



IT'S GOOD TO BE BACK

The industry gathers again at Merchandise World **p16**



HANDING OVER THE BATON

BPMA'S WAGSTAFF AND WILLETTS ON THE WAY AHEAD FOR THE INDUSTRY **p12**



DEAL OR NO DEAL GETTING A BUSINESS SALE RIGHT **p30**

TEMPTING TREATS PROMOTIONAL FOOD AND DRINK **p21**

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NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2021

WELCOME



Welcome to November/December issue of *Product Media*, brimming with news, views and information for the industry. Our special feature in this edition focuses on some

delicious trends in Food and Confectionery; look out for some of the industry's finest in this issue, adding extra flavour to merchandise.

In September, we finally opened the doors once more to welcome industry friends back to Marshall Arena in Milton Keynes. With visitor numbers close to 2019, a happy buzz filled the hall as we heard many reacquainting themselves with those exhibiting and for some meeting for the first time in person. A great day was had

by all; look out for pictures and our post show wrap up in this issue. In our next issue, we'll be talking about Merchandise World in January 2022 which is shaping up to be a great show, packed with innovative products and suppliers keen to share their wares.

The day-to-day news as we emerge from the pandemic has an outlook where it can be hard to locate the positive. The challenges across the industry have continued in the last few months with no sign of price increases easing in the short term. Continuing driver and petrol scares do nothing to smooth the next part of this recovery journey.

With end-users assuming much has gone 'back to normal' its essential we keep up the excellent communication with our customers to see out this still unpredictable period. However, across

the industry, the overall mindset is a positive one with orders still growing month on month – just another sign of the resilience our industry shows time and time again. Senior industry figures have also commented on the continued need for collaboration across the supply chain to ensure the encouraging uptick remains.

Read on for more news and useful articles on essential industry knowledge such as the extended deadlines on UKCA. Don't forget if you would like to contribute to the next issue with your news, articles or find out about special features, get in touch with us via editor@productmediamagazine.co.uk. For advertising in the next issue and for opportunities in 2022, please get in touch with Tom Robey at the BPMA.

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).



British Promotional Merchandise Association
Fetcham Park House, Lower Road,
Fetcham, Leatherhead, Surrey, KT22 9HD
All phone enquiries: 01372 371183
www.productmediamagazine.co.uk
www.bpma.co.uk

Editorial
editor@productmediamagazine.co.uk
Advertising and Media Pack
advertising@productmediamagazine.co.uk
Circulation
circulation@productmediamagazine.co.uk
Editorial Services
Stuart Derrick

Design and Production
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Promotion for Geiger UK's Kinasz

Geiger has promoted Vicky Kinasz, managing director of its UK arm, to the executive team where she will work on strategic planning, policy, and overall future business growth and direction for Geiger.



Kinasz will keep her role as managing director of Geiger UK. Prior to joining the company in May 2020, Kinasz was managing director of the distributor agency Supremia, which included overseeing key accounts such as global beauty products manufacturer Coty.

She has 25 years of experience in the promotions and merchandising industry. Her first industry job involved the manufacturing and licensing of toys.

Geiger has also promoted Elizabeth Fagan to vice president of American merchandise business Crestline.

Jo-an Lantz, Geiger president and CEO, said: "Both Vicky Kinasz and Elizabeth Fagan have the leadership skills and management talent to support our company culture and growth trajectory. It will be exciting to work alongside them as they lead their respective business units into the future."



USB2U invests in the future

Technology merchandise company USB2U has invested in two new full colour, digital printers to add to its production facility in Northampton.

With demand for branded USB sticks and other tech gifts increasing since the Government announced its roadmap out of coronavirus restrictions, the firm is ready to fulfil requirements for branded merchandise giveaways at corporate events as the sector makes its recovery.

The new printers increase USB2U's production capacity and offer photo-quality prints. An extensive range of USB sticks and tech gifts can now be printed with a company logo, slogan or picture.

With stock holding including USB sticks, power banks, wireless chargers, cables and presentation boxes, USB2U can deliver bulk orders of tech gifts printed in just 24 hours.

Sebastian La Porta, managing director, said: "After a difficult 18 months for the industry, we are seeing business confidence slowly increasing. However, this is set against the global transport delays which are unlikely to improve for the foreseeable future."

He added: "This major investment ensures we have the capacity to deal with this increase in demand and ensure that we have full control of the supply chain."

