



GETTING BACK TO BUSINESS

Industry buoyant at
Merchandise World p10



THIS ONE'S ON US

LATEST TRENDS
IN DRINKWARE
& CERAMICS

P16



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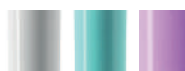
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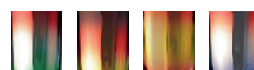
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NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2023

WELCOME



What a busy few months it has been for the sector... and the rest of the year shows no sign of slacking off either.

It was great to once again meet with the industry at the

September version of Merchandise World in Milton Keynes. A bustling show had impressive numbers of exhibitors and visitors, making it the best late summer show since before the pandemic, and yet more evidence that the industry is getting back on track.

Of course, there are still concerns, not least high inflation and the uncertainty produced by a looming election. We are not out of the woods yet, but maybe we should take comfort where we can.

The September show typically provides a bit more time for conversations with industry colleagues than its January version, and there seemed to be a lot of productive talking going on. Read all about it on p10.

Another sign of a bit more vitality in the sector is the upsurge in the interest in buying and selling merchandise companies that we noted in the last issue. In this one we take a deeper look at what's going on, including expert commentary from Peter Hill, director of business consultants Mark Holt.

According to Hill, his company conducted more acquisitions last year than in the previous decade, and he doesn't foresee it slowing down any time soon – find out why on p22. Whether you are buying, selling, or just curious, there is some interesting

insight in this issue.

This issue also includes the much-anticipated shortlist for the BPMA Product Awards which feature the best that the industry has produced in the past year. Find out if you are included on p32.

The awards themselves will be announced at a special BPMA event on 1 December at the splendid St Pancras Renaissance Hotel. As well as the awards, there is an opportunity to stay up to speed on the latest in sustainability thinking in our industry through a networking event on the same day.

With the BPMA's StepForward Pledge gaining greater traction throughout the sector, this is an event not to be missed. We hope to see you there.

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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Goldstar gets Smartt with merchandising

Goldstar has appointed Heather Smartt as its new global director of merchandising with a remit to advance the company's commitment to manufacturing alternatives, expanding product categories, and enhancing global product design.

Smartt has most recently been global

director, product development at National Pen, based in Portugal.

She has 17 years of experience in the promotional products industry bridging the North American and European markets, and has worked at Polyconcept in various locations worldwide.

Smartt said she hoped to leverage

her international experience to create products that meet the needs of customers while aligning with a commitment to sustainability.

Under her leadership, the company will unveil a groundbreaking four-piece Coastal Threads bag collection designed in Europe, and crafted with Repreve, Goldstar's recycled ocean plastic.

"Together with our talented team, we will help expand how the world perceives promotional products," she said.

Smartt has earned industry recognition, including being featured on ASI's Counselor Hot List for her innovative product designs.



Upcycled denims cut waste claims Kingly

Kingly has introduced a collection of upcycled denim products, including aprons, bags, hats, earrings, and tablecloths.

The textile specialist has introduced the products in part to counteract the negative environmental effect of denim production.

According to a Kingly report, these include high water and chemical usage, substantial energy consumption and emissions, and waste generation.

Studies by Kingly claim that its upcycling products save 95% of water, 50% energy, and use and use fewer chemicals.

Each upcycled piece is crafted from discarded denim into functional brandable items, impregnated with 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.

Upcycled denim can be branded by embroidery and DTG printing with GOTS-certified sustainable inks. The texture of denim provides a sturdy canvas for intricate embroidery work.

DTG printing can be used to cover a significant portion of the item with a colourful or intricate design. This method can be used for more intricate or colourful designs on the crown or brim of denim hats. It allows for detailed graphics and gradients that may be challenging with traditional embroidery.

Investment shortens lead times for EML

Eat My Logo has undertaken a range of investments to enhance its production capabilities and deliver high quality edible products to its customers.

The Lancashire baked goods specialist has made significant investments in new manufacturing equipment to meet demand over the last 18 months.

A new state-of-the-art flow wrap machine has expanded packaging capabilities enabling EML to efficiently package a variety of products, ensuring their freshness and protecting them during transportation.

A further two printers help cover the demand for edible printed toppers. The printers utilise cutting-edge technology to bring custom designs to life while ensuring exceptional print quality and accuracy.

Meanwhile, a new biscuit machine can produce products at a much faster rate, doubling production capacity and cutting

the lead times on biscuit orders.

The company's latest offering for Christmas is a Christmas jumper shaped biscuit, which also comes in a decoration pack with icing tunes, sprinkles and a branded topper.



Leather products at low MOQ

The Leather Business has announced that it can offer as few as 25 units Pantone matched so that even smaller orders can make an impact.

Selected leathers can be Pantone matched and are also sustainable as they are tanned in an LWG Gold Rated Tannery with fully REACH compliant chemicals and with hides from fully traceable animals.

MD John Thorp said the offering had received a great response from gift houses targeting the professional legal, financial and investment clients with products such as quality folders, technical organisers and tablet cases.

"This offers huge opportunities to many companies where they can make high quality products to reflect and strengthen their corporate ID," he said.

Small packs a punch from Prodir

Prodir has launched a new passport-sized notebook to pair with its innovative Mini pen.

The MM01 Small notebook is elegant and compact, measuring just 90 mm by 140 mm so that it fits easily in a bag or in the hand.

It features covers in environmentally friendly Fedrigoni Materica paper (250g/m²), exposed singer stitching, and 72 blank inner pages.

The DS6 S twist ball point pen is 24.4mm shorter than comparable models but boasts a full-sized Prodir Floating Ball lead free refill to guarantee a long writing life, and its casing is made from an innovative recycle whose manufacture generates 40% less CO₂ emissions than standard ABS.

Both products offer brands a range of standard and optional customisations, including bold colours and brand logo placements.



Adidas gets onside with The Outdoors Company

The Outdoors Company has added sports brand Adidas to its impressive portfolio of brands, bringing sought after corporate pieces to the B2B market for the UK and Europe.

Corporate partners will be able to access a broad range of core styles covering jackets, polos, T-shirts, hoodies, and bags all with good stocks and bright colours. All styles are available for personalisation.

Adidas joins other The Outdoors Company partner premium brands including Columbia, Finisterre, Patagonia, Rab, and The North Face providing promotional merchandise, gifts and corporate wear solutions.

Paul Morley-Smith, company 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."



Big awards for show exhibitors

Promotional suppliers were recognised for their exhibition efforts at recent trade shows.

CHX Products and BIC Graphic Europe won awards for the best promo stand at the autumn Manchester and Heathrow editions of the BIG New Products Trade Show.

Max Rutland of CHX picked up the award for the company's 4WD model that it used to demonstrate its new Eco Moto range, which was also on show at Merchandise World. Ian Barham of BIC also received the trophy.

The most innovative promo product autumn award went to Sam Brooks-Birkett and Mark Zurek from Castelli Diaries for its new Oritsei notebook from the Appeel Eco notebook collection.

Show organiser Gerry Thomas presented the best wearables stand award to Ashford Blake and Donna Powell from Beechfield Brands and the most innovative wearables product autumn award to Ian Hewlett and Ian Wilson from United Brands of Scandinavia for their Cottover sustainable collection.

Showcasing many of the industry's



leading companies, the autumn editions featured more than 70 of the top suppliers of promotional merchandise, wearables and services from the UK, Ireland and Europe.

New exhibitors such as Beechfield Brands, BTC activewear, Screenworks, Exceptio, Neutral, Fast Fit Promo, Oldeani, Impression

Europe and Bella+Canvas joined existing ones including PF Concept, United Brands, XD Connects, midocean, Laltex Promo, Preseli, DTB, Stormtech, Fruit of the Loom, Russell Europe, Regatta, Senator Pens, Hainenko, Bagco, Crystal Galleries, Pencom, Adpads, Eurocap and Bizz Badge.

Connecting Brands With People



Preseli is a first choice supplier of core products to the promotional industry. We have built our reputation on 30 years of award winning service & time-proven reliability.

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GOOD IN THE HOOD

The hoodie or sweatshirt has become a staple product of branded clothing but where did it come from? **Clive Alcott** investigates



The precursor to the modern sweatshirt was a simple grey cotton jersey shirt used as athletic wear by American football and basketball players in the 1920s. These early sweatshirts had a basic pullover design with ribbed cuffs and a crew neck.

