data about the empty packaging and packaged goods you supply or import in the UK (every 6 months) from either 1 January 2023 or 1 March 2023. Reporting dates are included in the government guidance listed below.
- create an account
- pay a waste management fee
- pay scheme administrator costs
- pay a charge to the environmental regulator
- get PRNs or PERNs to meet your recycling obligations
- report data about empty packaging and packaged goods you supplied or imported

No enforcement action will be taken about late submission if your data is submitted by 31 May 2024. You may face penalties after this date.

Details on the next steps to take on EPR can be found at gov.co.uk/guidance.

The DEFRA packaging team can also provide clarification at pEPR@defra.gov.uk 





BUILD YOUR BPMA BENEFITS

The benefits of BPMA membership really stack up whatever area of the merchandise sector you are in

Membership of the BPMA creates many benefits for those who join. Being part of the UK's most prominent trade association for the promotional merchandise sector means you are backed by a trusted industry brand of more than 50 years' standing.

The BPMA represents excellence, standards and confidence for any buyer, providing businesses with elevated status when compared with merchandise companies that are not members.

With thorough checks and audits undertaken on every member, businesses that display the BPMA logo represent reputable, sound organisations.

As well as a competitive advantage based on being considered a reputable business, members enjoy a raft of brilliant handpicked benefits that have a value beyond the cost of membership.

To see how those membership benefits stack up, the BPMA has devised membership calculators for distributors and suppliers that give a break down of the actual value of your membership. These can be found in the Resources section of the BPMA website.



WHAT BENEFITS DOES THE BPMA PROVIDE?

Every business is different, but even by using a few benefits, you could save up to £2,000 or more. These include:

- Credit management - the BPMA credit management package is worth in excess of £5,000
- Debt recovery
- HR/Legal/Tax/VAT and Health & Safety Helpline with unlimited access
- An online resource library with around 800 documents across a range of topics. Additional paid for HR and Health & Safety services are available
- Member Resource Library gives access a wide range of information and downloadable assets, including:
 - Latest Industry Research and White Papers
 - Infographic Downloads
 - Presentations Guides & Checklists
 - Export Support Case Studies
 - Trade Associations Address Book

- Business Documents and Templates Legislation
- Compliance & Product Safety
- BPMA Brand Guidelines
- Industry Marketing
- Strategic business and industry advice for your business, face to face or remotely
- BPMA directories for distributors, suppliers and service providers
- Discounted stands at Merchandise World and other events such as B2B Marketing Expo and PSI
- Free BPMA Job Board posts – worth £130 per post
- Export consultancy through the Institute of Export
- 10% discount on product and compliance testing services through Intertek, SGS and BSI
- Sustainability partners to help members meet their StepForward Pledge requirements – including Planet Mark, A Good Thing, and First Mile.

APPROVED PROVIDERS

Members can also benefit from pre-vetted preferred providers in 15 categories including:

- **Citation ISO Certification:** ISO accreditation 9001 Quality Management, 14001 Environmental Management, 27001 Information Security, 45001 Occupational Health & Safety plus other standards including GDPR assessment, cyber essentials, eLearning.
- **CB Tax:** Tax Rebates. CBTax offers every BPMA member a free 45-minute consultation to assess eligibility.
- **Moneycorp:** offering bank-beating exchange rates and guidance on international payments, whether for importing or exporting, paying staff overseas or international expansion.
- **Latcham:** data, print, digital and fulfilment.
- **The Mailing Guy:** graphic design, digital, litho and large format printing, direct mail, event branding.
- **PHMG:** digital answerphone service.

■ **The Business Allotment:** tailored services for business growth ranging from 12 month plans to deep dive, or 60 minute sessions.

■ **Love 2 Shop:** gift vouchers for high street, branded reward cards, delivery services, customer loyalty, employee recognition, incentive platforms.

■ **PHL Group:** order fulfilment, contract packing, order management systems, warehousing and storage, sales promotion solutions, customer service, IT services.

■ **Whistl:** management and support services across business mail, parcels, fulfilment, contact centres and doordrop media.

■ **clearBorder:** expertise of international trade, border process and business needs. BPMA members receive 10% discount off online courses.

■ **Piscari:** in-house group negotiation training.

■ **Sprint Logistics:** worldwide supply chain logistics and freight.

■ **Fulfilment Matters:** e-commerce fulfilment, variable data printing, promotional pick and pack, worldwide e-commerce distribution.

■ **UKAS:** conformity and compliance testing, verification, inspection and calibration.

CALENDAR DATES

2024

- 6 March** – The BIG Promotional Trade Show, Glasgow
- 8 March** – International Women's Day lunch, Birmingham
- 20 March** – The BIG Promotional Trade Show, Dublin
- 26 March** – StepForward Pledge support sessions (via Zoom).
- 27 March** – BPMA Sustainability Series. Webinar update from A Good Thing (members only)
- 28 March** – BPMA Members Orientation seminar, Leatherhead
- 5 June** – BPMA Sustainability Conference, Marlow
- 27 June** – BPMA Golf Day, Nottingham
- 11 September** – Merchandise World, Milton Keynes
- 6 November** – BPMA Members Orientation seminar, Leatherhead
- 6 December** – Product Awards presentation, London



(L-R) Halle Hopkins, sales support coordinator, Nicola Durant, regional sales manager, Liz Ghosh, artworker, Ned Greaves, head of finance Megan Abbs, marketing coordinator



INSPIRING INCLUSION

This year's IWD will put the focus on improving equality and diversity. PM heard how one member is driving inclusivity

The BPMA is again marking International Women's Day (IWD) with a special event for members which aims to #InspireInclusion.