Recognising resilience at the Bardon Group

In September, Recognition Express gathered for its first face to face event for over a year, the theme was one of sharing experiences, learnings and lessons. The collaborative air of Recognition Express franchisees meant an honest and open exchange of views, supported by the management team at Bardon Group, owners of the franchise group.

During a day crammed full of ideas, inspiration and innovation, Bardon Group chair Nigel Toplis praised the franchisees for their staying power during the pandemic. Tales emerged from those contributing to the day's events that told a story of grit and determination.

The performance of Recognition Express has slowly and surely recovered during the pandemic. Group support between franchisees was evident in their exchanges; a sense of pride in their network and the key to customer retention was hailed in the strong communication style adopted and encouraged by the Recognition team back at base.

Invited to join the session by Bardon



Group's new managing director, Chris Masters, BPMA CEO Carey Trevill delivered a closing key note speech to the assembled franchisees. Focused on the theme of trust and communication, Trevill spoke about how to harness end-user attention; why the measure of effectiveness was critical to claiming budgets; where to focus time on securing end user attention, and what matters to their audiences when considering acquisition and retention.

Chris Masters said: "It was fantastic to be able to get our franchisees together in a live environment again following 18 months of only seeing the group over Zoom. It was also encouraging to see the venue bustling and holding other events for other businesses. As a network of over 40 years Recognition Express has always shown resilience and adaptability in the face of adversity and we can now add survival of a pandemic to our list."

He added: "We heard from five franchisees about their individual experiences ranging from raising awareness, to keeping close relationships, to investment in manufacturing capabilities to ensure they are best placed to thrive in a post COVID world. We were also privileged to be joined by Carey from the BPMA who gave an informative and inspirational keynote on communication, customer behaviour and how to stay relevant in an ever-changing market."

Recognition Express also awarded Jan Chidley as Franchisee of the Year.

COGS awards look to reward campaign enablers

BPMA member are invited to enter the IPM's awards for service agencies who help power promotional campaigns. The COGS awards are back for 2021 following a year's absence due to COVID.

Awards are being given across seven categories as well as a Grand Prix award for the entry that is judged to be the best overall.

The IPM states that service agencies continue to manage the promotional sector's work and help to deliver exceptional campaigns.

In a call for entries, it states: "These unprecedented times have demanded remarkable feats of agility and resourcefulness. Show us what you have done and help us elevate what you all continue to do. With so many more obstacles to overcome, your clients need to know you are still there to call upon, fighting fit and ready for whatever new challenges emerge."

CATEGORIES THIS YEAR ARE:

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C. Print, Packaging, Point of Sale
D. Prize, Incentive, Reward and Loyalty
E. Risk Management, Insurance Services
F. Digital, Social
G. Best Service Provided in response to Covid-19



The deadline for submissions is 12 November and the COGS are open for submission now. For more details and an entry brochure, go to theipm.org.uk. The BPMA Awards are also back this year. For full details, go to page 15

Tool for greener advertising launches

The advertising industry is getting behind a carbon calculator for advertising production to ensure advertising agencies, production companies and production service companies are able to measure the carbon impact of their projects.

Launched by AdGreen, a representative body that advocates for a greener ad industry, the calculator works by allowing users to enter information in four key areas that relate to a production. By inputting data related to activities such as travel and transport, energy and fuels, and materials and catering, users can build up a picture of the carbon impact of their production.

Sebastian Munden, chair of Ad Net Zero and EVP and general manager, Unilever UK & Ireland, said: "As an industry, we have to take responsibility for the carbon emissions involved in advertising production activities and take rapid steps to reduce them. The AdGreen carbon calculator is a brilliant tool for every ad professional involved in the process of producing ads – we will be embedding its use into production of Unilever ad productions going forward. I urge everyone to register for the tool, collect the levy and embed the use of a carbon calculator like this in their working practices."

The tool is free at the point of use, as



the project is funded by the AdGreen levy – a 0.25% charge on production spend, paid by participating advertisers, and collected by their agencies before being passed to AdGreen each quarter. This was launched in June.

The need to track, measure and reduce carbon emissions involved in ad production is an essential part of Ad Net Zero, the UK advertising industry's plan to reach net zero by end 2030.

It was designed by Alchemy Digital and developed by BAFTA Media Technology Limited – the same duo who created the albert carbon calculator for the Film and TV Industry. Future developments planned include bid process functionality so that projects can be compared by not just budget and treatment, but environmental impact too. A reporting dashboard will also be added, allowing users to pull information required for company carbon reporting.

Back to face to face for TPW and Snap

The Pen Warehouse and Snap Products presented its range of new and best-selling products at the AIM XP exhibition recently.