The name 'sweatshirt' was coined because these garments were designed to absorb sweat and keep athletes comfortable.



RISE IN POPULARITY

As sports and athletic events gained popularity, sweatshirts became more widely used by athletes and sports teams in the Thirties and Forties. Colleges and universities began to print their logos and team names on sweatshirts, making them a form of sports merchandise.

After WW2, sweatshirts started to become popular as casualwear. They were

often worn by students and young adults, particularly on college campuses. During this time, the hooded sweatshirt, or hoodie, emerged as a variation.

HOODIE POPULARITY

Hoodies gained popularity in the 1970s, partly due to their association with urban streetwear and emerging hip-hop culture. The hoodie's practical design and anonymity (with the hood up) made it a favourite among young people.

They were worn by celebrities, featured in movies and TV shows, and became symbols of rebellion and nonconformity.



FASHION EVOLUTION

In the Eighties and Nineties, sweatshirts evolved into fashionable items. Designers and clothing brands began to experiment with different fabrics, styles, and graphics. Sweatshirts often featured logos, slogans, or artwork.

Athletic apparel companies like Nike, Adidas, and Puma started producing sweatshirts and hoodies as part of their product lines furthering their popularity.

CONTEMPORARY TRENDS

They continue to be popular and versatile items of clothing with fashion designers incorporating them into their collections.

With the rise of online custom apparel shops, individuals can easily personalise sweatshirts. The leavers' hoodie has become the must have item for school, college and university students.



Happy selling
Clive the clothing and bag guru.

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Nothing compares to real life and live events, so we are delighted to announce The BIG shows are back next spring! Now incorporating and co-locating **The BIG Wearables Trade Show** as well. Register now and get engaged! **The BIG Promotional Trade Shows** are the promotional merchandise and wearables events to get to in 2024.

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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.

Back to business

This year saw the biggest one-day Merchandise World event since the pandemic – proof that the industry is in a positive condition



The bounce back continues for the promotional merchandise industry. Despite concerns about the state of the economy, the sector's peak season showcase of Merchandise World at Marshall Arena in Milton Keynes defied the gloom.

The bright late summer's day was complemented by the eager faces of distributors looking for new ideas, contacts, and to catch up with valued suppliers.

Overall, the show had 98 exhibitors, which was 13 more than at last September's show. Eight of these were new exhibitors to the show.

A record number of visitors had registered to attend and approaching 500 professional distributors subsequently arrived at the event making it the best September show since before the pandemic, according to David Long, chairman of show organiser Sourcing City.

INDUSTRY OPTIMISM

The organiser pointed out the show indicated that the industry appears to be holding up well, with conversations positive and optimistic for the future. Over the years



the industry has faced numerous challenges but each time the entrepreneurial spirit of the inspirational company leaders in the trade have found a way to modify their business to continue moving forward, Sourcing City said.

Show organiser, Ella Long added: "Seeing the show hall buzzing is always great for everybody. There was lots of feedback from visitors, thrilled with the new products

and suppliers they had discovered and the exhibitors felt that both the quality and volume of the visitors was exceptional. Time to prepare for January now."

CHX sales director Max Rutland said the company was very happy with the one-day Milton Keynes show, reporting that the team didn't stop all day, and had very good conversations with quality distributors.

"We've started to use Merchandise World

as a platform for our new product range launches twice a year, and this one we felt was our best yet. Focusing all out on that question of 'what's new?' we brought with us only what was new or redesigned, our winter release Eco Moto," he said.

"Feedback on the new Eco Moto lines was very positive and people loved the buzz we created with our sales model based on Andy's Land Rover Defender, with us being able to have an in-show demonstration of our new Ice Pop, Ice Scraper Keyring and how the new scrapers and tyre gauges in the range worked. Another successful range launch, another great show."

'PEOPLE ARE BUSY'

Carey Trevill, CEO of the BPMA, which is Sourcing City's partner in Merchandise World said that the vibe was busy and bouncy all day with packed aisles and happy conversations, marking a return to something approaching normality after more than two years of disruption.

"It's been tough, but people are busy. Margins are looking good and many are finally getting the staffing levels right as well now to service the steady demand. August was quieter for some but it was a more 'normal' summer this year compared with last year's insanity as events were still getting back on track. The continued investment into face to face and interactions means the UK is open for business and we're doing it," she said.

There could still be economic shocks to come but wages and inflation are starting to be where they should be, she added.

Events and areas which need merchandise keep on spending, with this being one of the only areas where spend was unaffected in the last few months.

"We are still in for a tough time we believe but our sector delivers something unique and we see no signs this will stop," she said.

STEPFORWARD ON SUSTAINABILITY

Meanwhile, the BPMA continued its efforts to get the industry aligned behind its StepForward Pledge, which aims to revolutionise the promotional landscape by fostering sustainability in products, operations, and the communities it serves.

Trevill and BPMA Board Member Melissa Chevin delivered an update on why it mattered to a standing room only session on the BPMA stand.

Focusing on the business case for sustainability they pointed out that customers now expected sustainability, and would favour brands that demonstrated that it was at the heart of their operations.

Other benefits lie in areas such as recruitment, with younger workers more prepared to work for a company that is more sustainable, and some even willing to take a pay cut to do so.

The BPMA StepForward Pledge empowers BPMA members to proactively shape an environmentally conscious industry.



Launched this year, it has been voluntary so far, but from next year it will be compulsory for members to sign up.

"We will give members time to do it but they need to be sustainable. It is your record to your customers and fundamental to what the industry has to do for its reputation and profile," said Trevill.

For supplier companies, that message has been well and truly received with more and more products aimed at satisfying demand for sustainability.

The Eco World zone provided lots of ideas on the innovative eco-friendly products that are now available. It was given a facelift this year with new eco products downloadable by a QR code, giving a simple way for all new eco products, and the supplier details, to be taken away for future reference. This proved a great way for exhibitors to promote their products and show their items to visitors that may have missed them on their stands.

PRACTICE WHAT WE PREACH

Elsewhere, the show enlisted the help of exhibitors to showcase what sustainable merchandise looks like.

This year's lanyards were again provided by Preseli which ran a lanyard repurposing initiative as part of its commitment to the BPMA StepForward Pledge.

Merchandise World had dedicated lanyard recycling bins in place for the first time, encouraging visitors to return their lanyards for onward use. Preseli worked with local charities to find ways to repurpose items and ensure that all lanyards were repurposed, or appropriately recycled with nothing going to landfill.

Preseli marketing manager, Robert Bruce, said the new lanyards, which launched at the show, are made from paper but have the appearance and feel of a normal lanyard.

"Paper has been used before but the product was always paper like," he said. "Our new paper lanyards use pulp from sustainable wood sources that is then made into a flexible textile like material and woven, the result being a true lanyard that can be printed and work like any other."

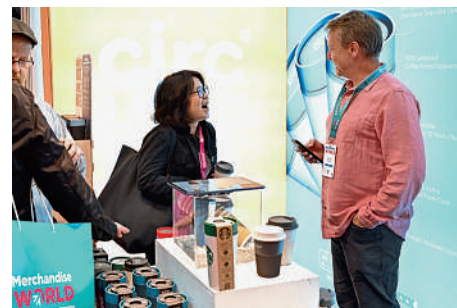
The lanyard return bins were a total success with a big bag full returned after the show. A tally has shown that more than 30% of the lanyards issued were returned.

"Our display of re-purposing ideas got lots of attention and was an engaging way to bring up the subject of finding new uses for single use promotional products," he added.

Preseli is using the returns to find bigger scale solutions to repurposing and disposal of used lanyards. They are being used as samples as Preseli works with processors to create a long-term solution.

"At the very least all will be stripped of their components (which will be used again for next year's show," he said.

Another company that demonstrated sustainability in action was Circular & Co, which provided its returnable cups at the show for hot drinks.





The high-quality recycled PP cups and lids were used at the show, alongside collecting bins where the cups are deposited for washing and reuse. They can be reused about 500 times and are recyclable at the end of their useful lives.

Given the Merchandise World visitors thirst for beverages, they represented a huge saving on single use alternatives.

LAUNCHED FOR CHRISTMAS

The September show is always a big one for those more in depth conversations and this was no different, said Carey Trevill.

"We saw a number of new exhibitors joining us this year such as new member,



Tony's Chocolonley and of course lots of familiar faces too. Buyers were on the hunt for the new and different to wow their customers on those critical end of year projects and 2024 trends," she said.

