



TAILOR MADE BRANDING

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WELCOME



Welcome to the March-April issue of *Product Media* magazine. In this latest issue, read on for our special feature on apparel and bags, our usual articles and industry intel.

The first quarter of 2021 has been fraught for many in the industry; adopting new customs rules for import and export together with a new lockdown have proved trying to many. For the UK to have confidence in the supply chain, the adoption of the changed status is essential for the smooth running of future transactions. What remains to be seen is who picks up the tab for increased transaction costs as

not every company has approached the situation in the same way. Government has come under a lot of pressure in the first quarter, facing criticism from businesses across the UK. The late Brexit deal left many in the industry unclear and with complex processes to adopt, this mix has hampered placement and completion of orders. Compound this with some resources not updated at the start of the year and a perfect transition storm played out. Supporting BPMA members during this period has meant detailed advice, signposting to the right information and importantly unravelling the Gordian knot of digital detail. Meanwhile, the wider industry reports a significant dip in this quarter despite the signals pointing to revival later this

year. Look out for more commentary and insight in this issue on the projected recovery and spend for 2021. End user spend appears paused, with event and promotional activation suffering the brunt, however, spend is reserved for the experiential sector working towards a less restricted world. Bringing together the right advice, direction and support from experts, the BPMA will continue to lead the industry forward into the new trading era with the EU and rest of the world. While the year ahead seems uncertain, the BPMA represents consistency and commitment for its members, looking ahead to the future.

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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New role for Sarah as Prominate enters next phase

Prominate has promoted Sarah Daniel as its new global CEO, replacing Mike Oxley who moves to the vice chair position for the organisation.

Daniel took up her new position at the promotional merchandise company at the beginning of the year after four years as COO of the business. Looking forward to her new role, she said Prominate would help brands adopt a human and purpose driven approach in response to the change in consumer behaviours throughout the pandemic.

"Consumers want to align with the principles of the brand and have the time to select brands based on shared values and commitments to their local and global community. This is incredibly valuable for the promotional materials industry," she said. "Now more than ever, we can lead key agendas such as sustainability through innovative brand stories and customer experiences. I am thrilled to lead Prominate into the next phase of its journey, working closely with



our clients to co-create the next stage of innovation."

Daniel said she was grateful for the supportive and collaborative handover from Oxley who was CEO for 10 years, will continue to work with Prominate chairman, JP Donnelly. Oxley remains a major shareholder and continues as owner and managing director of Prominate UK, which was formerly

known as Lesmar.

Oxley said he was delighted to be supporting the ongoing growth of Prominate globally, while also having more time to spend on Prominate UK.

"Having developed the global business from inception to over 100 offices I am proud to have been global CEO, working with a great team, for the past 10 years," he said. "Having successfully navigated the past nine months of COVID-19, with continued strong performance, now is the right time for Sarah to continue Prominate's global progress and I wish her all the very best in her new role."

Chairman Donnelly said he was excited about the next chapter of the company's development and growth: "Sarah comes to the table with a wide range of skills and experiences from across the marketing industry."

Donnelly added that he was pleased that Oxley had accepted the role of vice chairman of the global board of directors for the next two years.

Whiteside to lead Brand Addition on sustainability mission

Brand Addition has appointed Karl Whiteside to the role of group managing director with a remit to lead a four-year plan to transform the organisation into a sustainability leader.

Whiteside will assume the leadership of the global provider of creative and promotional merchandise, which has offices in the UK, Ireland, Germany, Hong Kong, China, and the US. Chris Lee will continue as CEO of The Pebble Group, the UK-based parent company of Brand Addition and Facilisgroup.

After serving as the managing director of Brand Addition's US business since August 2017, Whiteside brings 14 years of industry experience with roles in supply chain, sales, compliance, logistics, and executive management.

At Brand Addition, he has helped grow the list of international clients while focusing on technology and customer solution improvements.

"We are excited for Karl to bring his leadership talents, enthusiasm, drive, and customer centric approach to a broader role for the organisation" said Chris Lee. "Karl leads with passion and resolve, holding himself accountable while supporting his team and our customers."

Brand Addition is embarking on a new four-year plan, baONE Sustainability & Growth to transform into a sustainability leader within the promotional products industry.



Pen Warehouse in the running for family business awards

The Pen Warehouse has been shortlisted and is in the running for the Family Business of the Year Awards 2021. Awards up for grabs are by sector, with regional and national winners. National titles are awarded in respect of entrepreneurship, innovation, small family business and spirit of family business.

Helen Dyl, operations director of The Pen Warehouse said: "We're absolutely delighted to have been shortlisted for the Family Business of the Year Awards. This company was founded by my father, and our MD, over 25 years ago and is now in its second generation. Through hard work, brilliant vision, and an amazing team we are still here today."

Family Business United is a voice for the global family business community and an invaluable source of insight. It celebrates the contribution family firms make through the provision of employment, creation of income, as well as supporting local communities and charities.

In addition to the Family Business of the Year Awards, to help boost the awards and celebrate the contribution of family firms, there is a People's Choice award (regional and national winner), that anyone can vote for by visiting familybusinessunited.com.



AMT supports vaccination set up

Guildford-based AMT Marketing has helped the NHS set up a vaccination centre at G live Guildford, Surrey.

The promotional gift house was initially contacted to see if it could source privacy screens. After making a few phone calls it decided it would team up with local

Busbridge Church and donate the privacy screens instead.

The screens were sourced from Print Vision, which supplied them at cost. The privacy screens were made in NHS blue out of antiviral material and Print Vision turned them around in 48 hours.

Andrew Turner, owner of AMT Marketing, said: "Most of all, I would like to thank Rhian Warner at the NHS for contacting us. I have seen first-hand what you and your team have achieved in the last few days, it is an inspiration to all of us."



Fluid announces Platinum Trusted Service recognition 2021

Fluid Branding has been awarded the highest level of service award from customer service monitor Feefo for the sixth year in a row.

The company has been awarded the Platinum Trusted Service Award, which is awarded to businesses that use Feefo to collect genuine reviews and insights. Businesses who meet the high standard, based on the number of reviews they have collected and their average rating, receive the award.

A highly valued badge of approval, the accreditation is based purely on interactions with real customers.

Miles Lovegrove, Fluid's managing director, said: "Winning this Platinum Award is a real tribute to the effort that our entire team puts into making our customer's experience exceptional. The past year has been one of shock, fear, surprise and worry, both individually and as a company. One of the best things that happened to Fluid is the strengthening bonds between our teams and offices. It has been incredible to see everyone working together to solve problems, find solutions, work hard for each other and support each other in a way that I have never seen at any other company. Our entire Fluid family embraced the challenges and pushed each other to



overcome what seemed at the time an almost impossible task. To come out the other side in a stronger position, whilst still giving exceptional customer experiences, is amazing. It's great to be acknowledged in this way."

Congratulating Fluid on the award, Steph Heasman, director of customer success at Feefo, said: "The Trusted Service award has always been about recognising companies that are outstanding in customer experience and generate great feedback from happy customers. This year, despite the incredible challenges of a global pandemic, so many companies using Feefo have continued to provide remarkably high levels of service and they deserve a huge amount of credit for what they have achieved in such difficult circumstances."

Home grown Horner takes Laltex top job

Laltex Group Promotional Merchandise has promoted Neil Horner as their new managing director after 20 years of service this year.

Horner joined Laltex Group during a university placement two decades ago, around the same time Premium Portfolio catalogue was launched.

He has worked his way through the organisation undertaking various key roles within the business and gaining a wealth of knowledge and industry experience along the way.

During his most recent position as head of promotional divisions, Horner guided the promo teams successfully resulting in many industry awards and accolades over the years.

Dedicated to implementing a company-wide training and development programme, Horner has not only fine-tuned his own leadership skills but has been instrumental in the training and development of others to ensure continued growth for an already thriving company.



Maskari adds to the family

Jutebag is launching three brand new products into the Maskari range following the success of the non-medical mask.

The Maskari Pro builds on the popularity of the original mask by adding adjustable elastic ear loops, making it even more comfortable and easy to wear. The Pro is available in small, medium and large, and comes in five colours – black, navy, grey, khaki and royal blue.

Also new to the range is the Advanced Snood, designed to give extra warmth and protection during the chilliest of days. The snood features a three-layer treated mouth section and an elastic toggle on the rear to ensure a snug, secure fit. Like all the Maskari products, the Advanced Snood is washable at 40C and tested for 30 wash cycles. It is available in a single size, and a single colour, black.

To provide somewhere safe to stow masks

when not in use, the Advanced Pouch has been added to the range. It features the same HeiQ Viroblock as the rest of the Maskari range and stands up to the same wash regime too.

All the items in the Maskari range are EU and BPR-compliant and can be logo printed.

Jutebag director Parit Shah said: "Sadly, we know that the need to wear face coverings is going to be with us for some time yet. As people become more accustomed to wearing them, many are naturally looking for better comfort and quality – that's where Maskari comes in. The Maskari brand is already a direct-to-consumer success story boasting an Amazon best-seller accolade and countless rave reviews. We have turned Instagram followers into micro-influencers and used highly targeted Facebook ads to grow brand awareness."



Print investment is key to Eat My Logo

Following success with its 'postal range' of edible merchandise in 2020, Eat My Logo has invested in new printing equipment for 2021.