In a return to face to face meetings, the firm discussed plans for the future, new products and caught up with colleagues.

Activities included team exercises and discussions involving mixed groups of distributors and suppliers to gain insight of the industry and its demands from both perspectives.

Matt Dyl, head of sales, said: "We just want to thank the team at AIM for hosting a great day and to the distributors that attended, these events are brilliant and we are so grateful to be exhibiting again after a challenging 18 months."

• Check out the review of Merchandise World on p16





French appointment for Listawood

Listawood Europe has appointed Charles De Varax as account director for its operation in France.

He brings a 20-year pedigree in the promotional industry, most recently with Senator France where he managed key accounts for 15 years.

"Charles has a wonderful knowledge of the promotional industry in France and is highly thought of by distributors across the country," said Listawood group sales & marketing director, Andrew Hill. "Even with the effects of COVID and Brexit, the market in France has continued to grow at a fast pace for us so we are pleased to appoint someone senior who has the experience of this really dynamic environment."

De Varax said: "I have been very aware of Listawood's development in recent years. They are at the forefront of product and process innovation as well as being completely focused on sustainability in everything they do. They have many plans in place for the EU, so this is a fantastic opportunity for me to support all my industry colleagues who demand both innovation and creativity."

He made his first event appearance for Listawood at French merchandise show, Les Specialistes in September.



Essential gets a round in to help local families

Dunstable-based Essential Workwear was among the businesses taking part in a golf day at Dunstable Downs Golf Club to support a local charity.

The event was in aid of Dunstable mayor Gloria Martin's charity Home-Start Central Bedfordshire. A raffle on the day raised £350.

Home-Start supports families who have at least one child under the age of five and are struggling for reasons including disability, poverty, mental illness and multiple births.

Essential Workwear's sales and marketing director, Dorian Tranter, took third in the individual event which had 50 participants in total.

Tranter said: "As a family-run business, we are keen to be at the heart of our community, making a positive difference wherever possible. The golf day was so much fun. I'd highly recommend other businesses sign up in future – it's a great way to get involved in your community and support a good cause, as well as being a great team-



building exercise for colleagues."

Councillor Martin thanked Essential and other businesses that took part.

"The majority of my working life was spent as a health visitor, so I saw first-hand the work of the volunteers in this organisation and I know this charity needs all the support we can give it to continue its vital role," she said. "Children are this country's future and many were even more disadvantaged by the measures that had to be taken to control the COVID-19 pandemic. The work with families that Home-Start provides will be even more necessary in the future."

Dunstable based Essential employs around 60 people in the Bedfordshire town.

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Page launches job matching service

Page Distributors is stepping into the world of recruitment to use its 30 years of experience in the merchandise sector to help individuals looking to make a move.

Brian Hayward, Page's managing director said that Page represents a group of up to 40 distributors who represent some of the best names in the industry and are always on the lookout for new people to join their teams. The recruitment service is only open to Page member companies.

"However, if you work in the industry, you may be hesitant of sending your details to a rival company in the fear that it will get back to your existing employer," he said. "At Page Recruitment, we guarantee your anonymity until it gets to final selection and only with your consent."

Because the Page group has distributors all over the country it can help individuals looking to re-locate, as well as those who want to take a step up the ladder or just feel that they need a new challenge.

The main openings are in sales administration, sales executive/account handlers and, in some cases, directorships with a view to running the company.

Hayward said all applications will get a reply and that expectations will be managed to ensure that the aspirations of applicants could be matched with potential opportunities.

Candidates abbreviated details will be sent to interested parties within the Page group before a potential introduction is made.

Applicants are invited to send their details to Brian@pagepartnership.co.uk.



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SPECIAL EFFECTS THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Besides looking outstanding, special effects give your designs and logos a point of difference, says **Clive Allcott**



Demand for special-effects printing is coming back right now, and most major retail brands have at least some graphics in each season's range that use one specialty technique or another. What is different in the promotional clothing arena is that most special-effect printing is entirely design driven rather than just technique for its own sake which leads to a creative demand from you and your artwork team.

Photochromic ink - Photochromic, or UV-reactive inks, are almost transparent when viewed indoors but change to vivid colours in sunlight.

Advantages: Magical effects can be created with a print that effectively displays two different designs, indoors and outdoors.

Disadvantages: Only a limited range of colours is available.

Glow in the dark ink - This is an ideal branding solution for staff clothing in clubs

and bars or where darkened areas prevail.

Advantages: Can combine with a standard print to highlight a particular part in the design.