Other launches at the show included Kingly which launched its Christmas promotional product campaign, creating a brand-new customer experience by adding sparkle to its funky socks. A metallic yarn called Lurex makes any Christmas ornament on its Classic Crew Socks sparkle, while a neon yarn creates a shine element.

These socks are made with conventional cotton from ethical producers within the EU, high-quality reprocessed cotton that saves water and electricity, reduces carbon emissions and landfill space, and is chemical-free, sustainably produced and processed organic cotton, accredited to the Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS).

The stars of the show were Kingly's custom socks in transparent balls that resemble Christmas ornaments. Brandable T-shirts were compressed into Christmas Tree shapes and socks in tins wowed customers. There was even a sock advent calendar.

Also on the Christmas Trail was The Sweet People, which was showcasing its Winter Collection, including advent calendars, chocolate truffles, and Christmas puddings. The company also offers a full eco range featuring compostable and recyclable packaging, as well as vegan treats.

Although Christmas is the focus for now, it is only a few months until the industry gathers to do it all again for the New Year event in Coventry. Exhibition slots are going fast so don't delay, book today. [PM](https://www.merchadiseworld.co.uk)

Merchandise World New Year event is held on 24-25 January at the CBS Arena, Coventry. Find out more details at [merchadiseworld.co.uk](https://www.merchadiseworld.co.uk).





A BRIGHT FUTURE

Following a successful Merchandise World, leading British manufacturers gathered to discuss where the industry is heading, reports **Mark Alderson**

This year's annual Briman conference focused on the rapidly changing face of promotional merchandise, sustainability goals, and all things UK manufactured.

The morning began with a lively industry-based conversation. This discussion focused on how British manufacturers could build on strategies to maximise the benefits of an increasingly popular, post-Covid trend, in buying local. All members reported an increase in project briefs requesting British made products, with end users increasingly looking for local solutions.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Ellie Greenwell from Quest, a BPMA service partner, delivered the first seminar of the day. Her presentation focused on best practice for hiring and galvanising the existing workforce. A number of top tips were shared, including tactics to incentivise and motivate staff while maximising output and prioritising personal development. Ideas

to help upskill the workforce and increase productivity were particularly well received and are essential to ensure the longevity of British manufacturing.

Over lunch the members reflected on the significant successes of the previous day at Merchandise World. The Briman aisle attracted an exciting selection of distributors.

"We had a fantastic day engaging with many of our top clients, educating them on our rapidly growing range of UK-made, real wood trophies," said Simon Adam, managing director of WCM&A.

TECH TALK

Gemini Blue was next in the hot seat with its MD, David Mallinder, returning for his second Briman conference. Following his first successful presentation in 2022 a number of Briman members engaged David's services, with the aim of improving the efficiency of their ICT stacks. This year's talk focused on ERP automation and the challenges associated with the

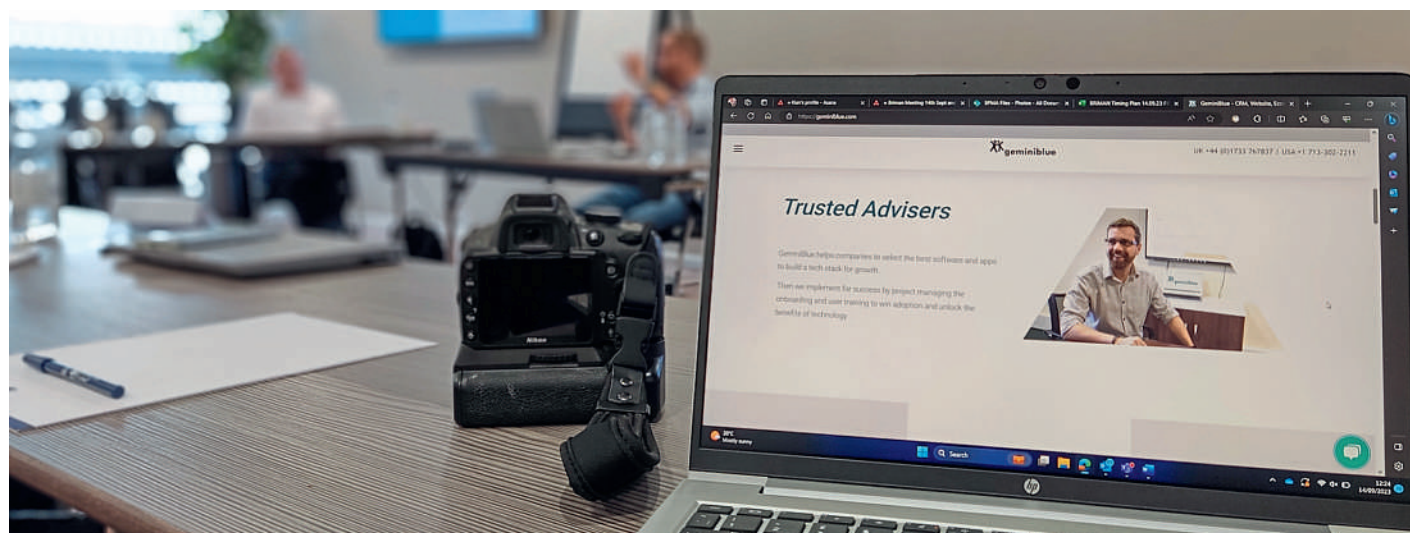
bespoke nature of our industry.

The event ended with a thoroughly thought-provoking presentation aimed at helping businesses reach their net zero goals. This was delivered by Tim Davis of Project Rising who explained how the appeal of UK-made promotional products is set to grow as they carry a significantly reduced carbon footprint.

Jamie Gray, of Sow Easy said: "It was great to see validation of the carbon reduction measures we have implemented at our Slough based factory. For our ongoing development as a sustainable business, it is fundamental for us to be associated with like-minded UK manufacturers."

The Briman group supports sixteen of the industry's leading UK manufacturers. Members are committed to sharing best practice, driving innovation, improving standards, and share aggressive sustainability goals.

• **Mark Alderson is chairman of the Briman Group of British manufacturing promotional merchandise businesses** 





BPMA Product Awards Lunch

1 December 2023

St Pancras Renaissance Hotel, Euston Road, London

For the first time, the prestigious Product Awards will be presented at a magnificent lunch hosted in the prestigious surroundings of St Pancras Hotel in London. The industry is invited to secure their places. The celebratory lunch follows the Member Networking Event taking place on the same day. Celebrate in style and start the festive season with a bang!

Visit bpma.co.uk/events for details of how to book tickets and tables.

Inspire | Connect | Educate

Booking Terms & Conditions apply. Networking Event: only open to BPMA members. Product Awards Lunch: open to the industry. See bpma.co.uk/events for more information. Last date for Networking Event and Awards Lunch Bookings: 13th November 2023. For sponsorship opportunities (members only, first come, first served basis), please contact Tom Robey on **01372 371183** or email tom@bpma.co.uk.



The drinks are on you

When it comes to drinkware, recipients remember who the giver was, especially if it is personalised

The government may be going cool on its green agenda but in the promotional merchandise world sustainability goes from strength to strength, not least in the world of drinkware.

Nowhere was this more evident than at the most recent edition of Merchandise World where the much-needed cuppa was turned into an opportunity to demonstrate the power of circularity courtesy of exhibitor Circular&Co.

We're all fans of the unlimited hot beverages at our favourite merchandise trade show, and the September edition saw the usual single use cups supplanted by a Circular Returnable Cup scheme. Drinks were served in the premium feel, no litter cups which have been specifically designed for commercial deposit return schemes.

Drinkers collected their beverages as

usual and deposited them and their lids in collection bins where they could be taken away for cleaning and reuse.

Liz Newton of event organisers Sourcing City, said: "The Merchandise World event team are always looking for ways to make the show more environmentally friendly. We were delighted that Circular&Co offered to provide their returnable cup scheme for the show. With the amount of tea and coffee consumed at the show, it was clear to see the benefit of using returnable cups at an event of this size. The clear signage and collection bins made it very simple for people to enjoy their drinks and reuse and/or return the cups, for use again in the future."

It is hoped that Circular&Co will provide the cups again for the next Merchandise World show in January 2024.



MANY HAPPY RETURNS

The result of two years of development and over 12 months of field testing in a variety of pilots, the attention to detail makes the transition from single to returnable as pain free as possible. Everything has been considered and tested.