Director Andy Poar noted the importance of continuous investment in the machines. "Using the right machines has always been key to our operations, and we are happy to be able to invest in more dynamic machines for the coming year," he said.

The new printers allow the business to offer some new and unique printing options, which are expected to be announced in the coming months. The print team has been busy ensuring that the hardware and software used are all ready and setup for some large projects later in the month.

Haptica postponed until September 2021

Germany's Haptica live '21 is the latest merchandise exhibition to be postponed, with its venue being utilised as a vaccination centre.

Haptica was scheduled to take place at the World Conference Center Bonn (WCCB) on 17 March following a COVID-secure event in September 2020.

However, the event location was set up as a municipal vaccination centre from December 2020 until 31 March, 2021, making postponement necessary. The event has now been rescheduled for 23 September at the WCCB.

Michael Scherer, acting partner of the organisers, WA Media, said it received the news about the change of venue use at short notice.

"This is deeply regrettable, however at the same time this is also in line with a realistic assessment of the current situation of the COVID-19 pandemic and – also with a view to next year – with the ongoing dynamic number of infections. The health of our exhibitors, visitors and employees takes top priority for us."



The ninth edition of the event will include exhibitors, a lecture forum, and marketing speakers. The accompanying Best Practice Show will highlight examples of international campaigns featuring promotional products, while a special exhibition showcases the award winners of the Promotional Gift

Award 2021.

In coordination with the responsible authorities, measures such as admission restrictions, a larger layout, a one-way visitor guidance system and multiple hand-disinfecting opportunities will be conducted to make visitors feel safe.

Galpeg behind two more merchandise start ups

Two stalwarts of the promotional products industry have chosen to join the Galpeg Network. Between them, Trevor Howard and Michael Carter have almost 45 years of industry experience.

Howard has launched a new business called Evergreen Branding having spent 15 years working for Premier Print and Promotions. As a senior account manager at the Essex-based distributor, he has significant wins under his belt and built a reputation for customer service.

He said: "Everything Galpeg offers is tailored to me, to help me grow my business and achieve long-term success. The freedom to run my own business, but with professional support available as and when I need it, is a big factor for me."

Carter has worked in account management roles for prominent



Michael Carter (top),
and Trevor Howard

distributors over the past few decades, most recently at AD Merchandise. He will be operating as Malachite Promotions.

He added: "The back office support frees up my time to focus on my customers, while the relationships Galpeg has built up with suppliers will reap all sorts of benefits for my own business, from better pricing to priority services. Galpeg will help me to grow my business at the level I want."

Galpeg MD Paul Green said: "We're delighted to welcome Trevor and Michael to the network. The flexibility we provide is set to afford both companies significant advantages in today's climate of unique business challenges."

"The outsourcing of back office functions will allow both companies to concentrate on growth, while the ability to scale up and down quickly and responsively is invaluable in such unprecedented times."

DTB signs up Allcott

Global garment supplier and decorator Direct Textiles and Bags (DTB) has announced that Clive Allcott has been appointed as commercial director.

The seasoned industry veteran brings a wealth of knowledge and expertise to DTB, a specialist in the bag, garment decoration and clothing business for the promotional market sector.

"We welcome Clive to our board," said Ian Ault, managing director of DTB. "His global experience in driving significant business growth, his knowledge of the promotional and clothing market and his expertise in building long-term partnerships will be invaluable as we continue to strengthen and grow Direct Textiles and Bags."

Allcott said: "It's an exciting time to be joining DTB and to be a part of their continued growth and expansion plans. To have so many innovative and creative branding methods in house means we can focus on education, sustainability and being an all-encompassing solution for branded garments and bags. I am really looking forward to working with the team here."



Advantage announces award winners

In a normal year, the Advantage Group awards would have been presented at its annual launch event in the summer, with the winners basking in reflected glory well into the autumn.

Unfortunately, as we know, those hopes were dashed along with further hopes of delaying the awards until a meeting in November which of course couldn't happen either.

Determined to reward the winners before the year was out, it was decided to plough ahead and reveal all over the course of a week before Christmas. An award a day was announced over five days culminating in a well-attended Zoom meeting to announce the final award, Group Member of the Year.

Advantage Group Director, Lawrence Angelow said: "Many congratulations to all of the companies who featured in our awards. I know much hard work and endeavour goes into achieving these coveted positions. Let us hope that later in 2021 the industry can get back to some sort of normality, and that we can all meet up at our favourite events once again."



Advantage Winners

Data Champions – for the provision of accurate and timely data – Product Source Limited

Best Use of Advantage Web Site – Promo Brand for promo-brand.co.uk

Catalogue Cover of the Year – Manic Merchandise

Group Supplier of the Year

Commended – Adco Products, Impression Europe and The Bizz Badge Company

Highly Commended – Logobugs Plus and Xindao

Winners – Laltex Promo

Group Member of the Year

Commended – Hatters Promotions, Impamark and Pinksheep Marketing

Highly Commended – Hype Branding and Stay Sourced

Winners – Mojo Promotions

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IT NEED NOT COST THE EARTH

Organic cotton has a powerful story to tell, but you need to know what you are buying, says **Clive Allcott**



The branded clothing sector has seen an increasing demand for organic and certified clothing, especially with the current pandemic making us all think about the world we live in.

Many don't realise that what we wear started life in the soil. Cotton is grown in a field, the fluffy fibre is picked and then spun into thread. Once woven into material it is light, breathable, easy to work with and easy to wear – this is why more than half the clothes sold in the UK are made from it.

There are various sustainable cottons available, but, if you want to be sure what you are buying or selling is grown in a truly sustainable way, go for certified organic cotton. Organic is the only workable practice which eliminates highly toxic substances from the environment and works for the long-term benefit of people and the planet.

Other fibres can be produced organically, such as hemp, flax (linen), jute, silk and wool, but cotton is

the most commonly used.

So, what are the differences between organic cotton and conventional cotton?

The headline is that organic cotton is grown using methods and materials that have a low impact on the environment, but what does that really mean?

Organic production systems replenish and maintain soil fertility, reduce the use of toxic and persistent pesticides and fertilisers, and build biologically diverse agriculture.

Third-party certification organisations are then invited in to verify that organic producers use only methods and materials allowed in organic production. Along with no unnatural pesticides and fertilisers regulations prohibit the use of genetically engineered seed for organic farming.

How do I know if it's organic?

Unlike food, textile products do not have to be certified in order to be described as organic which is confusing. A product claiming to be organic might only contain a small percentage of organic cotton or may be made of organic cotton but dyed using toxic chemicals which would never be allowed in certified organic products. However, the use of any organic cotton product is a positive step in the right direction.

In order to be sure a product really is



organic from field to finished product, you need to look out for relevant accreditation, such as the Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS) symbol as well as the OEKO-Tex symbol.

In reality we work in a difficult market where often the client wants the maximum quantity for their available budget. The price differential between certified organic and conventional products, can be considerable and does affect the choice of garment. If we however deliver the back story of sustainability and certified clothing to our clients along with a tangible way of promoting the reasoning and benefits (such as on a printed swing tag) to the recipient of the garment, then surely this can be a winner all round.

Happy Selling
Clive, The Clothing Guru. 



ORGANIC VS CONVENTIONAL COTTON

	ORGANIC	CONVENTIONAL
SEED PREPARATION	Natural, untreated, genetically modified organism free seeds	Typically treated with fungicides or insecticides. Possible genetically modified organisms
SOIL PREPARATION	Healthy soil through crop rotation. Retains moisture in soil from increased organic matter	Synthetic fertilisers, loss of soil due to mono-crop culture, intensive irrigation
WEED CONTROL	Healthy soil creates natural balance. Beneficial insects and trap crops used	Aerial spraying of insecticides and pesticides. Nine of the most commonly used pesticides are known cancer-causing agents
HARVESTING	Natural defoliation from freezing temperatures or through the use of water management	Defoliation induced with toxic chemicals
WEED CONTROL	Healthy soil creates natural balance. Beneficial insects and trap crops used	Aerial spraying of insecticides and pesticides. Nine of the most commonly used pesticides are known cancer-causing agents
HARVESTING	Natural defoliation from freezing temperatures or through the use of water management	Defoliation induced with toxic chemicals
WHITENING	Safe peroxide is used	Chlorine bleaching creates toxic by-products, which are released into the environment
FINISHING	Soft scour in warm water with soda ash, for a pH of 7.5 to 8	Hot water, synthetic surfactants, additional chemicals (sometimes formaldehyde)
DYEING	Low-impact fibre-reactive or natural dyes with low metal and sulphur content	High temperature containing heavy metals and sulphur
FAIR TRADE	Social criteria in place to ensure safe, healthy, non-abusive, non-discriminatory environment with living wages	No social screening. Possible child or forced labour used. Facilities may be unsafe and unhealthy
MARKETING	Positive story can be told to differentiate you from your competitors	None. As awareness of organic advantage expands, increased potential for negative image
PRICE	Initial cost more expensive. Long-term advantages are priceless	Initially cheaper. Long-term impact on environment is devastating



HOPE AHEAD

Despite a tough end to 2020, the signs are that pressure on marketing budgets is easing and 2021 is predicted to be a year of growth

With 2021 starting in lockdown, marketers and brands were given some hope for the year ahead in the shape of the latest AA/WARC Expenditure Report which forecast an upgraded 15.2% growth for 2021.