With organisations of all kinds striving for a more gender equal world, *Product Media* reached out to Castelli to hear about its drive for greater equality and diversity in the workforce.

The stationery company is committed to fostering an inclusive and diverse workplace and consequently has a balanced management team comprised of a 50/50 female/male split. It has recently welcomed five new team members, all women with two members in senior positions.

To fortify its commitment to ethical practices, Castelli is pursuing the B-Corp certification, which it says aligns with a dedication to a corporate culture that values and embraces the well-being of team members and the broader community.

Mark Poland, managing director of

Castelli Milano 1938 said: "We recognise that being an inclusive company is not an event, more a lifelong ethical process. What we have learned is that our community is hugely influenced by the valued contributions each person makes."

PM spoke to Nicola Durant, the company's new regional sales manager, about her experience as a woman working in the merchandise sector.



Q How did you get into this industry and what do you like about it?

A Interestingly, I began my journey in the promotional industry more than 20 years ago in Castelli's export department. I moved to become an account manager at Senator Pens for 15 years, before spending four years at Listawood. Throughout my

career, I had the privilege of working under the leadership of Andrew Hill, who was a true mentor and an ambassador for the promotional industry. Equipped with this knowledge and experience, I have returned to Castelli Milano 1938.

Every day is different in this industry. I get to collaborate with exceptional people on remarkable projects. I love the creative part of this industry, as it allows me to engage with a wide variety of products. I have formed some valuable friendships, including meeting my husband in this industry.

Q Have you seen change in the way women are treated in the promotional merchandise industry?

A There have been efforts to promote gender equality and inclusivity over the years. Many companies have implemented policies and initiatives to address gender bias and promote equal treatment for women. The introduction of IWD has been a positive

step towards promoting the contributions of women. It provides an opportunity to celebrate women's achievements. By supporting this day, the industry can create a more diverse working environment.

Q Are there enough opportunities for women in the industry?

A There is always room for improvement. It is important to have open and inclusive conversations. We need to raise awareness through seminars and webinars for example, and we can introduce more networks to support each other, providing guidance and opportunities for professional growth. We need to encourage companies to establish clear procedures for addressing gender bias and discrimination, providing measures for reporting incidents and making sure that appropriate action is taken to address them.

Q What do companies underestimate when it comes to supporting women?

A Support involves more than just implementing diversity and inclusion programmes. Many women juggle multiple

responsibilities, including parental and at home. Companies often underestimate the importance of offering flexible work arrangements. Providing support for work-life balance benefits all employees.

Castelli recently conducted a trial and subsequently implemented a steadfast hybrid working policy aimed at fostering a harmonious work-life balance for all employees, including working mothers.

Female leadership representation can also inspire and empower women at all levels within the organisation. Lack of representation may give the message that there are limited opportunities for career advancement.

Q Tell us about your role?

A As regional sales manager, I manage sales activities within my key accounts, driving sales growth, and building and maintaining relationships. I find new business opportunities, collaborating with our marketing team to produce campaigns that our customers can feature in their social media activity. I also analyse market trends, looking at our competitors and

what they are offering, and make sure any customer feedback is actioned.

Q What advice would you give to younger women starting out in their career today?

A First and foremost, believe in yourself. Have confidence in your abilities and believe that you deserve to be where you are. Your skills and talents are valuable.

Secondly, remember to lift as you climb. Support other women by sharing knowledge, providing mentorship, and fostering a positive and collaborative work environment.

To encourage future leaders, we must promote education and encourage ambition in young individuals. Offering tailored development opportunities and investment in young high achievers helps them to develop the necessary effective leadership skills and to nurture individual growth.

We must continue to recognise and celebrate the achievements of women in leadership roles. Highlighted examples of cross-industry success stories can inspire and motivate the leaders of the future.

BPMA MARKS IWD

Last year saw the BPMA hold its first International Women's Day event in London. The event featured talks, networking, and lunch for a group of women, and men, from the industry. For a sector that has historically seen an impressive level of female entrepreneurship and talent, it was a chance to formalise the importance of women in the sector, and to begin the conversation about how to improve opportunities and enhance inclusion.

This year, the BPMA is looking to the theme of #InspireInclusion at its dedicated IWD members event in Birmingham.

It is hosted at the centrally located Birmingham Conference Centre and tickets include a delicious networking breakfast, keynote speaker address with lively panel discussions, plus a three-course lunch to continue the conversation and discussion.

Participants can find out more about the event and book at bpma.co.uk/events.