Disadvantages: Maximum effect only works in the dark.

Foil printing - Foil printing is a two-stage process which leaves a shiny metallic 'print'. First, the garment is screen printed, using a special adhesive rather than ink, and cured (dried) in the normal way. A sheet of foil is then heat-pressed on to the image created by the adhesive. When the press is lifted away, the foil sticks to the adhesive-printed areas and the excess is removed.

Advantages: It's the best shiny metallic printing effect. Bling at its best!

Disadvantages: It may not work quite as well for fine, detailed designs, and it's vulnerable to energetic washing.

Metallic inks - Metallic inks result in a shimmery, sparkly effect, rather like metallic

car paint. It is cheaper than foil printing but doesn't have the same full shiny effect.

Glitter printing - Like foil printing and metallic inks, glitter inks can make your design sparkly and eye-catching. They're available in a variety of colours and will make that logo look dynamic.

Puff print - Puff prints are created by mixing a specially formulated base in with the ink. The base-ink mix expands as the print is cured through the heat tunnel, leaving a 3D texture.

Flock - Flock printing is again achieved by adding a special base to the ink, which gives the ink a furry, velvety texture as it cures through the heat tunnel. It can also be supplied as a transfer print.

All of these specialty printing techniques can be used to give your designs a little "extra" something, making them special and unique.

Happy selling,
Clive (The Bag and Clothing Guru). PM



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A STRIKING SUCCESS

The return of the BPMA Golf Day proved a popular day out for members

As the sun rose over Burnham Beeches Golf Club on Wednesday 14 October, some of the industry's finest golfers prepped themselves for a day of spectacular putts, birdies and drives across the rolling greens in Buckinghamshire.

Organised by BPMA Board director Clive Allcott of DTB Europe and the BPMA team, the long awaited golf day had been postponed several times due to COVID. With teams itching to get out on the green, the eight all-male teams were fortified with bacon sarnies and set off clutching scorecards and BPMA branded leather scorecard holders supplied by Juniper Products for the event. The competitive spirit was evident as teams vied to win the range of amazing titles and trophies on offer, kindly sponsored by Crystal Galleries and Laser Crystal.

Throughout the day, the teams were fed and watered to make sure they could stay the challenging course at Burnham. With incredible drives and performances from some surprising quarters, the event concluded with a dinner and award presentation from Clive Allcott, BPMA Chair Angela Wagstaff and BPMA CEO Carey Trevill.



The BPMA will be hosting another Golf Day in June 2022 and hope to see more members joining the event. Playing on the day, the BPMA's Tom Robey said: "It was a great event, and we are already planning next year's. We really hope to see a wider variety of members playing as we know there are some excellent golfers out there and those who just play for the fun and relaxation of this inclusive sport."

Interested in getting involved in the next industry golf event? Contact the BPMA for more information. 

2021 BPMA Golf Day results

- **Winners of the 9-hole BPMA Scramble** – Brand Addition (Andy Martin 24hcp, Tom Ryder 6hcp, Steve Royle-Toone 24hcp, Matt Pluckrose 9hcp)
- **Winners of BPMA 4-ball better ball competition** – Team Direct Textiles + Bags (Clive Allcott DTB 11hcp, James Allcott DTB 16hcp, Oliver Simpson LSI 11hcp, Lloyd Simpson LSI 16hcp)
- **Runners-up in the 4-ball better ball** – Team Alvaston
- **Runner-up of BPMA best individual score** – Billy Hussain – Alvaston
- **Winner of BPMA individual score** – James Allcott – DTB
- **Nearest the pin** – 3rd hole – Oliver Simpson – LSI
- **Nearest the pin** – 6th Hole – Matt Pluckrose – Desktop Ideas
- **Nearest the pin** – 10th Hole – Aiden Brown – PF Concepts
- **Nearest the pin** – 13th Hole – Simon Barber – Alvaston
- **Longest drive** – 18th Hole – James Allcott – DTB



ONWARDS AN

BPMA chairman Angela Wagstaff passes the baton to Haydn Willetts this month. *Product Media* spoke to them both

The highs and lows of chairman Angela

After three years as chair of the BPMA, Angela Wagstaff is handing over the reins to Haydn Willetts following her time in charge that she describes as having its many highs and lows.

One of the 'highs' was being introduced to a packed Merchandise World gala dinner by charismatic 6 foot 10 former rugby international Martin Bayfield. However, one of the lows was definitely the previous awards ceremony which didn't go quite as well.