The report, which represents an upgrade of 0.8% from the last forecast in October 2020 also indicates better-than-expected results for 2020.

A preliminary estimate for growth in 2020 now stands at -7.9% with adspend of £23.17bn, which is a 6.6% improvement since the last outlook, owing mostly to brighter prospects for online platforms.

The new forecasts show that the UK's ad market will make up for 2020's decline and accelerate further into growth this year, reaching a total of £26.69bn and exceeding the previous high of £25.37bn recorded in 2019.

Further, the decline seen in the UK's ad market during 2020 is estimated to be softer than the global rate (-10.2%) and that of the rest of Europe (-13.7%). UK projected ad market growth in 2021 is also expected to be ahead of key international markets, with the US expected to grow 3.8%, Germany 9.3%, Europe (excluding UK) 8.8%, and China 10.3%.

INTERNET LEADS STRONGER Q3

The latest dataset includes actual figures for Q3 2020 and predictions for the coming eight quarters. The key findings show that UK adspend fell 3.3% to £5.9bn in Q3 2020. This was far better than the -17.9% forecast in October 2020, owing mostly to better-than-expected internet growth.

Internet spend rose 10.1% to £4.2bn during the quarter, buoyed by a 14.5% rise in search spend (which in turn was driven by e-commerce advertising). Overall, UK adspend was down 11.1% over the first nine months of 2020, at £16.2bn.

FAST GROWTH FOR 2021

Double-digit growth is expected across most media sectors in 2021. Particularly strong results are expected in cinema at 228.4%, which was closed for most of 2020; digital out of home at 53.6%; traditional out of home at 37.7%, and video on demand at 21.2%.

Stephen Woodford, chief executive, Advertising Association said the figures were welcome news.

"Not only does the data show the overall decline expected in 2020 may be less than feared, but the recovery in 2021 will be stronger than we would have dared

hope even a few months ago. With the vaccine rollout accelerating and a Brexit trade deal in place, the 2021 business outlook is brightening, reflected by these new forecasts showing a stronger and quicker recovery in adspend, with a stronger rebound than in other large economies."

James McDonald, head of data content, WARC said greater certainty around Brexit and the potential for the vaccination programme to unlock economic growth mean that the ad market could 'overcorrect' this year to top its 2019 peak, even though large parts of the industry remain fragile.

BELLWETHER REPORT

Although the AA painted an optimistic outlook for the year ahead, it couldn't hide the pessimism of UK marketing executives as recorded in the end of year IPA Bellwether Report.

Marketers noted another sharp decline in advertising budgets during Q4 2020 with a net balance of -24% of Bellwether panellists recording a contraction in marketing budgets.

Overall, only 16.4% of firms noted an increase in funds, compared with 40.4% that experienced a decline. However, the latest reduction in budgets was much weaker than those recorded in both the second (-50.7%)

and third (-41%) quarters, when the economic impact of COVID-19 was most severe.

The impact of the virus remained the main reported reason for cuts to adspending.

Broken down by marketing category, Events budgets were the most severely impacted in the latest survey period, with a net balance of -62.9% of firms recording a decrease in available spend (-64.1% in Q3). Budgets for other categories were also down to a lesser degree than in Q3:

- Sales Promotions (-26.5% vs 36.0% in Q3)
- Market Research (-25.0% vs -32.6%)
- Main Media Advertising (21.8% vs -25.3%)
- Direct Marketing (-13.9% vs -25.3%)
- Public Relations (-8.5% vs -31.4%)

BUT HOPE AHEAD

The IPA agreed with the AA's predictions for the year ahead, with the preliminary outlook for adspending in 2021-22 suggesting a net balance of +12% of firms expect their total marketing budgets to be upwardly revised.

Of the seven broad marketing categories, expectations for next year are strongest in Main Media Advertising, where a net balance of +4.6% of firms anticipate higher adspending. Panel members also expect a rise in Direct Marketing budgets (net balance of +3.3%) and Public Relations (+3.2%).

Expectations are more subdued in the other categories with Events spending the most pessimistic (-30.9%), followed by Other Marketing (-6.2%), Market Research (-4.7%) and Sales Promotions (-3.7%).

RECOVERY IN ADSPENDING FOR 2021

Following lockdown periods and other strict public health measures, IHS Markit anticipates a -11.6% decline in GDP during 2020.

However, following the development and approval of COVID-19 vaccines, as well as the swift commencement of immunisation programmes, the outlook for the next few years is far more positive. IHS Markit therefore expects a +3.5% expansion of GDP in 2021, predominantly supported by strong growth in the second half of the year, followed by a +4.9% increase in 2022.

Assuming that economic conditions recover as expected, it anticipates robust adspending growth of +6.9% and +6.2% in 2021 and 2022 respectively, before a steady trend towards long-term rates.

Commenting on the latest survey, Paul Bainsfair, IPA Director General, said that despite the negative end of the year due to a combination of COVID and Brexit, there were green shoots ahead and budget plans for 2021-22 are into positive territory.

"As the vaccination roll-out continues, as the lockdowns begin to ease and as firms adapt to post-Brexit rules, perhaps we can dare to ready ourselves for the roaring twenties after all. Those brands that have withstood the storm, kept their voices heard and their subsequent market share up, will be the ones consumers turn to first in the good times."

ALL IN

UK ADVERTISING CENSUS

Industry is All In to measure inclusivity

The advertising and marketing services industry is being asked to get involved in a census on 10 March, 2021 to help benchmark inclusivity in the industry.

The Census is the first element of the All In campaign which aims to build a more inclusive industry for all.

Recorded and analysed by Kantar, it will provide a record of the make-up of UK advertising's workforce and a benchmark for progress. The results will be used to inform an Action Plan to be launched at an industry summit this summer addressing how greater inclusivity across all areas of the industry's talent will be achieved.

The All In Census will be a short online survey. All UK advertising and marketing services professionals will be invited to complete the survey. The distribution of the Census for March 10 will be supported by the members of the Advertising Association, IPA and ISBA to reach the teams at thousands of agencies, media companies, brands and tech companies.

Kathryn Jacob, chair of the Inclusion Working Group, which represents the AA, ISBA and IPA, said: "We know there is a systemic problem to tackle in our industry, that of fully inclusive representation in our workforce. To make the most meaningful change, we must set a benchmark to measure and track progress against. This census is a vital starting point for everyone to help build an industry that truly represents the world we live in today. I encourage people to spread the word – March 10 is the day for all in our industry to come together and say, 'I'm In.'"

Members are encouraged to make their own personal commitment to be All In through social media channels in the run-up to the Census. The goal is to generate the biggest number of recorded entries as possible of those people working in the industry on the

day of March 10, 2021.

The Census will be completely confidential and aggregated, recording all aspects of diversity and inclusion to provide the industry's leaders with comprehensive data for the first time on how the industry performs on inclusivity. It is intended to inform actions that the Inclusion Group will put into place to make genuine and concerted progress on building a workplace that is inclusive for all.

The Inclusion Group will be conducting an All In countdown to the Census and is looking for support from across the industry to show that they are in, with their own 'I'm In' and 'We're In' messages to help secure the biggest number of participants.

Any company wishing to take part can register their interest to receive Census details to share with their teams on the All In page at adassoc.org.uk/all-in.





YOU WEAR *it well*

Clothing and bags remain mainstays of merchandise despite the lockdown. *Product Media* looks at the trends

Promotional clothing and bags are two of the most popular buys in merchandise.

The reasons are simple – they both have great utility and desirability, and have enough variety to be able to offer a product for every target market and every budget.

According to Sourcing City's annual Promotional Merchandise Industry Market Report, in 2018 bags were the top product group by market value, worth £179m, or 14% of the total merchandise market looked at by the report. Clothing was the ninth largest market by value, worth £36m, or 2.8% of the total market.

Drilling down into the appeal of bags and clothing, effectiveness as communication media is of great importance. While certain promotional products deliver the message to the office or home of the recipient, apparel and bags take it out into the wide world turning wearers and carriers into walking, and willing billboards.

It's incredibly cost effective too. In its Global Ad Impressions study, the Advertising Speciality Institute (ASI) found that

promotional T-shirts alone were owned by 80% of Americans. Headwear (69%), outerwear (67%), and polo shirts (65%) also clocked highly with consumers. When it came to bags, 73% of respondents have a promotional carrier of some sort.

Looking at T-shirts ASI also found that 63% of consumers kept promotional wear for a year, and 47% kept them for two years. This equates to 3,400 impressions generated during their life time, making each impression cost 2/10ths of a cent.

The story is similar for bags, which typically clock up 3,300 advertising impressions in their average 11-month use.

While all very impressive, the market for both products has shifted during the pandemic. With fewer people travelling to work, or anywhere, and fewer events taking place, the opportunities for promotion using clothing and bags has changed.

However, the emergence of video platforms as a medium for meetings and even exhibitions and conferences means that visibility and brand messaging remains important.

STILL POPULAR

According to Clive Allcott, commercial manager of DTB the market for both bags and clothing has been severely affected due to the pandemic with multiple cancelled events leading to a minimal demand. However, there has still been business focused on current communication requirements.

"Instead of printing festival or promotional T-shirts, these have been turned into 'Stay 2M apart' or 'Wash your hands' style messaging as well as other demands for PPE," he says.

Paul Morley-Smith, co-founder and director of The Outdoors Company says the pandemic has helped reconnect people with their outside environment.