In US and Asia the cups are supplied in 100% food grade recycled PP (rPP) making the Circular Returnable Cup a fully circular product, with huge carbon savings for the industry.

FSA European and UK markets are not currently able to use rPP due to pending regulatory approval so the cups are supplied to these markets made from 100% recyclable, food grade virgin PP.

However, it remains a cost-effective, affordable solution to replacing single-use cups designed to last over 500 commercial wash cycles. It is tough and ready for whatever you can throw at it.

Everything can technically be recycled in the cup making it 100% 'Real World' recyclable the company claims.

IN THE LOOP

The company was not the only one to make a virtue of circularity. First Edition was also launching a sustainable product at Merchandise World, in the shape of its Loop water bottle which is made from recycled milk containers.

According to Mark Alderson, managing director of First Editions: "With businesses increasingly demanding trust and traceability from their suppliers, we place sustainability centre stage and offer complete transparency throughout our supply chain.

In a closed-loop production facility, milk bottles are sorted, cleaned, shredded and melted down into pellets. These are then used to manufacture the Loop bottle which is based on First Editions' popular style Olympic bottle, with a no-slip grip.

The Loop is made in the UK from 100% post-consumer waste and is food grade-assured, BPA free and dishwasher safe. It's fully customisable and presented in recyclable packaging. It is even produced using renewable energy from First Editions' zero-waste plant.

Alderson added: "Our focus on energy efficiency, renewable energy supply and a 'zero waste' production process is helping us to mitigate environmental impact and reduce carbon footprint. Business success should not come at a cost to the planet."



GIVING BACK

Having a good story for a product is increasingly important for brands to help convey that there actions go beyond mere mission statements.

Laltex Promo has launched the first in a series of promotional items that help to support charitable causes. The Bilby Bottle, from its new eco-friendly drinkware range has an interesting story that really seems to resonate with distributors and end users alike.

Promoting environmental and humanitarian change for the better, the Bilby Sports Bottle is branded as the 'bottle that gives back'. This environmentally conscious item is made from recycled



ocean bound plastic which is much kinder to the planet.

In addition to its eco credentials, the Bilby helps to provide safe water sources for thousands of impoverished children and their families at direct risk of waterborne illness in Uganda as for every bottle sold, a donation of 20p is given directly to HUGS (reg. charity 1098176) to fund the provision of sanitation, latrines and water catchment facilities for those who need it most.

OCEAN PLASTIC

Another product that combines longevity with protection of the coastal environment is the Ocean Bottle, which is distributed in the UK by PF Concept.

The high-quality bottle provides stainless steel vacuum insulation to keep drinks hot for eight hours and cold for 18.



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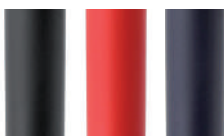
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Every one of the bottles funds the collection of 1,000 plastic bottles, or 11.4kg of plastic, helping to divert plastic away from the world's oceans, improving livelihoods in coastal communities.

Not only that, but they look great and can be branded in several different ways including engraving, printing and Pantone colour matching.

According to PF Concept's Rob Durrant, the bottles are retail standard and so are particularly desirable and valued by recipients. The high perceived value makes them ideal for sectors such as electric vehicles and fintech companies, he thinks.

ATTENTION GRABBING

Neil Cleere, managing director of The Pen Warehouse & Snap Products, said such innovation captured the imagination of users.

"Businesses are continuously looking for unique promotional products that capture attention and resonate with their audiences. We are thrilled to provide our distributors with the latest and most sought-after items," he added.

With increased awareness of gifts with meaning, the company is seeing an increase in environmental sustainability credentials being essential. Companies are also prepared to spend more on a well-made and long-lasting product.

Recycled materials and carbon offsetting are in demand with bottles made from recycled materials with GSR certification becoming standard. This relates to mainly plastic materials where the raw materials are guaranteed to be ethically recycled.

Carbon offset products are also proving popular as it is not always possible to manufacture promotional items from recycled materials, where the process of recycling can impact the quality of the material.

There is a growing appetite for offsetting the carbon footprint of these types of products. The Chili range of products is offset using reforestation projects, tree planting and building sustainable energy production facilities such as hydro-electric power plants in Africa.

Cleere points to personalisation as a way of adding meaning and value to a promotional gift. Items that can be customised to feature

a recipient's name or a tailored message are particularly on-trend, with a sharp increase in this request around the festive season.

The Pen Warehouse and Snap Products uses a digital printing technology that offers high quality printing at magazine quality, this print method along with laser engraving allow for variable data meaning an individual message or initials can be added to each unit product ordered.





SET TO STAY

Listawood managing director, Alex Turner also notes a move towards 'ultra-personalisation' where customers are wanting more than just a silver bottle, white Cambridge or black Sparta mug for example.

"They are looking for custom coloured products matching exactly their corporate colour palette that can be branded with

their logo or advertising message. Or equally they may be looking for drinkware that can be branded from top to bottom that can be personalised quickly and in very small quantities," he said.

The company offers an extensive selection of coffee-to-go and thermal drinkware lines that meet the increasing demand for high quality and useful corporate gifts that offer exceptional return on investment due to their high desirability and value for money.

Listawood has invested in innovative processes and state of the art technology such as its digital ColourFusion process which allows the entire surface of the drinkware to be decorated. Developed in its UK research and development centre and first launched in 2018, this innovative process is protected by US and European Patents and has proved to be phenomenally popular with their line of thermal bottles.



Traditional ceramic products remain a staple product line for the manufacturer, and demand for thermal and coffee-to-go products continues to grow.

Along with standard colours and finishes across the product portfolio,

Listawood offers UK produced Pantone matched thermal bottles and coffee-to-go drinkware in a choice of finishes. Its recently launched 360-degree full colour digital print can be applied to its entire metal drinkware collection, including Pantone matched ColourCoat bottles for a stunning and totally customised finish.

Whatever product brands choose, the recipient is sure to remember who got the drinks in. **PM**

Listawood's journey of innovation and expansion

In the world of promotional products and personalised merchandise, Listawood has a rich history of innovation and expansion.

The BPMA grabbed the chance for a factory visit, hosted by Alex Turner, Listawood managing director and BPMA Board Member, Andrew Hill, group sales and marketing director and Becki White, sales and marketing manager.

Established in 1988 as a small supplier of magnetic games, Listawood took its first steps into the promotional market in 1992.

Demonstrating the innovation for which it would become known, Listawood introduced WowMugs, a product line that utilised a special spray coating method for thermochrome mugs. The mugs reveal an image or message when a hot liquid was poured into them, creating an engaging and

interactive experience for users and brought a new level of personalisation to promotional products.

Listawood's unique spray coating method was at the heart of its success, allowing for high-quality, full-colour images and designs to be applied to the mugs, ensuring durability and a vibrant finish.

Next, Listawood developed DuraGlaze, a revolutionary dishwasher-proof coating that significantly enhanced the durability of its merchandise, ensuring that printed images and designs remained intact and vibrant even after repeated wash cycles.

As the demand for innovative products grew Listawood made strategic moves to expand its operations, opening factories in India and Poland. These hubs ensure that Listawood's products are readily available around the world.



TO BUY OR NOT TO BUY

With a recent flurry of acquisition activity stirring up the merchandise sector, *Product Media* asks if it is a sustainable route to growth

Considered at a macro level, businesses face plenty of headaches at the present. Ongoing concerns about Brexit, raging inflation, recession, the cost-of-living crisis, energy costs, the war in Ukraine, Middle East instability, and ongoing supply chain challenges have meant that businesses and investors have adopted something of a 'wait and see' mentality when it comes to investment.

However, that's not the complete picture. As business consultant, Peter Hill, director of Mark Holt told *Product Media*: "In 2022, we did more business sales and MBOs than we did in the previous decade. Covid has really changed business mindsets. Some entrepreneurs saw industry peers lose everything and have reconsidered their priorities."

According to Hill, who has run events and webinars with the BPMA looking at a range of business issues including profitability and business planning, a unique set of circumstances means that many British businesses are in the market to grow by acquisition.

SITTING ON CASH

The Brexit vote in 2016 led to instability with businesses reluctant to invest. "People held on to their cash and bided their time, and then we hit Covid," said Hill. "The UK was therefore better prepared than much of Europe and some businesses were awash with cash."

In Hill's scenario, this cash rich group with nowhere else to gain a decent return on their money, has encountered a generation of businesses looking to exit, hence a rise in M&A activity.