"I was quite nervous and bit down on my tooth just as I got on stage, shattering my tooth and leaving me with a mouthful of fragments and the inability to remember anything," she laughs.

It's possibly one of the few times she's been lost for words as chair after joining the BPMA board intent on making a difference and giving back time to an industry that

has supported Angela and her business Allwag Promotions over the years.

"If you want to change things, then you have to get involved, so I joined the board and fairly quickly, be it by default, volunteered to be vice chair because nobody could step into the breach," she says.

Her passion was, and remains, education and training, and she helped set up the BPMA education programme. She was also heavily involved in setting up the first BPMA show at Silverstone, which would eventually become Merchandise World when the association teamed up with Sourcing City.

"It proved a real launchpad to bring the industry together," she said. "The Board wanted to put on a show for its members by its members but we didn't realise just how much work goes into it."

That was solved by the joint venture

with Sourcing City, which has created the industry's main meeting place, and one that came back in its September slot this summer after an 18-month enforced absence.

The pandemic has been the biggest challenge the industry has faced over that time, which coincided with bringing CEO Carey Trevill on board in the early part of last year.

"We needed to reshape what we were doing as a trade association and Carey's experience with other trade bodies, and her extensive advertising background mean that she was the perfect candidate," says Angela.

They only managed one strategy meeting that wasn't COVID-related before it became apparent that the areas that Angela had prioritised for her chairmanship, such as sustainability, the next generation, end user engagement and research were going to suffer.

Communication and education

Haydn Willetts, the regional director of Midocean for UK and Ireland steps up to the chair of the BPMA at what he calls "a really pivotal moment for our industry".

"With all the complexity of post Brexit delivery, compliancy transparency in the marketplace, supply chain challenges regarding courier delivery accuracy along with stock and raw material availability and pricing combined with heavy increases in demand as a result of the bounce back we are witnessing, the months ahead have the potential to offer a bumpy ride for all involved in the supply chain," he says.

Compliance and sustainability are huge issues for suppliers. The DNA of a product must be demonstrated as meeting the required criteria. This translates to continual improvement of working conditions not only in the UK and EU production sites but with more challenging global supply partners.

"The final customer will insist on this type of conformity of product and people compliance. The ongoing challenge of carbon footprint, sustainability and the eco angle of product supply is going to become ever more important," he says.



ND UPWARDS

Angela describes her CEO as “an absolute star” in how she helped steer the association through the pandemic, keeping the association on track and helping weekly webinars to keep the embattled sector up to date at a time when many were both uncertain and unaware of legislative changes and the impact of COVID.

“During the pandemic, the BPMA showed how strong we are as a trade association and as an industry. It wasn’t the 18 months that I’d planned certainly,” she says. “I do think we earned our stripes and provided a supportive service to our members. We engaged with far more people than we’ve ever engaged with and our reach was far greater.”

A big disrupter has been Brexit, although it has almost been overshadowed by the pandemic as a challenge, Angela says. However, in the longer term it will have a bigger impact on

the economy and the industry.

As it was, Brexit and the pandemic squeezed some of the initiatives that she thinks the industry has to address, such as making room for new blood. She was conscious that the industry risked ageing if it didn’t appeal and engage with younger people.

The result was Next Gen, a group that brought together younger voices with the idea that they could be mentored as they found their feet in the industry and be represented on the Board. Because of the past year that hasn’t quite happened but it remains something she thinks is important.

Sustainability is also a key area that Wagstaff has been passionate about and one that she will continue to focus on as she steps down as chair into the President’s role. While many suppliers are progressive, she says there is still a huge mountain to climb to rid the industry of its reputation for throwaway



products, mainly by educating its buyers throughout the supply chain.

As Angela reflects on the many highs and lows, she says: “I’ve been privileged to work with a fantastic Board and have enjoyed the last three years despite the challenges faced. I look forward to supporting Haydn and wish him every success.”

Many suppliers, including Midocean, are working to be more transparent with testing reports for both product and suppliers, he says.

“End customers are demanding instant gratification to their requests. Companies who do not embrace this requirement along with information on product stock availability, print capability, and performance potentially could leave themselves vulnerable in the supply chain to certain customers.”

The BPMA can help explain sustainability and what that really means, as well as educating staff of both suppliers and distributors. The relaunched education programme will ensure that new blood coming into the trade has a high level of professionalism.

After a tough 18 months for everybody in the business, Willetts is positive about the future.

“This year has been really strong with order books coming back in a really dramatic fashion and talking to industry colleagues on both the supplier and distributor sides of the fence, this seems to be the case for large chunks of the trade.”