"We've seen an ever-growing demand from our corporate customers for outdoor apparel and bag products during the course of lockdown. Personalised bum bags, wash bags and backpacks from brands such as Herschel and Fjallraven have become increasingly



popular with our customers," he says.

According to Rachel Salisbury, sales manager at Bags HQ, drawstring, polyester bags have been the best-sellers throughout 2020.

"This bag is a great all-rounder and an ideal give away for many different industries," she says. "Foldable shoppers in both polyester and cotton options continue to be a great seller since the bag tax came in 2015, particularly our Bayford and Farrington shoppers."

TRENDS

The year 2020 may be known as the year of the face mask and the hand gel dispenser, but clothing and bags have had a role to play.

Bags HQ's Salisbury points to a hot trend in individual name personalisation. "Whilst this was initially used as a way of making corporate gifts more personal and thoughtful we have seen a surge in demand for health reasons too," she says.

"After the first national lockdown ended and people returned to the workplace, we noticed an influx of orders on our Griffin Cooler bag printed with individual names."

This simple solution helps to prevent cross contamination amongst colleagues and is an ideal place to store lunch and utensils.

Morley-Smith notes rise in demand for products that are premium, sustainable and ethically manufactured. The Outdoors Company is a trade supplier of high-end clothing, accessories and equipment to the B2B market, covering brands such as the North Face, Berghaus, Columbia, RAB, Montane, Arc'teryx and Patagonia.

"Businesses from a wide range of industries are requesting items from brands who invest heavily in the design and manufacture of clothing that is kind to the environment, kind to people and their communities," he says. "Our biggest selling bag, The North Face Jester Backpack, is 100% recycled and this desire to kit employees out in sustainable clothing is only set to rise with companies keen to meet their CSR goals."

Allcott notes a definite sway towards

generalist workwear as people have become aware of the phrase PPE.

Hi-viz has also led the charge in sales, linked to the pandemic of COVID-19.

The product mix for 2020 has focused on general workwear clothing such as hoodies, T-shirts and polos featuring informative branding based around health and safety information.

The undeniable front runner has been the facemask, he says. "Twelve months ago, this was a product that we would never have considered as a branding option let alone a 'must have' product."

The marketplace has many different styles and types available from the disposable, the reusable and the professional medical mask. Personalised facemasks have been in great demand with transfer print proving to be a popular branding option due to its flexibility for design, multiple colours and quality finish.

DELIVERY CHALLENGE

With many users working from home due to COVID, delivery and fulfilment have all been affected in one way or another.

The Outdoors Company has had to change the way it works as a result of the pandemic, says Morley-Smith. "Our dedicated team has transitioned seamlessly and worked tirelessly with our brands to ensure that there is minimum disruption for our customers. Some stock had been slightly delayed for the first week in January, but we are now seeing deliveries from overseas return to normal."

There have been extended timescales to deliver or have blank garments supplied, says Allcott. With most garment decorators working to 'just in time' processes, delays and stock issues have become a daily occurrence despite the efforts of clothing wholesalers.

Garment suppliers have had to deal with depleted staff levels and new COVID-19 health and safety compliance. "As a factory we have invested substantial time, effort and resource in the protection of staff, our customers and making the workplace a safe environment to operate



from while still being able to trade as near normal as possible," he says.

Although times are tough, it has been an ideal time to invest in new equipment and branding development as well as to evaluate working practices and procedures.

Bags HQ has adapted fulfilment to 'new world' demands. With so many people now working from home it offers an individual address delivery and fulfilment service.

"Gifting has been hugely popular throughout the pandemic. Providing a well needed 'pick me up' for your employees is a lovely way to show your appreciation and promotes mental wellbeing during such difficult times," says Salisbury.

Similarly, sending a personalised gift to customers at home is a fantastic way of boosting brand engagement and customer loyalty.

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BREXIT

The overlay of the end of the UK's transition from the EU and the commencement of a whole array of new trading procedures, has introduced new challenges.

Neil Horner, managing director, Laltex, says Brexit has complicated trade to the EU and Ireland.

"It is a relatively short period of time since the deal, but Bags HQ and all other divisions of Laltex are committed to creating a solution to ensure we can continue to supply the EU and Ireland, whilst also making the process of working with us as simple and easy as possible."

With the main focus of attention being on the pandemic and survival for many businesses, Brexit slid off the agenda, not least because of changing advice and late breaking guidance due to the last minute nature of the deal.

Businesses are only starting to see the detail and how it will affect our marketplace, says Allcott.

"I am receiving regular correspondence from my supply chain informing me of between 12 to 15% increase on garments bought in from the EU along with administration fees for orders placed. These increases along with proposed delays in transporting goods back into the EU will have an impact on our market."

For DTB, a European office in Poland is

now supplying European customers, as well as UK customers with supply into the EU.

Morley-Smith says that for many of its customers, there has been no impact at all, but adds: "As with everything with Brexit, nothing is 100% clear, and for a small percentage of our European customers, we envisage that there could potentially be some minor issues surrounding taxes and tariffs."

HOPES FOR 2021

Allcott says his conversations with industry peers lead him to the view that, "April will be the new January" for both distributors and suppliers.

"Masks and informative branding are here to stay for the near future. However, if we can see the hospitality sector getting back up to speed and the event calendar is fulfilled, distributor and supplier businesses will be able to get back to the levels of trade we need and expect."

One positive aspect of the pandemic has been the heightened focus on sustainability, recyclability and of being custodians of the planet. "This sector of the market will grow year on year and we all need to play our role and be part of the solution," he says.

In light of Brexit, many of The Outdoors Company's brands have moved stock from EU distribution centres and set-up UK based hubs with increased stock levels, in order to

minimise impact and ensure sufficient stock flow. "Distribution will now come directly to the UK from the Far East, aiming to improve efficiency and reduce standard lead times for our customers," says Morley-Smith.



A greener approach to bags

The market for sustainable shopping solutions has never been greater. Since they were first taxed in 2015, UK demand for single-use plastic bags has dropped by a whopping 86%.

But as with everything in life, there are definite shades of green. Specialist bag supplier, JuteBag Trade holds both the Fairtrade and Global Organic Textile Standards (GOTS) certification with its own licence number which means the certified products are fully traceable.

A good example is its Kwenzi 100% biodegradable jute bag. Unlike others, which feature a plastic lining, this uses a natural starch lamination, which gives extra rigidity and makes the bag fully sustainable. The Recycled Koo cotton bag, meanwhile, is made from 100% post-consumer waste. It's a GRS (Global Recycled Standard) certified, 50z recycled cotton shopper with long handles.

The rPET range, made from recycled plastic bottles, is another illustration of the company's relentless search for greener solutions. In a closed-loop production facility, bottles are shredded, ground into pellets, melted and processed

into rolls of fabric. A new addition is the GRS-certified Tombili and Tausi, which can fold into a pouch when not in use. There is also a drawstring bag in this range called the Tombo and all of them are available in various colours.

Director, Parit Shah says: "We continually invest in products and solutions that benefit the environment. I am excited about the game-changing products we are launching in 2021. Watch this space."





Green denim from Mantis

We're all making an effort to go greener these days, and when it comes to bags, this should be no exception. Mantis has been leading the pack in sustainable apparel for 20 years, and its M195 and 196 Denim bags are a great choice for those looking for something that ticks the eco-friendly box and looks great at the same time.

Responsibly manufactured from 100% organic cotton, these bags are perfect for printing and look fantastic embroidered too. Available in two sizes, a regular sized tote that's ideal for everyday use, and a roomy shopper style which is finished with a handy internal pocket. These bags are versatile, durable and complete with retail-friendly detailing.

The bags are just one example of sustainability from the company, which has celebrated 20 years in business. It has called attention to textile manufacturers and consumers buyers to take responsibility to make the right choice about where raw materials are sourced, with feature such as a traceability map to show where its cotton comes from.

This year, the company introduced QR codes to its garments to allow the wearer to see the journey of production and understand the origins of the cotton used. The codes feature in its latest lookbooks, allowing the reader to discover more about garments by scanning them with their



smartphone.

They connect to a white label site that shows the savings in water, emissions, energy and pesticides that have been made from choosing organic over conventional. It also gives an insight into the supply chain. The hope is that an interactive journey through the manufacturing process, plus an understanding of the positive environmental impact will help customers connect with the garments beyond the pages of a catalogue.



McLean steps up at PPAI

Promotional Products Association International (PPAI) has appointed executive vice president, Robert (Bob) McLean as interim president while it looks for a successor for Paul Bellantone, who is stepping down after more than 20 years helming the US trade association.

BPMA CEO Carey Trevill has already been in touch with McLean to continue the close collaboration between the two organisations.

"I'm delighted that Bob has been elevated to this interim role; joining in

a similar capacity last year myself, Paul and his team welcomed me warmly to the industry and I'm looking forward to working with Bob in the coming months," she said. "With solid connections with the PPAI in the US, PPPC in Canada and APPA in Australia, our partnership has led to sharing of insight and forecasts during this challenging period."

The PPAI board has appointed executive search firm SearchWide Global to help identify the next leader of the organisation.



Successful SMETA audit for Kingly

European-based custom sock manufacturer Kingly recently conducted a successful SMETA Pillar 4 audit. This allows the company to further strengthen its ethical stance on product origin, supply chain ethics and responsible production processes.