Continental connections

BPMA membership director **Tom Robey** kicked off 2024 by spreading the word to Europe at two important events

In the realm of promotional products, where creativity meets strategy, trade shows serve as vibrant hubs for industry professionals to connect, collaborate, and innovate. This year, the BPMA had the privilege of immersing into two prominent events in the promotional products calendar: CTCO Lyon 2024 and PSI Dusseldorf 2024. Here's a glimpse into both gatherings.

CTCO LYON 2024

Just outside Lyon, CTCO 2024 brought together an array of industry stakeholders from the EU. Over the course of three dynamic days, the event served as a melting pot of innovation, showcasing the latest EU trends, technologies, and strategies shaping the future of promotional marketing.

Amidst the bustling atmosphere, the BPMA had the opportunity to engage with both European and US associations and organisations, including the PPP (Netherlands), BAPP (Belgium), 2FPCO (France), PWA (Sweden), and AimFap (Spain), amongst others. These interactions underscored the global nature of the promotional products industry and the importance of collaboration in driving innovation and growth.

One of the highlights of our participation at CTCO Lyon was my involvement in a panel discussion titled USA, Europe: du dialogue à la collaboration [USA, Europe:

dialogue and collaboration] where industry leaders dissected key trends and challenges facing the sector. The exchange of insights and perspectives during these sessions was both enlightening and inspiring, offering actionable strategies to navigate an ever-evolving market landscape.

PSI DUSSELDORF 2024: CONNECTING IN THE HEART OF EUROPE

Prior to my attendance at CTCO Lyon, the BPMA had the pleasure of participating in PSI Dusseldorf 2024, held in vibrant Dusseldorf, Germany. This premier trade show served as a gateway to the European promotional products market, offering a platform for industry professionals to showcase their latest offerings and forge meaningful connections.

During PSI Dusseldorf, the BPMA had



the opportunity to support members of the BPMA and explore a wide range of innovative products and solutions from exhibitors across the globe. Beyond the bustling trade show floor, the association also seized the chance to network at association and general industry events, fostering valuable connections and gaining insights into emerging trends and best practices.

As the association reflects on experiences at both CTCO Lyon 2024 and PSI Dusseldorf 2024, we remind ourselves of the boundless opportunities for innovation and collaboration within the promotional products industry. These gatherings serve as catalysts for creativity and connection, fuelling our collective efforts to drive positive change and make a lasting impact in the world of marketing and branding.

SHOW DETAILS

CTCO is a three-day promotional garments and gifts show held in Lyon, France, and is the only French event positioned at the beginning of the year. It takes place alongside sister show CI!Print which focuses on the related area of visual communication and graphics.

This show attracts more than 300 exhibitors and more than 10,000 visitors over the three days. Next year's show is on 4-6 February 2025 in Lyon.

The next edition of the long-running PSI show will be held in Dusseldorf on 7-9 January 2025.



BIG SHOWS VENUES IDEAS

Nothing beats the power of meeting face to face!



GLASGOW
6 MARCH Crowne Plaza



HEATHROW
18 APRIL Marriott



MANCHESTER
25 SEPTEMBER Emirates Old Trafford



DUBLIN
20 MARCH Crowne Plaza



MANCHESTER
24 APRIL MUFC Old Trafford



HEATHROW
16 OCTOBER Sheraton Skyline

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- Promotional Merchandise
- Wearables
- Business Gifts
- Printwear
- Sustainable Products
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- Systems ...and more!

Nothing compares to real life and live events, so we are delighted to announce The BIG shows are back this spring! Register now and get engaged! Now incorporating and co-locating **The BIG Wearables Trade Show** as well.

The **BIG Promotional Trade Shows** are the promotional merchandise and wearables events to get to in 2024.



- More than 70 key suppliers & brands
- Free to attend
- See all the latest products
- Convenient locations
- Collect samples, catalogues & ideas
- Free parking
- Refreshments provided throughout the day



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INTERESTED IN EXHIBITING?

For further information please contact us at any time:

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The BIG Promotional Trade Show exhibitions are closed trade events. Only bona fide distributors and resellers of business gifts, promotional merchandise and printwear may attend. Suppliers, manufacturers and their affiliates and all service providers must exhibit to be able to attend.

BPMA GOLF DAY 2024

The Nottinghamshire | 27th June 2024



Join us for the Annual Golf Day at The Nottinghamshire Golf and Country Club this June. Open to all BPMA members and industry golfers, this spectacular course promises an exciting day, great golf and brilliant company.

The all day event starts with breakfast at 9am before teeing off to start The Signature Course 9 hole scramble, pausing to enjoy lunch before the afternoon's 18 hole Stableford Better Ball competition on The Championship Course. Finishing the day with a well deserved dinner and Awards, we'll be awarding Nearest the Pins, Longest Drive and seeing who gets the annual wooden spoon!

Book your place today

Visit bpma.co.uk/events to book teams and places. This is an inclusive event.

£145+vat per person or a team of 4 for
£560+vat for BPMA members. Non BPMA members £175+vat
per person or a team of 4 for £700+vat. Booking terms apply.

Venue: The Nottinghamshire Golf & Country Club.

Visit thenottinghamshire.com for more information about the course.

All members and non-members welcome. Hotel accommodation available locally.