The challenge for many is to ramp back up, both in terms of staff and stock.

Product availability changes rapidly from quotation to the placing of an

order. It means communication is more important than ever to ensure that customers are aware about dynamic changes in the order cycle.

Change is also coming as furlough and government support comes to an end. It’s something of an unknown he admits but says the industry should continue to drive home the value in the marketing mix of promotional merchandise.

“The BPMA will continue to educate and reinforce the importance that merchandise should and can play in a company’s engagement to be a more important part of the overall marketing mix rather than a last-minute consideration.”

Again, it comes back to education, he says. Often a distributor is reliant on a junior member of staff within the end customer relaying a complex message on issues like compliance and sustainability to their boss.

When it comes to his approach to the chairmanship, Willetts says he hopes to carry on where his predecessor left off, providing an element of stability in a period of great change.

He hopes to be inclusive and get more of the industry involved and to garner further participation from both suppliers and distributors alike. For companies to recognise and take advantage of the added value in what the association does and

focus on a partnership approach to help the industry win business as a whole.

Relations between suppliers and distributors will be a focus.

“There have always been far too many assumptions on both sides and a lack of understanding. So, the communication needs to be sharp, accurate, informative, clear and concise, with the ultimate aim that the end customer experiences a smooth, professional and fully compliant service.”

Trusting and utilising the information on suppliers’ websites will help, he says, giving instant information that can be provided by the distributor to the final client.

“People need to trust this information so that they can respond to the end user’s request far more quickly and effectively.”

Willetts says that one thing that has come out of the past 18 months is that players in the industry should respect each other.

“We should all try to play nicely with each other. There’s lots of pressure on all sides of the supply chain and everybody wants everything immediately. We all strive to do our best but with the sheer volume of transactions that are taking place at present, issues can arise. Talk to each other more to understand situations fully. Everybody has the same end goal to put as much merchandise out in front of people as we can.”

BPMA ANNUAL AWARDS DINNER 2022

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RECOGNISING *excellence*

The BPMA Awards are back to mark the best in our industry

We've come a long way from February 2020 when we gathered to celebrate the BPMA Awards and recognise those brilliant businesses who landed Product of the Year accolades. Once again, the BPMA is rolling out the red carpet for its members to finally honour member achievements.

As we look ahead to 2022, the Product Awards and BPMA Awards are back with a bang. With refreshed Product Award categories to enter, the BPMA has been busy planning for both Awards over the last few months.

"We're so excited to be finally talking about Awards again. We decided during last year the situation just wasn't right so this year, we're recognising successes over 2020 and 2021 for our Product Awards and opening voting for the BPMA Awards," says

the BPMA's Tom Robey.

With an extraordinarily tough few years for the entire industry, the BPMA is looking to celebrate the innovation that drove members forward, and recognise the resilience and staying power of companies who strove to maintain excellence throughout.

"These Awards are going to represent so much more this year as we all know how much effort has gone into just staying the course; we can't wait to mark their achievements," says Robey. "What has been so exciting about planning these awards are the products our judges will be asked to review after the incredible innovation we've seen plus seeing the outcomes of the votes for the BPMA awards."

BPMA PRODUCT AWARDS

The Product Awards this year recognise products on the market from January 2020

right through to November 2021 as exception for this year only. With a category refresh, BPMA suppliers can choose from a range of categories to suit their product, remembering products can be entered into more than one category.

- Drinkware Product of the Year
- Awards & Gifting Product of the Year
- Pens & Stationery Product of the Year
- Exhibition Product of the Year
- Technology Product of the Year
- Health & Travel Product of the Year
- Bags & Folders Product of the Year
- Work & Play Product of the Year
- Apparel Product of the Year
- * Eco Product of the year

The Product Awards are open to BPMA suppliers exhibiting at Merchandise World. More information can be found at bpma.co.uk.

BPMA AWARDS

The BPMA Awards provide a truly unique insight into company reputation and performance. Voting for this year's awards opens in December with the membership recognising suppliers and distributors who have excelled.

Members can also nominate their 'Unsung Hero' during voting. As the industry regroups for Merchandise World in January 2022, the BPMA will be once again hosting a glittering Awards Dinner in Coventry.

Look out for more details from the BPMA or visit bpma.co.uk for more information on entering, voting and booking a ticket for the Awards Dinner on Wednesday 26 January 2022 at The Ricoh Arena, Coventry.