Kingly was also recently accredited with ISO 14001: 2015 and ISO 45001:2018. Its next goal is to pass GMP22716, OEKO TEX and GOTS audits, said Rob Armour, managing director of the company.

ISO 14000 is a family of standards related to environmental management that exists to help organisations minimise how their operations affect the environment, as well as comply with applicable laws and regulations. Holders seek continual improvement.

Kingly has also created a new product fulfilment service to send merchandise directly to recipients.



New notebooks from Boosters

Mibuk is a British made casebound book from Boosters in four size options with customisable page options throughout.

All have a full-colour wraparound cover using a customer's chosen image or artwork. Text page options include plain pages, pages with lines, grids, planners, perpetual calendars, or bespoke designs.

Logos can be added to each page to further personalise the book. If the

customer wishes to use a bespoke design throughout, templates and artwork guides can be provided.

Mibuk is a brand and supply is to the trade only. The website mibuk.co.uk refers potential customers to the distributor of their promotional products. A personalised video can be requested with your company details included at no charge.

European facility for Listawood

Listawood has opened a new facility in the Netherlands to support the rapidly growing demand for its products within the European Union.

The company already exports to more than 80 countries worldwide. It opened its first factory in 1988 and has since become known for the development and use of award-winning, innovative new decoration methods and technologies. In 2012 it opened a wholly owned subsidiary

factory in Southern India to enable it to manufacture its family of patent protected Duraglaze gloss, satin and anti-microbial photomug lines.

Alex Turner, managing director, said: "We don't want to stand still – our strategy is to deliver innovation in the promotional drinkware market; presenting a stream of new processes and product ideas to supplement our comprehensive range of bestselling drinkware lines."



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PRICING IN A RECESSION

It can be hard to stand your ground on pricing, but eroding margin only leads to a greater focus on price over value, says **Peter Hill**

Times are tough and may get tougher. So discounting prices is necessary to hang on to existing customers and win new ones – isn't it?

No! Discounting is the very last thing you should do.

TO GOOD TO BE TRUE

Firstly, big price drops rarely lead to any significant increase in sales. Many high street and online retailers promote '50% off' sales, but these are marketing techniques, where headline prices are inflated in order to present an apparent discount. Consumers aren't stupid, and they no longer believe the honesty of these deals.

Secondly, even if lower prices might increase sales volumes, that is only half the equation.

GIVING AWAY MARGIN

A 30% margin business decides to

- **Business sold 100 items at £10 each = £1,000. Profit £300 or 30%.**
- **Decides to sell for £9 each, to boost sales. Profit now £2 per item.**
- **Volume increases by 40%.**
- **Great result? - No!**
- **140 items now sold at £2 profit = £280. £20 less than before.**
- **Needed to sell 150 items @ £2 profit to make same £300. 50% more just to stand still**

drop prices by 10% to increase sales.

The key question is not whether sales volumes will increase, but whether they will increase enough to cover the discount being given to everyone.

The outcome varies at different margins as does the price sensitivity of products. But most businesses simply do not ask this question or work out the dynamics. If you think blanket price reductions will increase sales, they might. If you think they will increase profit, they don't.

IS IT WORTH IT?

But what about one single customer where you will lose a sale unless you discount. Surely selling 100 items at £9 is better than zero items at £10? Let's consider a few issues...

Gross profit is just the start. There are transaction costs of invoicing and debt collecting. Items are picked, packed and shipped, and people cost are part of every step. Many may find that the overheads involved in any transaction might reduce an overall gross profit of 30% to a net profit of 5%.

Example. (Using same numbers on the left)

- 100 items generated £300 gross profit. (30%)
- Share of overheads approx. £250. Net profit £50 or 5%
- Discounting by 10% reduces gross profit to £200.
- Transaction costs remain £250, so now a net loss of £50 on this sale.

You might argue that the overheads would be the same with or without this sale, so

you are £200 better off by making this sale, than not making it. Perhaps on a one off decision, but these are not one offs. Make this a common or even systemic issue and the impact can be catastrophic.

SO WHY IS PRICE THE BIG ISSUE?

Because we make it the big issue. If the sales process does not cover all of the other critical elements of the transaction, such as urgency, quality, reputation, design input, delivery, credit terms, refund policies and a host of other conscious or subconscious elements of the buying process, then the only issue to argue over is price.


BUT WE ARE IN A RECESSION, SURELY THAT'S DIFFERENT?

Yes. It is even more critical that businesses focus on margins and profits than at any other point in an economic cycle. You don't want to be doing the same work for less money, and you certainly don't want to be doing more work for less money.

Even in recession, there is a big part of every market that wants quality and service above price. In fact, for some customers these issues become more important.

For example, there is a stack of research which shows that the speed of returning a quote for a potential sale has a significantly greater impact on the buying decision than price does.

Don't get cheaper, get better.

Peter Hill is the author of Pricing For Profit (Amazon) and consults with countries across Europe on pricing strategies. 



CHARTER PRESCRIPTION FOR SUCCESS

It can be hard to pick companies that have hit the pinnacle of expertise, standards and compliance. The BPMA Charter makes the process easier

There are many ways of selecting a compliant company with high standards: SEDEX, SMETA audits, ISO accreditation and more. How does the industry independently verify businesses who hit consistently high levels across the board?

For many years, the BPMA has presented its Charter Standard to the industry; awarded to those members who achieve a full audit, carried out annually to ensure adherence to compliant practice, procedures, standards and legislation in light of changing demands on the industry.

REAPING THE BENEFITS

Securing a Charter award from the BPMA is no mean feat. Requiring preparation and dedication, the application process takes BPMA members through a path to examine each area of their business and operational procedures. Companies who have achieved ISO status are particularly suited to the Charter award as this forms part of the preferred set of standards looked for in promotional merchandise excellence.

Companies with Charter Status are often selected over and above other companies due to their pre-audited status; reassurance and comfort are the words most often used when describing the relief factor Charter affords.

END USER SUPPLY CHAINS

While business has been slow during the pandemic, companies are planning ahead. Given widespread concern voiced over apparel scandals involving poor working conditions or cotton supplies from China linked to Uighur forced labour, an audited company can stand out from the crowd.

As a unique industry, we often fall into different areas of manufacturing, production and supply – and firmly into

the creative industry sector, producing an estimated £1.2bn for the UK economy. This means the verification of the supply chain is examined with greater intensity than some other sectors.

With some areas such as sustainable goods and environmentally friendly solutions requiring a greater focus, end users indicate a growing concern over the use of merchandise in high volume situations like events and awards. Signalling your business has independently audited compliance can provide much needed security for all involved. As growing numbers of end user clients contact the BPMA looking for the 'gold standard' companies, Charter companies can stand out from the crowd.

MEMBER CONFIDENCE

More BPMA suppliers and distributors are turning to Charter to help differentiate themselves in the market. The BPMA Board features many successful, award winning Charter companies including suppliers Juniper Trading, recently-awarded First Editions, plus high profile distributors Allwag Promotions and Brand Addition.

Commenting on the value of Charter, Mark Alderson, First Editions said: "BPMA Charter status is a hallmark of trust and provides further proof that we are serious about service and will always strive to deliver quality for our customers. Charter status provides a significant advantage helping to ensure consistent and good quality products and services that are delivered in a sustainable way, which in turn brings many business benefits."

BPMA CEO Carey Trevill added: "During my career, the BPMA logo always represented a badge of trust and symbol of quality when buying merchandise. The Charter status lets end users rest easier knowing they

are working with some of the best in the industry. Seeing procurement take more and more of the buying decisions during my time running marketing agencies and brand projects, knowing these teams lacked specific marketing knowledge, I would always point to a Charter member to take the guess work out of the initial selection process. It is a huge point of difference for companies as we start to come out of the pandemic. I am in no doubt listening to end user discussions on why, how and what they buy in 2021, quality assurance is going to be critical. I urge any member who feels they are ready for Charter to approach us and apply."


BECOME PART OF AN OUTSTANDING SECTOR OF THE INDUSTRY

Applying for BPMA Charter Status comes via BPMA membership. Most often companies achieving these standards are invited to apply but BPMA members can start the process at any time. Working with the dedicated BPMA team and external BPMA Charter Ambassador, Clive Allcott of DTB, members are taken through a stringent process.

Becoming part of this group means your business represents:

- Quality assurance
- Product conformity
- Continuity of service and product
- High ethical and environmental values
- Financial security
- Trust and transparency

As we seek to shore up our future, securing the Charter badge for your business looks like a very sound investment.

To apply for BPMA Charter status or find out more about membership at the BPMA, contact enquiries@bpma.co.uk 

BECOME A BPMA CHARTER MEMBER

Stand out recognition for your business

BPMA Charter Status is the ultimate in industry standards. BPMA Charter promotes the highest level of business practices and customer service; representing the most respected and reputable companies within our industry.

How can BPMA Charter Status benefit your business?

- BPMA Charter provides confidence and reassurance to customers your business performs to a high standard in business practice and compliance
- BPMA Charter is a professional independent endorsement, recognised and respected
- BPMA Charter logo is a mark of trust, confidence and excellence
- BPMA Charter is an endorsement of your businesses' substantive professionalism
- BPMA Charter is a clear differentiating factor for your business, enhancing your USP

If your business stands for quality assurance, product conformity, ethical and environmental values, trust and transparency, compliance and service; BPMA Charter is perfect for you and your business.