"There's a demographic element to it where business people in their mid-sixties have had a wake up call after Covid and realised that they've put off exit planning for too long, but a lot of businesses are now looking at it," he said.

TIME TO EXIT

It's a situation that Paul Green, managing director of Galpeg recognises, citing a noticeable surge in mergers and

acquisitions in the post-Covid era. The pandemic disrupted many industries, causing sales to plummet in some cases, with acquisitions emerging as a strategic move for buyers in a mature market to grow back business more quickly.

"As a result, buyers have been actively seeking opportunities to acquire businesses that complement their offerings or fill gaps in their capabilities," he said. "The value to the buyer, depends very much on their existing infrastructure – can they bolt on sales quickly for example and benefit from economies of scale? This is an important question when considering the cost of the purchase."

Acquisitions can serve as an important route to market for buyers looking to achieve rapid and aggressive business growth, said Green.

DEALMAKERS

In recent months, *Product Media* has reported on a number of acquisitions, most recently Geiger's purchase of Firebrand Promotions, Premier Print & Promotion's acquisition of LogoX, and LSi's deal for Propaganda.

Each deal has its own dynamics, but all point towards businesses looking for growth and to adapt to changing market conditions.

Geiger, which has acquired four other UK businesses in recent years, said the Firebrand deal was a strategic move to strengthen its position in the UK and showed commitment to growth and sustainability.



LSi MD Lloyd Simpson (left) shakes on the deal with Propaganda's Stephen Taylor

Managing director of Geiger, Vicky Kinasz, said: "We are delighted to welcome Firebrand to Geiger. Their focus on sustainability perfectly aligns with our own principles. By joining forces, we can enhance our offerings to customers and drive positive change in the promotional products industry."

Yorkshire-based LSi has undertaken two deals in the past 18 months, acquiring Sussex Promotions and more recently Propaganda.

Managing director Lloyd Simpson said that post-Covid the opportunity came up to acquire Sussex Promotions, a business that had been affected by the pandemic downturn. Sussex had a great client list but it was struggling to service them as the bounce back started.

ENHANCED OFFERING

In comparison, LSi had managed to keep the majority of its staff onboard and was able to hit the ground running.

LSi provided Sussex Promotions customers with access to an experienced team of designers, account managers, order progressors, on-site storage and fulfilment services, and digital print. Serviced by LSi's enhanced offering, Sussex's turnover doubled in 12 months.

"We brought a lot more resources to the business. It had a really good customer base and was a respected business but it was struggling to get in contact with them," said Simpson. "We implemented a smart, seamless



(L-R) Managing Director of Geiger International, Vicky Kinasz, Managing Director of Firebrand Promotions, Andrew Bourne and President & CEO of Geiger, Jo-an Lantz

transaction over six months.”

Simpson admits that he was surprised at how well the deal has gone, and with the founder Andrew on an earn out, there was an ongoing interest in making the deal work.

This success gave him an appetite for another deal with Propaganda. Acquisitions are a gamble, he admits, but says that it only takes one new piece of business to come off to make it worthwhile, and he has great confidence that when LSi gets in front of customers it can convince them of its offering.

“This business used to be about picking up the phone and calling people, but it’s now harder than ever to get in front of customers. You have to be more proactive,” he said.

LSi is already looking at further deals, and Simpson said that the model of using LSi’s services to help businesses be more effective, is enticing for others.

“They want to grow but they don’t know how. We can help them to do that.”

OTHER OPTIONS


Acquisition is just one way of growing a business. Business owners can look to invest in technology to boost efficiency and customer engagement for example or, empower their team through training programmes. However, it’s not a case of either-or, and successful businesses should be doing this on top of acquisition activities to foster growth.

According to Hill, timing can be an issue driving acquisitions. Organic growth simply takes longer, and if an opportunity arises to short circuit the process, it needs serious consideration.

“At the minute, with a challenged economy, it is actually very difficult to grow organically,” he said. “At the same time, there are a lot of businesses that have been poorly run that could be good turnaround prospects. Savvy buyers could do well in this market.”

Setting up a new branch, recruiting staff – if you can find them in the current market – and establishing a new part of the business, all takes time. Buying a business, even one that’s in trouble, can advance your plans by months.

Hill predicts that a lot of what he calls ‘zombie businesses’ will come to a natural end over the next year or so, presenting opportunities for opportunistic buyers.

Overall, the economy may still be languishing, but a downturn can actually be one of the best times to grow your business. We are in exciting times. 

There’s more advice on business profitability and valuing your business over the next few pages.



PLANNING FOR A PROFITABLE FUTURE

A long-term exit plan for your business may sound like just one more job, but knowing where you are going opens up more options, says **Peter Hill**

Let's be blunt as we explore the objectives for business owners. No generic language, just a reality check at a critical time in the economy and many business owners' careers.

There are two objectives for a business:

1. Generate a profit
2. Build value for an eventual exit.

These are of course not mutually exclusive, in fact doing 1 better will make 2 easier. In my experience many business owners accept lower profits and justify this as 'building the value', and many others focus on making money with no eye on the end game at all.

In the last issue of *Product Media* we explored the ways to drive profit and help business owners to maximise income and business value with a more structured and focussed approach to the bottom line, so I won't cover that here. Except to say that better run and more profitable businesses provide business owners with more options, and are often quicker and easier to exit from.

A profitable business future must also include a successful exit, and very few owners pay enough attention to this issue. Let's just explore for a moment what we mean by exit.

The first critical point to understand is that none of us live for ever. There must be an exit at some point so planning for this is important for the business, its employees, its customers, and all other stakeholders in it. An unplanned exit may not just leave the shareholders short changed, but many others may be badly affected.

However, exit also does not necessarily mean a sale of the business and retirement to a beach. Let's look at a few possible options.

FULL SALE

You may decide that there is actually a date when you want to sail off into the sunset. Shareholders find a buyer and

sell 100% of the business. There may be a transition period, but after 12 or 24 months, someone else will own and run the business and all you have is a lump of cash to fund retirement.

PARTIAL SALE

It has become increasingly common for owners to sell part of the business and retain some interest. That may be 50%, 60% or any proportion that works for both sides. Shareholders take some cash and reduce their financial risk as they approach retirement, and involve a buyer in a controlled transition. More often than not the remainder is sold on at a future date, but that isn't essential.

The next point is to consider who you may sell to.

TRADE BUYER

Probably the most common buyer is someone in your industry. A competitor, a supplier or even a customer. Someone where there is a good strategic decision to add your business to theirs. They will look at your financial performance but also at how adding your bit to theirs may generate extra value. Do you have fantastic customers, a geographical location that fits, or a product, expertise or other commercial upside?

YOUR TEAM

Management buyouts can be very effective. They already know the business and you know them. There may be challenges in raising finance and often sellers leave some value behind to be paid from future profits.

Similarly, family members involved in the business may be the best buyers, with some creativity on how value is withdrawn for retiring family.

EQUITY INVESTORS

There are many investors with spare cash that would see an investment in a good trading business as a safe move. They may

be doing that with many businesses and putting their own management team in place, or allowing owners to take some money out to protect their retirement plans but carry on running the business and paying a return to the investor.

Another key issue is the taxation of any form of exit. In broad terms cashing out of a business is a capital gains tax transaction (CGT). For most, the sale should be covered under Business Asset Disposal Relief rules (BADR used to be Entrepreneurs' Relief) meaning each qualifying shareholder gets £1m lifetime allowance at a 10% tax rate. Anything above this is at 20%.

It is possible to sell to an Employee Ownership Trust and pay 0% tax, but this is not as easy as it sounds so quite an unusual option despite the tax savings.

It is important to understand the tax element of a deal in terms of when it is due as well as how much. Where sales proceeds are paid over a number of years, it is possible that tax is due before any money has been received.

In short, the current tax regime for existing business is actually a good deal for most, but tax is complex and must be carefully planned and fully understood.

The critical points to understand are:

■ Most owners think a business sale is a one off, all or nothing decision. In reality all sorts of deals are possible, to sell some of the business or sell it all over a number of years.

■ Many think that the sale must be to a competitor buying up a similar business. There are many different potential buyers inside and outside of your business. All should be fully explored.

■ A well-planned sale could see the exiting owners getting perhaps double or more than that from an unplanned and rushed exit. Grooming the business to maximise its value, and running a sale properly to get the best price on the best terms, can have a huge impact.