A WORLD OF opportunity

The industry was holding its breath for a great Merchandise World and on the day Milton Keynes delivered a safe, social and successful return to meeting again

This September, the BPMA team had the slightly unreal but real experience of packing up and heading off to Milton Keynes for its first show in more than 18 months. A sense of trepidation and excitement filled the office as they took call after call from members, looking forward to catching up in person after so many months on screen. The BPMA was back on the road, ready for Merchandise World.

As the doors opened for the show, the happy din of our fellow distributors and suppliers proved the show was not only welcome but timed well as the industry enjoys increased order levels after many months of uncertainty. Conversation was consistent in tone and theme; increased orders, challenges over stock and availability, freight charges that could surely not rise any further – and a report of communication issues across the board.

CEO Carey Trevill reported to PM on her outlook for the coming months: "We

were all clearly delighted to be back at Merchandise World and as this was my first show – and the first time for me meeting so many of our members face to face – it was a wonderfully exhausting experience, and I can't wait for January 2022."

Looking further ahead, she noted that the industry faced a combination of unique opportunities and stresses at the moment.

"The industry has really endured over this period in a way perhaps many thought they never could have done, but we're not out of the woods yet. The overall positive view from most members and industry we speak to at the moment has an underlying fragility dictated by the price rises in raw materials, stock and of course freight."

She added: "Every time we think we've seen the worst of it, something else pops up. I have faith in the resilience of the industry and the news that budgets are being spent in our direction. I would stress to every distributor the need to keep communicating

with their suppliers and for suppliers to do the same. We must ensure every base is covered during the order process – landing these orders smoothly and successfully is essential for every part of our supply chain at the moment so keeping on top of any twists and turns is paramount."

Referring to increased levels of feedback from all members, the pressure from end users who are assuming it's back to 'normal' is in turn ratcheting up pressure across the industry, Trevill pressed home that managing expectations is fundamental to maintaining order levels and reputation.

The BPMA will be continuing to support members in the coming months with more business information, skills and insight to help every member stay on top form.

HOW WAS IT FOR YOU?

Eighty exhibitors took the leap of faith and booked stands to meet once again at Milton

Keynes' Marshall Arena. With constantly changing situations and expectations in the run up to the show, it was unclear which distributors, and how many would attend.

As Sourcing City's David Long has noted, the entire industry has been suffering for many months and many distributors have had to reduce staffing levels to survive. This in turn meant that the potential visitors were reduced, and there was also the knock on effect that it made it more difficult for distributors to leave their offices. Based on these circumstances it was anticipated that visitor numbers could be disappointing.

However, much to everyone's delight around 400 distributors attended the show and hearing the show hall buzzing was

exciting for everyone. Many exhibitors also commented on the high quality of the people they were speaking to, and were delighted that their commitment to the show had paid off. It is clear that people were very keen to reignite existing relationships, meet new people and to get the industry thriving again.

As Haydn Willetts of Midocean put it: "It shows what a social industry we have where people do value each other."

In terms of business opportunity, the recent reawakening of the sector following the pandemic induced hibernation made for a busier than usual late summer show, according to Oldeani's Lucy Bennett.

"Businesses that would normally have

been planning ahead for the autumn seem to have held back, cautiously but are now ready to get back on track – hence the high volume of urgent enquiries."

The show also demonstrated that it was possible to hold a show in a COVID safe environment, with a safety policy for everyone's benefit.

It won't be long before the industry gets the chance to do it all again, on the even bigger stage of the two-day Merchandise World at Ricoh Arena.

Merchandise World's new year event takes place on 26-27 January, with the BPMA Awards Dinner taking place on the 26 January. For more details go to merchadiseworld.co.uk



Everybody was a little bit unsure of exactly what would transpire on the day. But I think it was important for the players to be visible, and to show distributors that they were ready, willing and able to work and move forward. Overall, the numbers were pretty good and I think distributors made the effort to get through the door and see the suppliers that had invested in the show.

The response has been overwhelmingly positive with people really enjoying seeing each other. There was a mixture of people who still wanted to wear masks to the other end where people were throwing their arms around you and giving you a big kiss, which was great.

So, there was a certain amount of confidence and it showed what a social industry we have where people do value each other. Most relationships are positive, most communication is positive, and it was a really good platform to set the tone for the rest of the year.

Haydn Willetts, Midocean



It was great to feel a buzz back and so much positivity from clients. Everyone seemed really pleased to be back out again and interested to see what new products there were. The general feeling was that business had definitely picked up over the summer when normally we might be expecting things to quieten down.