➤ Get in contact

For more information about BPMA Charter Status, please contact enquiries@bpma.co.uk or call 01372 371 183

www.bpma.co.uk/membership/charter-status

BPMA Charter is open to all BPMA members. Charter Status awarded subject to application and audit.

BECAUSE MONEY DOESN'T GROW ON TREES

Accounting for every penny is essential in these stretching times.

Mike Collins explains how to reduce risk



The promotional merchandise sector is moving from crisis mode to recovery, with growth on its heels as the vaccine helps kickstart the economy into action.

Marketing, sales and setting out a stall of products to help clients achieve their sales targets is crucial for members. But please don't underestimate the importance of undertaking a robust review of your credit management processes too. Reducing risk is vital as is eliminating those survival

tactics deployed to get through the last 12 months but now, they are unlikely to be of benefit to your business.

Time for change

Where are improvements needed? It's likely (and certainly our work with BPMA members demonstrates this) that in 2020 you suffered more frequent payment delays, an increase in the proportion of overdue B2B invoices and days sales outstanding (DSO) and a longer invoice to cash turnaround. The impact of

late payments was felt by the sector with many members having to correct cashflow, postpone their own payments to suppliers, losing revenue and asking for payment with order. Looking at these figures for the last 12 months, where are the black holes? Did some new customers use you as a credit line because the goodwill from their previous supplier had dried up? Should you continue with last year's payment extensions? Now is the time to put a stop to practices with the potential to undermine your business and sabotage healthy cashflow.

Time wasters

How much time did you and your team spend chasing overdue invoices and attempting to collect debt in the last twelve months? Did you write off any debts because you had exhausted all avenues? Did you settle for less because the signs were that recovering the full amount was futile? Do you really want to continue with these activities or is your time better spent elsewhere? Fundamentally is debt recovery really your strong suit?

How will we help you? Direct Route

In 2020 Direct Route recovered more than £12 million for promotional goods' distributors and suppliers. In most cases clients didn't pay fees because we either provided a completely cost-free solution, for both client and customer or used the late payment legislation to recover our fees from more difficult debtor customers. Direct Route collects overdue debts from £100.

AccountAssyst

Is a powerful, easy-to-use online credit management system. Whether you have 10 customers or 10,000, sign up new customers regularly or rarely AccountAssyst will benefit your business. It's fully automated and includes new customer account opening, customer account reviews, an overdue monies chase process and comprehensive credit reports. Ask about ROSI – The Register of Outstanding Invoices because in this pandemic era where the accuracy of credit reports is now questionable, the up-to-date information ROSI provides on debtor businesses is invaluable.

Thanks to the BPMA funded offer you benefit from 600 free units annually. That's equivalent to 100 free credit reports a year. If you want to improve cashflow and massively reduce the time your team spends on credit management, you need AccountAssyst.

Free Online Friendly Overdue Invoice Service

To date more than £7 million has been recovered for BPMA members using this service. Our three-minute video explains why it's so effective – go to directroute.co.uk/covid19support for more details.

Let's talk!

For a no obligation friendly chat as to how we might be able to help, contact Ian Jenkinson Tel: 07860 197476, Email: ijenkinson@directroute.co.uk

Mike Collins is MD of Direct Route

Local Support Contact Details

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

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WATCH OUT 2021

Technology took something of a back seat during the pandemic, but it's set to come roaring back, says **Matt Pluckrose**



2020 was for many one of the worst years in memory from both a business, personal and industry perspective. I don't think there will be anyone in our industry who was not touched negatively by the effects of the COVID crisis in one way or another.

Thankfully, we all start a new year with more hope and optimism on the (albeit distant) horizon with the amazing vaccine roll out ramping up, spread of the virus slowing and hopefully lighter/brighter days coming. So, what can we all look forward to in 2021 from a promotional technology perspective?

Technology in the mix took a dramatic drop in popularity in the last two quarters of 2020 as the market turned its focus from PPE to products that helped to increase well-being, health, and happiness, as well as traditional hampers and mixed gift boxes at Christmas.

I am delighted to note this drop in demand is now turning quickly as it seems marketers are starting to look again and appreciate how useful technology ideas can be to both equip their staff and deliver and reward clients for their ongoing business while delivering brand awareness.

Here are some thoughts on what will be topical in 2021.

Eco/sustainability

The demand for technology with a more sustainable story is still growing fast and now represents one in every three enquiries for technology. This will continue to grow massively as marketers look for promotional products with a better story and the public demands more of business and government in protecting the environment.

Many tech products can now have an outer shell made from a whole range of natural materials including cork, wheat, cement, wood, or bamboo. The list is endless as well as the 'treated' plastics that biodegrade in a fraction of the time compared to normal plastic.

Personal Audio

Headphones, wireless/wired headsets, and so called 'TWS' (true wireless stereo) earbuds are fast becoming the most sought after products in our promotional tech market. Continuous daily video calls mean many business people need to focus on calls and reduce distractions from the rest of the home. They also don't want to and wear out their own personal headphones or Air Pods which they use for the gym or watching content on their phones or tablets.

This is rapidly generating a new and growing market for promotional audio products as we are finding people will switch to the most recent or best set they have been given. This gives the marketer the opportunity to brand their employee or customer as they will wear the products during the working day while on video calls.

UV-C Digital Cleaning

When the world starts to return to some degree of normal and people begin working from their offices again, workers will want to ensure their possessions are as clean and hygienic as possible. A new and growing product area that will become popular for this application will be UVC cleaning lamps and boxes.

These devices use far UV-C light which is short wavelength/ultraviolet light (used in hospitals to clean medical instruments and

surfaces) to break down the DNA of viruses and bacteria, killing them in around three minutes.

There are some concerns over this technology however as over exposure can damage skin and eyes. However, the closed boxes in our sector work at a low level of intensity so are mostly safe and harmless.

Some of these cleaning boxes also have a secondary feature such as wireless charging while the phone is being cleaned. This new technology application also can deliver a great branding solution for 'back to the office' kits which will become popular very soon.

'Smart' face masks

Some major manufacturers such as RAZER are developing smart face masks that will include surgical respirators, active ventilation, auto-sterilisation and



light-up interiors with clear visors to increase expression recognition even in darker environments. They even include built-in voice amplification and look cool.

Technology will no doubt push the now humble disposable face covering into a new dimension and open up opportunities for those companies who want simply the best protection for their staff and customers when travelling.

Matt Pluckrose is managing director of Desktop Ideas

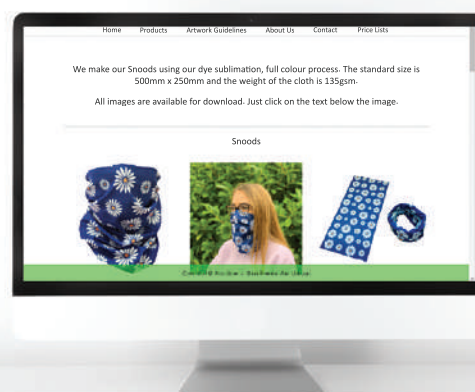


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A NEW INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

Fundamental changes in manufacturing present businesses with a golden opportunity in the coming years, if they can adapt, says **Mark Alderson**

A report into the state of British manufacturing reveals that there are some encouraging opportunities on the horizon, and if Britain acts now, it could be in a position to take advantage of some of the trends that are going to affect the way things are made in the future.

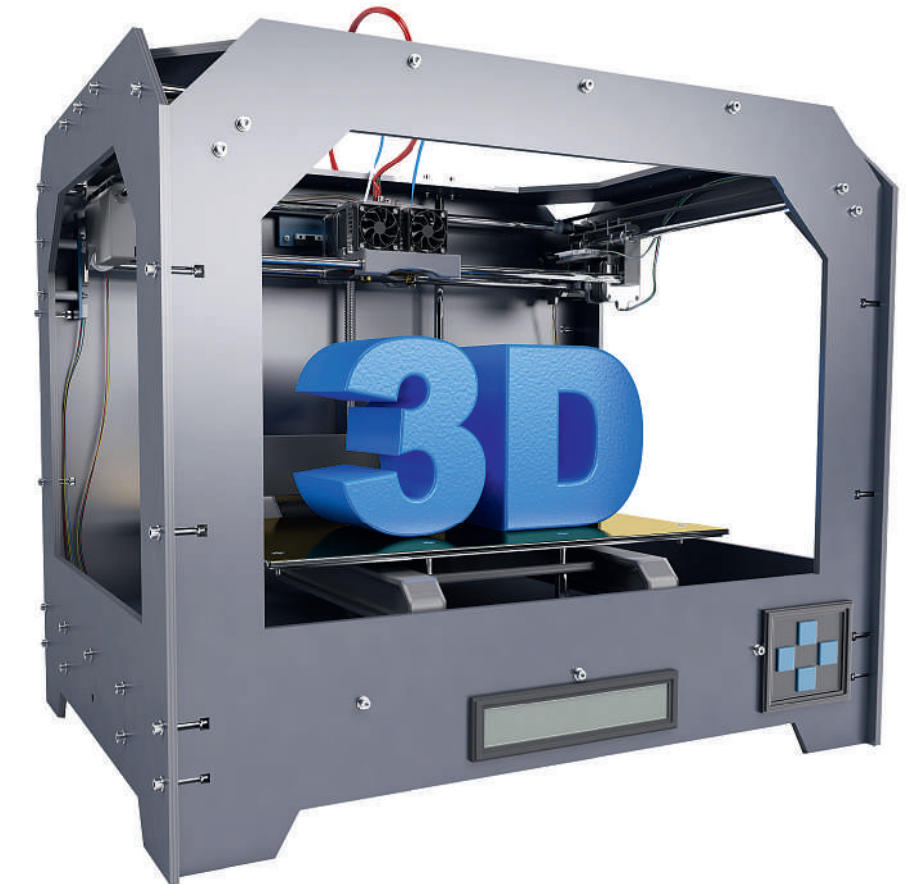
With a growing world population and increased demand for materials, water, energy and land, supply chains will become much more volatile and manufacturing closer to home will make the country more resilient to these effects. Reshoring production, where manufacturers who had previously moved their production overseas bring it back to this country, is already a reality. It is now much easier for Britain to compete with lower cost locations on quality, delivery speed and customisation. Firms such as Hornby, John Lewis, and Bathrooms.com have all begun reshoring production over the past 12 months, and more are likely to follow.