And the most important point is to start looking at this years before you plan to get out. If you have time, you have options. If you are relaxed about selling you can play hardball on any deal, but if you are fed up and have no energy for continuing the business, you will do a bad deal.

If you want help understanding your options, your business value and how to improve it, get in touch.

Peter Hill is a director of business consultancy Mark Holt. You can contact him at phill@markholt.co.uk or on 01752 229079 

A QUESTION OF WORTH

Working out what you can get for your business can depend on who is in the market and why, says **Paul Green**

How much is your distributor business worth?

This question is uppermost in the mind of a business owner considering a sale. However, a more suitable question is who might be interested in buying your business and why?

If you can determine this, you are more likely to maximise the sale value; knowing which interested party has the most need to buy may allow you to command a premium price.

DIFFERENT STROKES

In one such example, two distributors looking to make an acquisition had different business models themselves. One operated predominantly via a highly optimised website and the other had a more traditional face-to-face approach. The overall profit margin of the business for sale, which was a face-to-face business, was 25%.

The second distributor deemed this too low at the asking price as their minimum profit margin requirement was 30%. For the online distributor, however, the profit margin was not an issue. In fact, they had an urgent need to find additional trained staff to handle the volume of enquiries coming through their website. Buying the business enabled them not only to increase the proportion of face-to-face sales but, more importantly, to resolve the problem of a shortage of trained staff and they were happy to meet the seller's asking price.

BROKERED DEALS

If it is not possible to identify potential buyers and the preferred route to a sale is through a business broker, then unless the broker has previous experience of selling distributor

businesses, it is possible that they will suggest an unrealistic multiple of earnings. However, it's worth noting that there may be buyers who will accept this valuation, such as a new entrant or a foreign company with little industry experience or knowledge of the domestic market.

So, if a multiple of earnings may be unrealistic, what would be a realistic alternative?

My experience has been that assessing value starts with a review of three years' worth of accounts, including the operating profit, the profit margin in each year, customer data (such as numbers and purchasing frequency), and the contribution to the operating profit from the top five customers. Any long-term contracts, the age of the business and the number of key staff will also affect the valuation as well as the route to market.

Based on my knowledge of completed sales in this sector, the valuation usually falls within a range of 75% to 125% of one year's gross (or operating) profit, coupled with a current valuation of the net assets of the business.

THE DEAL

Payment for the business may be in stages or in the form of an outright purchase, depending on the valuation. Stage payments normally vary in timescale from one to two years, with an initial payment and the balance linked to future profitability. The seller usually continues in the business and is paid a salary during the buyout period to ensure that operating profit is at least maintained to justify the valuation agreed.

An outright purchase or a reduced buyout period may adversely affect the valuation,

especially as the loss of the owner or key members of staff may negatively impact customer retention. This is where the valuation of less than 100% of gross profit accounts for loss of business as a result of change of ownership.

I have been involved in the industry for almost 40 years and have recently witnessed a surge in sales and acquisitions of distributor businesses more than ever before. There may be a number of reasons for this which I will not delve into here and now, save to say that while I have no direct involvement in this activity, I would be more than willing to offer guidance to anyone considering selling.

If you have questions or need assistance with valuations or any aspect of the process, please feel free to get in touch at paul@galpeg.com.

Paul Green is managing director of the Galpeg Network which provides back-office support for promotional merchandise distributors. 



RUNNING ON EMPTY

Learn to spot the signs of overtrading or you could be supporting an ailing business with an interest free overdraft, says **Mike Collins**

Here at Direct Route-AccountAssyst we asked ourselves, is there one word that sums up the effect of the current cost of living 'crisis' on the credit management of a business?

ONE WORD PERHAPS – OVERTRADING

The sky rocketing cost of buying larger ticket items such as raw materials, the utilities to convert them and the fuel to distribute means that all companies in supply chains need to spend more to simply purchase the very same goods as they were previously.

Many companies are understandably reluctant to raise their prices to match these cost increases, or worse still are dealing with a contract that they are committed to or unable to adjust within. This means substantially reduced margins, lesser profit, or worse.

LARGER COMMITMENTS

To cope with these reduced margins, some businesses are what we call 'overtrading', where they commit to larger and larger contracts to bring increased invoicing revenues.

The downside to committing to larger projects is the necessity to buy more to complete the projects. Buying more leads to an increase in spending with suppliers.

Yes, we can hear you say... "but this increased demand is fine, because everybody is to earn more from the larger project". But are they?

All it takes is a snagging query on a site, or a manufacturing query on an item, or a minor credit note request and the customer's payment chain can come to a grinding halt, restricting business cash-flow, which is passed on through the

none or later payment of the increased supplier demands.

SIGNS TO RECOGNISE

So how do you spot the tell-tale signs of overtrading? Look at your ledger for these:

- Has a regular customer suddenly started to order increased volumes beyond their credit limit?
- Have a customer's payments started to come in in a more delayed fashion, later and later?
- Has a normally 'talkative' customer become unexpectedly quiet and less communicative generally?

If the answers to either of the first two statements are 'Yes', then as a minimum give them a call and look for some answers.

Tell them you've noticed an increase in orders and ask them, is this for something particular?

BE PROACTIVE

Ring customers before due dates on the premise that you just want to make sure that they had everything they needed to ensure that your invoices were on track to be paid on their due dates.

Finally, if you sadly don't get a response from your attempts, then as per our previous advisory notes, it may be time to grab the bull by the horns and take some action.

Yes, they are a customer and customers can be few and far between but let's not forget, you're potentially funding their business cash flow with your invoices. It has cost you money, time and effort to fulfil these orders. It's not all pure profit and so, until you get paid, then it's you that is carrying their debt and indirectly providing an interest free overdraft facility to them, potentially even at the cost of your own financing (thereby eroding into your profits).

There are many tools and much assistance to aid suppliers and distributors alike in navigating these troubled times, including access to zero cost debt collection options for long overdue customers, or lighter touch solutions for customers that you would like to retain. Simply contact ourselves by email or telephone and utilise the services we are renowned for within the promotional goods sector.

If you are a BPMA member then great, you do get extra benefits supported by the BPMA, so call us to activate your BPMA Credit Management Package, if you have not done so already.

Not a BPMA Member? No problem we can still help. Ring 01274 223190 for immediate advice support. We're the best at what we do.

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
07860 197476

North East, Scotland and Northern Ireland

Mike Collins
mike@accountassyst.com
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TEXTILES ARE TOP OF THE LIST FOR PSI BUYERS

The PSI trade fair is strengthening its position in the textile segment at its upcoming event in January following feedback from the industry

More top textile makers will be among the PSI exhibitors, with more dedicated lectures on merchandise and promotional textiles in the PSI Forum and specialised formats such as the Textile Village.

The last PSI 2023 survey made it clear how important textiles are as an area in the promotional products industry, with 60% of visitors saying they were particularly interested in advertising and promotional textiles.

PSI's Textile Village exhibition space in Hall 10 is already fully booked for the show on 9-11 January 2024.

Meanwhile, the PSI Forum has confirmed lectures from textile experts such as Martin Schittko (head of merchandising,

Eintracht Frankfurt), Karsten Bleymehl (CEO circular materials GmbH and head of sales DACH, Pure Waste) and Anouschka Jansen (director sustainability solutions QIMA).

"With our textile offerings, we want to give the industry orientation, network them across segments and invite them to exchange expertise," said PSI director Petra Lassahn. "We are pleased that we can realise the Textile Village 2024 concept with our exhibitors and that together we can give our visitors valuable inspiration in the areas of textile advertising materials, corporate fashion and workwear in these challenging times."

PSI will reveal the results of its latest polling of the international promotional

products industry at the 2024 show.

Research for the PSI industry barometer was focused on areas such as how the global promotional products industry has changed; the impact of the pandemic on supply chains, and shifts in demand on the industry.

Industry experts from promotional products consultants, retailers and manufacturers as well as advertising and full-service agencies, service providers, exporters, importers and textile finishers took part in the online panel.

As one of the most comprehensive market studies in the European promotional products industry, the PSI industry barometer provides a detailed picture of the mood and provides information about current trends and developments.

More information about PSI is at psi-messe.com. 



premium high grade stainless steel bottles and mugs


oldeani



BPA FREE
All materials are BPA-free.



FOOD SAFE
These products have been produced with materials that are food safe.



HOT & COLD
These products have insulation properties and are suitable for both hot and cold drinks.



CHANGE IS COMING

Technology never stands still so knowing what's around the corner for 2024 can give you a marketing edge, says **Matt Pluckrose**



Product development for gadgets and tech takes many inspirations. Currently hot driving influencers for 2024 product development include different sustainable materials, changes to hardware (like Apple moving to USB-C for all their products), a move to permanent hybrid working practices and even changes to software that runs our gadgets.

Manufacturers constantly look for different ways to attract new and existing customers for their products and that is not only the accessory market but also the prime products from manufacturers such as Apple, Google, Amazon, and Samsung.

For our promotional marketplace we are always looking for both new and different product ideas and simple and effective ways to make corporate branding stand out while satisfying the increasing demand for products that are developed with the environment in mind.

UP TO THE MARK

Different and new product materials are currently driving products, ideas, and ranges in our market for tech and gadgets. During 2024 we will see increased choices of items made from certified or traceable recycled plastics, RPET, aluminium, stainless steel, and ocean bound plastics as well as natural materials such as cork, wood and bamboo when supplied with FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) and GRS (Global Recycled Standard) managed supply chains.

These materials will change the way we look at everyday tech items such as charging cables, hubs, power banks, speakers, headphones, earbuds and other devices. Such changes in materials will of course change the popularity in branding techniques, for example the likely increase in recycled metals will drive a demand for subtle laser engraving often with personalisation of names, logos and images.

CHARGING CHANGES

This autumn has seen some major changes to hardware with Apple finally switching its iPhone 15 over to being charged via a USB-C port. This hardware change will dramatically change product development for our sector especially with charging cables, power banks and plugs in 2024 and beyond.

The gradual move to all devices only using USB-C will make charging quicker, data transfer faster and phone and gadget accessories will reflect this as micro USB disappears quickly. Apple's lightning interface will be around for a longer timeframe but



should be gone in the next couple of years. This is a positive move globally and will reduce the amount of waste going to landfill of electronic cables and components, which is of course a good thing.

Look out next year for product designs that are simpler, streamlined, fast, powerful and made from reclaimed and recycled materials.

ON STANDBY

Apple leads the way with its smart phones and devices. Its new operating software (iOS 17) is likely to open up new product demand for wireless charging stands and platforms enabling you to enjoy your device and be more visible in the new 'standby mode' as you charge. Let's explore this.

With the release of iOS 17, Apple has introduced standby mode, which is a new way to use wireless charging that allows you to keep your iPhone powered up and accessible while it is charging. To use standby mode, simply place your iPhone on a wireless charger in landscape. Once your iPhone is in standby, you will see a clock, a weather

widget or a digital photo album which you can tailor to your choice making this time of the day an entertainment or information platform rather than a blank screen.

You can also swipe to see other widgets, such as your calendar, reminders, and a to-do list. Standby mode is a great way to use wireless charging while you are at your desk, beside your bed, or working hybrid anywhere. It allows you to keep your iPhone powered up and accessible, so you can check the time, the weather, or your notifications without having to wake up your device.

Standby mode is also relevant for wireless charging because it helps to conserve battery life. When your iPhone is in Standby mode, it uses less power than when it is fully awake. This means that you can charge your iPhone for longer periods of time without having to worry about running out of battery. Standby mode is a great new feature that makes wireless charging even more convenient and efficient.

So looking into 2024, in summary look out for new materials, new items that support hardware changes and new products that support software changes. It's an exciting time for promotional technology ahead.

Keep in touch. Keep connected and you will be able to keep your client at the front of what's new.

Matt Pluckrose is managing director of Desktop Ideas



OUR SUSTAINABILITY ROADMAP

The BPMA is looking beyond warm words as it sets out the industry's route towards a more responsible and sustainable future.

Melissa Chevin explains

If there is a single word that could describe the primary focus for our industry right now, it has to be 'sustainability'.

Not only does it make sense for the future of our planet, but it is something which nearly all the major brands (and the majority of the smaller ones) have at the heart of their marketing strategies. If promo companies are to succeed, it needs to be front and centre for us too.

To this end, the BPMA has come up with its Sustainability Roadmap. This framework will be unveiled in full on 1 December at the Member Networking Event: Sustainable Future of our Industry, but for now, here is just a glimpse of the road ahead.

COLLECTIVE ACTION

The key takeaway from the BPMA's inaugural sustainability conference, held in June, was that the climate emergency is one which needs a collective response.

With this in mind, the association has built a five-year sustainability roadmap outlining ambitions goals and promises.

The overall goal of the roadmap is to develop, promote and share best practices which drive sustainable development within the promotional products sector, while also setting clear targets for industry-wide progress.

Obviously, the BPMA recognises that each business within our industry is unique, so members will be encouraged to contribute to these over-arching goals in their own ways. By coming together and collectively reporting on our progress, we can drive through meaningful changes and make a significant contribution towards a sustainable future for all.

TARGET 2030

The roadmap takes the industry through to 2030 and aims to make significant progress throughout this timeline and beyond:

- The BPMA will support members in their journey to net zero by providing support, reference materials and training on adopting sustainable alternatives
- The association's dedicated sustainability working group will foster industry efforts to address key challenges such as the end of a product's life
- The BPMA will also collaborate with partners to promote and measure the impact of recycling and repurposing schemes so these can be reported on a sector-wide basis.

Our near-term target is to reduce scope 1 and 2 GHG emissions across the membership by 2030.



INDUSTRY PLEDGE

The focus for the remainder of this year will be centred around the BPMA's StepForward Pledge, with enhanced resources within the sustainability hub, and maintaining the forward momentum of companies taking up the pledge. There will also be a comprehensive programme of webinars and other educational events.

Next year will see the roll-out of an industry-wide recycling and charitable giving scheme, collaborating with organisations such as First Mile and A Good Thing (see p31 for more detail on the latter). Developed within this will be an 'impact report' to reflect the collective effects of the industry.

This is just a very brief taste of what lies ahead in the BPMA's Sustainability Roadmap. To get the full picture, we strongly encourage you to attend the networking event on December 1 at the St Pancras Hotel in London. More details are available at bpma.co.uk/events.

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

A GOOD THING GOING

The BPMA has teamed up with sustainability charity, **A Good Thing**, to help merchandise providers deal with unwanted goods responsibly

What is the mission of A Good Thing?

A Good Thing was set up to help businesses avoid landfill and do more for their local charities. The online platform allows businesses of any type to donate anything at all that they no longer need, to charities right across the UK.

How did you get involved with the BPMA?

When we first set up A Good Thing, we had some contact with a BPMA member via LinkedIn. He suggested that we contact CEO Carey Trevill, as he thought we would be a good fit with the BPMA's ethos and its drive to reduce waste within the industry.

How can BPMA members get involved, and how does it benefit them?

It takes 30 seconds for a business to sign up for an account. A Good Thing is a not-for-profit and is almost entirely volunteer-run, aiming to promote as much reuse as possible. The platform is always free for charities to use, and it's also free for businesses – for ad-hoc use and small offers. For regular use and large offers, there is a small fee for businesses, but we are currently offering BPMA members a reduced price (see below).

There are big benefits for BPMA members: businesses will often be saving on waste or disposal costs, as well as being able to build their sustainability credentials. They will be able to tell a powerful story about saving items from landfill, boosting their local community, and can do something wonderful for the environment.

How does this link with the BPMA StepForward Pledge?

Businesses and consumers are paying greater attention than ever to their environmental impact. In 2022 56% of UK consumers ranked sustainability as a top-five value driver: Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) targets are crucial in delivering long-term benefits and business growth.

A Good Thing can help BPMA members fulfil the obligations of the StepForward Pledge

The Pledge is all about members



taking proactive steps to improve their sustainability performance and using A Good Thing to give things away as opposed to sending them to landfill is a brilliant way for businesses to achieve this.

What's the response been like from BPMA members?

It has been amazing. On the day of the BPMA Sustainability Conference in June, at which Richard from A Good Thing was invited to be a guest speaker, businesses were signing up for the platform while he was still on stage. More than 20 members have now signed up, and that number is growing.

The highest-ever value offer was made over the summer by a BPMA member: £39,000 worth of PPE was donated and made its way to more than 50 different charities right across the UK.