EVERYONE IS A MAKER

Technology will play a massive part in the manufacture of goods in the future. Mass personalisation of low-cost products by methods such as 3D printing will enable everyone to become their own manufacturer, and increasingly manufacturing will become more urbanised and less based around large factories with many workers. Companies that do well will be those that make use of 'big data' to learn more about their customers and use it to their advantage to improve their products and enhance their competitiveness.

But perhaps the most interesting of trends are those based around sustainability. Remanufacture, where new life is breathed into old products rather than replacements made, is likely to play a big part in the revenue stream of many manufacturers going forward. Already JCB is selling a comprehensive range of remanufactured parts for its machines and more are likely to follow suit as resources and raw materials become scarcer.

Shared ownership of products is also likely to become much more widespread, calling for considerably



more durable things to be made. Britain has always been thought of as a place to buy quality and so should be in good position to take advantage of this.

SKILLS GAP

Over the next seven years there will be around 800,000 UK manufacturing jobs to fill as people retire or leave the industry. Sir Richard Lapthorne, who led the team behind the report, describes the situation.

"The quality and skills of the workforce will be a critical factor in capturing competitive advantage. It is essential that UK policy makers focus on the supply of skilled workers, including apprenticeship schemes, support for researchers, and the supply of skilled managers," he said.

The report concludes that immediate action is vital if the UK is to take advantage

of the rapid changes taking place in the modern manufacturing world. As well as keeping up with technology, sustainability and training skilled workers, we need to ensure that we are exporting the goods we make to the right countries – sales of our home made goods to developing countries are still lagging behind compared to many of our European neighbours.

MANUFACTURING MAKEOVER

Undoubtedly there will be a huge transformation in manufacturing over the next few decades which present major opportunities to those who take advantage of it – but will Britain be quick enough off the mark? Let's hope so.

Mark Alderson is the chairman of the Briman Group 

BETTER WORK – BETTER YOU

Working from home has left us needing a new set of guidelines for being productive and happier, says **Melissa Chevin**



Let's face it, last year was one we'll remember for all the wrong reasons – and the challenges continue as we ease our way into 2021.

Among the huge changes in our lives has been the reality of so many of us working from home. With that in mind, I've summarised some top tips to make your work life happier and more balanced.

A positive start

It really helps if you can get your working day off to the best possible start, so try to begin by doing something you know you will really enjoy. It's one more thing crossed off your list and will put you in the right frame of mind for the trickier tasks to come.

Don't defer dread

By the same token, don't keep putting off difficult or less pleasant tasks. Much better to get these done early – your mind will be in a better place to tackle them and you'll

feel better once they're out of the way.

Regulate your responses

It's tempting to open emails as they arrive and reply immediately, but more productive and urgent work can easily slide back down your schedule as a result. Unless it is absolutely vital, set aside a window to deal with less urgent correspondence. Do the same with social media.

Question, don't assume

With so much interaction happening virtually, it's easy to misinterpret the intention behind messages. If you're unsure, take time to politely question and establish what the other person is trying to say. It's so much better for your blood pressure.

Keep it clean

There's strong evidence to suggest













that when our working spaces are tidier and more organised, our brains perform in the same way too. Take half an hour out to declutter your desk and feel the difference.

Move

Sitting in front of a computer all day, it's easy to neglect physical wellbeing. There are loads of apps and programmes to act as reminders to get up and escape those four walls. A brisk half-hour walk will not only do your body good, it'll also be a real boost for your mental health.

Even after the pandemic slows down, many businesses will continue to work remotely. So, if there is a time to start being more productive at home – it's now.

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

		
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WINNING SUSTAINABLY

January's PSI show has been postponed until May, but its awards were held virtually

The sixth PSI Sustainability Awards were held virtually and attracted the highest number of submissions ever, despite the impact of COVID-19 and a short time to enter.

There were around 100 entries, 85 nominations in nine categories, a special prize and, for the first time, a digital awards ceremony.

Originally intended as a prelude to this year's PSI exhibition, the award ceremony turned into an opportunity to bring the worldwide industry together. Guest speakers from the US and the Netherlands congratulated the winners personally, while an international audience sat at home in evening dress and participated digitally.

Here are the award winners:

Economic Excellence

Winner: Karl Knauer KG

The Economic Excellence award is for certified measures that guarantee quality assurance. The winner Karl Knauer KG has consistently developed its extensive certification further and documented the continuous sustainable development of the company with a highly transparent detailed annual report.

Social Initiative 2020

Winner: Karl Knauer KG

In 2011, Karl Knauer, HYDRO Systems and the Biberach Local Authority founded the Fliegerkiste day-care centre to help make work and family more compatible with one another. Since 2020, Karl Knauer has also been actively involved in nature conservation and environmental protection, investing in a 2,600 sqm meadow for bees in collaboration with Bienenmartin's honey farm. The project is a smart way of combining the topics of sustainability, landscape ecology and education, as well as involving employees and the local authority.



Environmental Initiative 2020

Winner: Halfar System GmbH

Halfar System received an award in the Environment Initiative category for its new HAL logistic centre. Not only is the warehouse and site well-organised and energy-efficient thanks to building insulation and an eco-gas power plant, a 1,500 sqm area has also been set aside as living space for plants, birds and insects. These and other measures have meant major CO2 savings, while the company's comprehensive approach to sustainability is unique. The Environmental Initiative award is all about taking personal responsibility for economic and ecological measures, as well as developing your own environmental standards.



Innovator of the Year 2020

Winner: FARE - Guenther Fassbender GmbH

Project: Switch to waterSAVE for a promotional umbrella

The new Innovator of the Year award, sponsored by cyber-Wear GmbH, is for a sustainable product, by a sustainable company. Winner FARE - Guenther Fassbender GmbH has introduced a new and revolutionary dyeing process to help protect the climate and environment. Each fresh model of the style series is equipped with the new waterSAVE canopy. The novel dyeing process reduces the amount of natural raw materials and energy used, as well as ensuring a big reduction in the environmental impact of harmful substances.



Environmental Excellence

Winner: Schneider

Schreibgeräte GmbH

Schneider Schreibgeräte introduced certified measures for protecting environmental management in 2020, which go well beyond the minimum legal requirements. With its comprehensive and high-quality certification, the company has underlined its ecological achievement and is well placed for the future.

Social Excellence 2020

Winner: Halfar System GmbH

Despite the particularly difficult social challenges presented by 2020, Halfar was able to enhance its social excellence profile in the areas of personnel development, family friendliness, inclusion and integration. The company's commitment met all the criteria for the Social Excellence award which rewards the provision of certified measures for securing social working conditions.

Sustainable Products

The Sustainable Product category includes subcategories and evaluates products with regard to their ecological balance. Here are the winners:

Sustainable Product of the Year

Winner: blvck GmbH

Product: Pferdeapfel Bio Naturdünger

Even if it cannot be used everywhere, blvck GmbH's natural horse dung fertiliser is a practical ecological merchandising article, which is why the company won a Sustainable Product of the Year award. A great deal of meticulousness and passion has gone into the process behind the fertiliser. In the words of the jury, the product is effective, sustainable and unforgettable.



Sustainable Product – Textiles

Winner: Manufacturas Arpe, S.L.

Product: SKUT Community Mask

The Sustainable Product award winner in the Textile subcategory is the SKUT community mask, made by Manufacturas Arpe, S.L. The company also uses 100% renewable energy. The mask is free of pollutants and suitable for even the youngest children.

Sustainable Product – Writing Instruments

Winner: Schneider Schreibgeräte GmbH
Product: Reco

Schneider Schreibgeräte received its award for Reco, the first ballpoint pen to bear the Blue Angel environmental label. Thanks to the environmental and resource-saving way in which it is produced, this is one of the most sustainable ballpoint pens on the market.

Sustainable Products recommended by PSI

Sustainable Campaign
Winner: cyber-Wear Heidelberg GmbH
Campaign: #starkeschiene

German railways would like to run on a climate-friendly basis in future. It collaborated with cyber-Wear Heidelberg to produce promotional items that focus both on sustainability and are made in Germany. The product range includes a retractable pen made of recycled RPET material, a drinking bottle, and a speaker (all produced using green electricity and 100% recyclable), a bag for fruit and veg, a reusable cup, good chocolate, a beeswax cloth, a certified pencil and a writing pad made of grass paper. All these articles can be used in everyday life and are sustainable alternatives to their "plastic" predecessors.

Sustainable Product – Paper

Winner: Hanbückers Werbung GmbH

Product: inpoka (R) Folding Wall Planner

The inpoka (R) folding wall planner is a specially protected calendar design that has been optimised for the postage-saving DIALOGPOST mailing method. The jury considered it to be a well-conceived product that persuasively manages to combine practicality and sustainability.

Sustainable Product – Product Set

Winner: PS Concepts GmbH

Product: WE CARE mini super slim umbrella

PS Concepts GmbH wins the Product Set award in the Sustainable Product section with its WE CARE mini umbrella and integrated carrier bag. Both the canopy and carrier bag are made of high-quality polyester from recycled material. The other main plastic components such as the tips, runners, and slider are made of recycled material.



Sustainable Product – Product Line

Winner: Slodkie Upominki
Product: Fit&Healthy

High-quality products and biodegradable packaging go hand in hand with the winner of the Product Line subcategory of the Sustainable Product award. With Fit&Healthy, Slodkie Upominki has provided an innovative packaging design in combination a sweet and sustainable message.

Sustainable Company of the Year

Overall Winner: Halfar System GmbH

The jury's assessments and points accumulated from the different categories 1 to 8 were added up to find the entry with the most points. Halfar System was the overall winner of the sixth PSI Sustainability Awards. The company persuaded the jury with its certification and auditing in all three areas of sustainability: economic, environmental, and social sustainability. The all-encompassing environmental concept for the new Halfar logistics centre stood out as the most exciting aspect.

Special Jury Prize

This first ever special prize was awarded for the production of some excellent application forms and the company behind the initiative, SurvivALL i.G. Even if it is not about promotional products in the classical sense, the jury felt that SurvivALL's environmental initiative, to support deep cleaning of the oceans, was worthy of distinction.

PSI 2021 will be held on 18-20 May, 2021 in Düsseldorf. For more information, go to psi-messe.com

BUILDING BACK BETTER

With a new look and focus for the industry's only bespoke education programme, there's never been a better time to demonstrate your commitment to excellence

The BPMA has announced the long-awaited return of the TPM Course, Trained in Promotional Marketing, for its March 2021 intake. Boasting a brand-new platform to enhance learner experience, fresh and fully updated content plus live webinars, the only foundation course recommended for industry professionals has taken on new significance during the pandemic.

A FRESH APPROACH

Following a major technical issue a few months ago, the education platform was already being updated by the BPMA when all learning had to be suspended. Taking the opportunity to overhaul the popular course has resulted in a fresh approach to learning and subject matter, central to the BPMA's core directive – to inspire, connect and educate the industry.

Citing the many changes in the industry in the last year, the BPMA has strived to create the right content for today's promotional merchandise businesses to promote expert knowledge and commercial dexterity. The need to stay on top of areas such as research and trends has always been at the forefront of the skills every promotional business needs but with many lost skills in the wider end-user sector, at no other time is our expertise more sought after.

Preparing for the surge in demand now expected as the vaccination roll out continues apace across the UK, end users are indicating a strong return to ad spend as confidence grows across the country, according to the latest figures from the Advertising Association/WARC. A hoped-for safe return to events, hospitality and education in the coming months will carry great opportunities for the merchandise industry to step up and provide safe, secure touchpoints for brands and services



wishing to get their message to the masses. End user belief is further boosted by the assurance their promotional merchandise partners are knowledgeable and trained, taking the lead to deliver excellence on their behalf.

GETTING READY TO SERVE CUSTOMERS WITH QUALIFIED KNOWLEDGE

Covering essential learning across subjects such as customer service, sales, handling artwork and proofing, a wide selection of elective subjects awaits learners to encourage deeper knowledge in different categories. Testing at every step, learners must amass 180 points before taking their exam. Complemented by a series of live webinars from selected speakers on core topics such as finance and sales, those on the course will be able to increase their understanding and gain additional points. The course is run over a set period, differing to the previous course set up to ensure learners can achieve in a structured 'on time' environment.

Supported at every step by the BPMA

team, both employee and employer can track and monitor progress during the course, leading to more successful outcomes for learners. Starting in March, each intake runs for up to six months to ensure each person taking the course has the opportunity to achieve their qualification within the year.

Suitable for all entry level staff, it is also perfect for those returning to work after a long furlough period and with training also permitted for staff while on furlough, the TPM course represents a great way to connect back to the industry.

FOR ALL INDUSTRY SECTORS AND PARTNERS

A TPM course is not just for distributors; the BPMA heavily promotes the course to suppliers and service providers to help them understand the market better, embracing every aspect of the supply chain process, and techniques. By providing this in-depth knowledge, the concise TPM course is the perfect foundation for any member of the team.

The BPMA provides three levels of industry specific courses together with other relevant learning opportunities. The much-favoured CPM, Certified in Promotional Marketing, has also undergone the same refurbishment resulting in a reinvigorated commercially driven course to equip those in the industry with 3-5+ years' experience with the aptitude and competence expected of the industry.

Interested in enrolling? There is still time to join the TPM intake. Contact the BPMA on 01372 371184 or email education@bpma.co.uk for more information today.

The TPM course is only open to BPMA members. If you are interested in BPMA membership and education for your staff, please contact enquiries@bpma.co.uk.

BPMA EDUCATION PROGRAMME

Are your teams trained in promotional merchandise?

Register your staff on the TPM course starting in March 2021

The BPMA Trained in Promotional Merchandise (TPM) course is the only UK industry specific entry level course for your teams. Delivering essential training on trends, promotional merchandise fundamentals everyone needs to know, plus the latest topics driving the industry forward, accessed through our online learning platform. Benefit from expert knowledge, built by the industry for the industry, complimenting your company training and development.

Our March course includes:

- Introductory webinar
- Guest speaker webinars
- Access to all TPM course content delivered online – including artwork, industry research, screen printing and much more!
- Online exam
- Online community

Start the course in March and achieve your TPM certificate in 6 months

Why enrol?

- Flexible, structured learning programme
- Online portal can be accessed 24/7
- Industry specific expert knowledge
- Fresh, updated content
- Cost effective training for the whole team
- Compliments company training & development



➤ **Sign up**

For more information and to sign up contact
education@bpma.co.uk or call 01372 371 184

www.bpma.co.uk

SECURING A TARIFF RULING - IS IT WORTH THE WAIT?

The BPMA is working closely with Government departments to help members to navigate new processes and seize opportunities post-transition

January 2021 will go down in history as the month the UK's transition from the European Union ended with a big bang.

With many in our industry having faced the toughest month they have ever experienced, the clarity on rules and how they apply to our sector remains both challenging and expensive.

Hard to classify

While some areas are starting to become clearer, the land of opportunity hailed by HM Government, may feel a long way from the reality of business in these last few months. Typically, many goods in the sector fall under the 'hard to classify' sector and Government teams are increasingly directing us to seeking a ruling on certain goods to avoid issues through the to inward processing to avoid complex customs issues. Recent commitment from Government teams centred on 'Business Readiness' has told the BPMA they are fully committed to supporting every sector.

BPMA CEO Carey Trevill commented: "It is encouraging to see Government teams engaging so extensively albeit later in the process than everyone would have liked. It is clear the nature of our sector is 'atypical' and with elements of creative industries, manufacturing and more, we don't fit neatly into one segment."

Clarification for the sector

She added: "With much greater understanding of our sector capabilities and importantly our contribution to the UK economy, we have an accelerated programme now in place with these teams. We have welcomed input from representatives at VAT stakeholder engagement, the Business Energy & Industrial Strategy team, and The Institute of Export helping clarify issues for the industry."



Working closely with several Government teams for advice, both BPMA and its members have found advice has however differed when looking at tariffs and rules of origin. Flagging these issues to the Business Energy & Industrial Strategy team, the recommendation has been for the industry to secure special rulings for goods in certain circumstances and consider how inward customs processing could help ease the flow of goods.

Advance Tariff Rulings

Gaining an Advance Tariff Ruling may be just the answer many firms are looking for. Classifying goods can take some time; up to 120 days is the guidance given by the Government but the benefits of a ruling provide a reference number that uniquely identifies your goods and an explicit description of your goods which can be used to easily identify them at the frontier.

To apply you will need:

- a Government Gateway user ID and password – if you do not have a user ID, you can create one when you apply
- an Economic Operator Registration and Identification (EORI) number that starts with GB

- detailed information about goods, which can vary depending on what goods are
- provide brochures, manuals, photographs and samples where appropriate

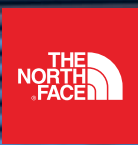
You can also let HMRC know what you think the commodity code should be. You will however need to apply separately for each type of goods needing a decision.

Find out more

Email the Tariff Classification Service on tariff.classification@hmrc.gov.uk to find out more or visit www.gov.uk/guidance/apply-for-an-advance-tariff-ruling and apply online.

The changes are here to stay and with the BPMA and majority of trade bodies putting pressure on Government to help illustrate sector examples, the expectation of faster, clearer guidance is promised. Visit www.gov.uk/topic/business-tax/import-export for more guidance and direction.

If you are a BPMA member, detailed support and guidance is being provided on this and other import/export topics. Contact the BPMA for more information via enquiries@bpma.co.uk or view their events page via bpma.co.uk/events for the latest online support.



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