One of our favourites has been the donation of 200 brightly-coloured stress-relief squeeze

goldfish by a BPMA member. These almost caused the platform to crash, there was such a lot of interest from charities. But there have also been beautiful luxury umbrellas, Bluetooth speakers (another near-crash), cosy fleeces, water bottles, notebooks, hoodies, computer monitors and charging cables.

In total 660,196 items have been saved from landfill by BPMA members, worth £42,975 in charity spend that has been saved by the donated items. So far 65 charities across the country have benefited from donations.

We are delighted by the support we have received from the forward-thinking Carey Trevill and her team at the BPMA, as well as from all of those wonderful individual businesses right across the UK.

• You can sign up online at agoodthing.org.uk/signup. A Good Thing is currently offering BPMA members a reduced price of £49 per month, instead of the usual £99, or £490 for 12 months instead of £990. PM





The chosen ones

After a comprehensive judging process, the shortlist for the BPMA Product Awards 2023-24 shortlist has been announced

Entrants for this year's Product Awards have excelled themselves. With realigned categories which include upweighted sustainability criteria and evidence, this has already been a tough competition.

With the judging process now well underway, the shortlist is out. More than 60 judges this year have been engaged to scrutinise the entries, compare the credentials and put their scores forward.

We are delighted to confirm the shortlisted products below are now through to the final rounds of judging.

CELEBRATING THE INDUSTRY IN DECEMBER

With three rounds in total, every product entered is put through its paces to deliver a well-rounded award which will be announced on 1 December at our industry networking lunch at St Pancras Renaissance Hotel, London, open to the whole industry to attend.

The Grand Prix winner will be awarded at the BPMA Awards Dinner, 24th January 2024.

PROMOTING AWARD WINNERS

Once the Awards have been announced on 1 December, BPMA Distributor members will have access to marketing materials to help them promote Award-winning products.

The following products are through to the next round:

- 100% recycled acrylic rectangle award
- 330ml branded alcohol can (IPA/pilsner/cider)
- 4 piece mood balm collection in a printed box
- AirTag RFID slimline wallet
- Akaw 600ml insulated stainless steel bottle
- Altius Secrid essential card wallet
- Anti-theft backpack
- Arusha R insulated cup
- Bamboo multi cable
- Bamboo photo frames
- Beach waste reusable coffee cup
- Beech 5-pointed star award
- Bee-shaped wildflower seed bombs
- Bespoke UK manufactured treat box
- Brite-Americano recycled 350 ml spill-proof insulated tumbler
- Cari 500ml insulated drinks bottle
- Circaloft hooded jacket
- Concertina phone stand
- Deluxe LED wireless earbuds
- Dillon Aware RPET lightweight foldable backpack
- DS6 S mini (pen)
- Eco earbuds




- EcoCharge organiser
- EcoNotebook
- Evolution Ecolutions pencil
- Evoxx Duo (pen)
- Fjallraven Re-Kanken
- Geo², Eco², Root² books
- Golf tool
- H2O Active Eco Vibe 850ml spout lid sport bottle
- HidrateSpark PRO 620ml vacuum insulated stainless steel smart water bottle
- Iqoniq Abisko recycled cotton zip through hoodie
- Kai unisex lightweight GRS recycled circular jacket
- Logo chocolate bar
- Nomad wireless folding charger
- Odyssey (T-shirt)
- Oriel wheatstraw ballpen
- Oyster Jumbo R - recycled 500ml cup
- Paper lanyard
- Paper mini-advent calendar
- Prestige Christmas hamper
- RC cooler
- Real wood trophy awards
- Reborn recycled aluminium pen
- Rectangular luggage tag
- rHIPS.b ice pop, ice scraper trolley keyring
- Rocketbook Core executive A5 notebook
- SCX.design C49 5-in-1 charging cable
- SeedCell
- Shield Plus RPET bag

- SIGG Traveller MyPlanet bottle
- Soda RCS certified re-steel carbonated drinking bottle
- Solar watch
- Student wellness planner
- Super Clip origin ballpen
- Super Hi! Matt recycled pen
- SustainX Hemp powerbank
- The Appeal Ortisei notebook
- The Liberty recycled pen
- The LOOP sports bottle
- The Second Life bag
- Tripower (handwarmer)
- Tube giftbox with wine & chocolate truffles
- Ultra HD printing on an electra ballpen
- Universal travel adapter
- Upcycled denim aprons
- Wheat Quad 4-colour ball pen
- XE Professional (backpack)
- Xoopar BOY wireless speaker X-R
- Xoopar Ocean Octopus
- Xoopar ZERO 2-in-1 wireless magnetic charging station
- ZENS 3-in-1 modular recycled wireless charger with iPad charging stand

Good luck to all the shortlisted entries for the final round of judging.

To find out more about the events taking place on 1 December including the Member Networking Morning, visit bpma.co.uk.

A low-angle photograph of the St Pancras Renaissance Hotel in London, showing its intricate Gothic Revival architecture with red brick, white stone details, and multiple spires against a blue sky with scattered white clouds.

BPMA Member Networking Event Sustainable Future of the Industry

1 December 2023

St Pancras Renaissance Hotel, Euston Road, London

The BPMA are hosting another landmark Member Networking Event to bring members together to meet and discuss the sustainable future of the industry on Friday 1st December. This is a morning event starting with a sponsored networking session followed by a workshop to deep dive into the next sustainable steps for members. On the same day, we're also hosting the BPMA Product Awards presentation to round off a day of progress and celebration!

Hosted in the spectacular surroundings of St Pancras Hotel, this must attend event is now open for bookings. For ticket options for the Networking Event and Product Awards Lunch, please visit **bpma.co.uk/events** to secure your places.

Inspire | Connect | Educate

Booking Terms & Conditions apply. Networking Event: only open to BPMA members. Product Awards Lunch: open to the industry. See **bpma.co.uk/events** for more information. Last date for Networking Event and Awards Lunch Bookings: 13th November 2023. For sponsorship opportunities (members only, first come, first served basis), please contact Tom Robey on **01372 371183** or email **tom@bpma.co.uk**.

MEETING *opportunities*

As part of the BPMA's membership team, **Kian Clews Braddon** will be supporting the industry at exciting upcoming events

The membership team at the British Promotional Merchandise Association (BPMA) is expanding and I am the new Membership Executive. I am delighted to be working with so many amazing people. The association is a great place for supplier and distributor businesses looking to grow their presence on the market, support their teams and benefit from the resources and networking opportunities that all members do. There is so much on offer to our members, and I will be there along the way to introduce and support throughout.

I joined the BPMA at the perfect time to be able to attend Merchandise World September 2023 as well as many other events in the second half of this year. What an experience to see so many businesses

and to be able to meet the people behind them. It's great to have an opportunity to catch up with our members. Also, to potentially meet many new ones as well.

SUPPLIER VISITS

Recently, the membership team headed over to Old Dalby for a BPMA education programme factory visit to DTB, hosted by Clive Allcott, the company's commercial director.

As part of TPM (Trained in Promotional Merchandise) and CPM (Certified in Promotional Merchandise) education courses, we offer factory visits to learners who then achieve credits towards taking their exams. So much happens at



supplier facilities behind the scenes before a final product is received by distributor clients. A big thank you to Clive, and DTB for affording a chance to sector individuals to be able to see the effort and processes behind the products and services they offer.

ON BOARD

At the BPMA, we are always thinking of ways that we can aid member businesses to grow and face industry challenges. Frequent meetings are held at our office in Fetcham with Membership Director, Tom Robey, CEO Carey Trevill, and all members of the BPMA Board. It was also a useful opportunity for me to be able to meet more of the individuals who help our organisation's growth, over a great lunchtime spread in a beautiful venue (our offices).

There have been so many exciting experiences in my time here already and the BPMA team and myself will be seeing you at St Pancras Renaissance Hotel in London, on 1 December for a fantastic Networking, Sustainability Workshop and Product Awards Presentation. If you haven't yet booked, you should. So, get in contact with us and we can change that.

• **Kian is Membership Executive at the BPMA. Contact him on**
Kian.cb@bpma.co.uk





bpma

ANNUAL AWARDS DINNER 2024

Wednesday 24th January 2024
CBS Arena, Coventry

Bookings now open

Tickets from £100+VAT and tables from £900+VAT*

To book please visit bpma.co.uk/events
or email events@bpma.co.uk

*Ticket prices are based on BPMA Member prices for early bird tickets only.
Booking terms and conditions apply. Last bookings for event taken 2 weeks prior to event date.



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