We were thrilled at the number of visitors. With five of us on the stand, we were busy from almost 8.30 until way into the afternoon. It was really encouraging to see so many people and to get such positive feedback on the stand and our products. Our range is growing all the time, particularly the drinkware so it was fantastic to be able to showcase our latest products.

Despite having known Oldeani for a number of years, we always see clients at the shows who are surprised at the range of products that we stock so it's a great opportunity to educate our clients on the services we can offer. We say it a lot, but you can't beat meeting face to face with people and allowing clients to touch and hold the products for themselves.

Sustainable products are of course high on everyone's agenda. I think promotions are becoming more sophisticated. We've moved away from the low cost giveaways, given out in huge volumes that ultimately end up being discarded. Customers seem to want quality items that reflect their brand and give the right message.

Demand is there for quality, practical gifts that have a real purpose other than just promoting a brand. When sourcing products we keep a firm eye on the retail market to see what's in demand and to ensure our products are well received by consumers. It's not just the products that customers are interested in. Packaging must be recyclable and kept to a minimum to reduce waste.

Lucy Bennett, Oldeani



It was brilliant to be back to really seeing people again, and being able to engage and find creative solutions together. We were pleasantly surprised at how busy the show became throughout the course of the day. It was lovely to see so many other fellow suppliers and all of the lovely distributors. The day was a great success.

Lots of visitors were looking for more UK-made products following experiences of customs delays and so on. There was also more interest in seeds and plants than ever before, as many connected with nature much more during the lockdowns. We are pleased to see a shift away from plastic products. Distributors told us that they can feel a bigger shift towards eco products. Lots of our samples went home with distributors who were keen to show clients.

Shaheen Shakeel, Sow Easy





It was so refreshing to have face to face meetings after such a long period of inactivity due to COVID. Just to interact on a personal level rather than a computer screen bought home just how much we missed our friends in the industry.

Great conversations were had covering product lines, updating of personal situations and company changes along with a return to happier times. Customers had an appetite for anything new and exciting along with a focus on recyclability and sustainability.

Clive Allcott, DTB



We were apprehensive about visitor numbers, as this is the first show back, however we were extremely impressed with the turnout. The hall was filled with familiar distributors, as well as some new faces, and some great conversations were had.

The industry seems to be full of life at the moment, and Merchandise World is certainly a great catalyst for activity.

Conversations were naturally around what new products we can provide. Everyone was using the show as a chance to find out about the fresh items they can provide for their clients.

In that respect, it was the perfect place to preview our brand new confectionery range. As expected, there has been an increase in demand for sustainable products, and for edible items. Specifically there has been a rise in the need for vegan and gluten free options.

We heard that some distributors had found some great success through direct mail products, such as our letterbox packs. These products are still selling well, and we see them remaining as part of merchandise propositions for some time.

Daniel Clarke, Eat My Logo

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Conspicuous consumption

Food and drink has the ability to connect directly with an audience, and there are so many options

In the last 18 months, we've all felt the need to say thank you, indulge others (and ourselves) in some delectable treats and the world of gifting has taken off. With some of the industry's finest rushed off their feet producing a range of sweet treats and wholesome delights, end users have discovered new ways to bring their brands to life through food and confectionery.

Celebrating the innovation and enterprise that didn't stop during lockdowns, this special feature explores the adjustments, focus and expectations across this sector. While business has been booming in the UK, the challenges faced after the UK's exit from the EU brought some unforeseen customs challenges never experienced before, leading some manufacturers to temporarily suspend or cease trading with certain parts of Europe whilst new rules took effect.

The advent of personalisation several years ago has pushed this sector into the spotlight, affording companies new ways to explore branded goodies, and

planet friendly expectations are now at the forefront of helping this category grow in popularity. And it's not just ingredients that are expected to pass the sustainable test, it's packaging and production too. PM has been discovering just how many manufacturers have not only been quietly developing brilliant ranges, they have been overhauling packaging and production for fully sustainable operations.

POWER OF THE INTERNAL MARKET

Like many merchandise companies, Eat My Logo had to pivot dramatically when the business events it relied on for bulk sales stopped overnight last March. It looked instead to postable products to send to those working from home to try and get remote staff engaged.

Fun initiatives such as cookie decorating over Zoom took off and the company's postable brownies, biscuits and cupcakes proved a popular option for firms looking to motivate isolated WFH employees.

"People still eat and companies still had money to spend. We looked to provide something that distributors could sell beyond PPE," says director Andy Poar.

With most distributors dealing with marketers, they missed out on the internal market, says Poar. Half of EML's orders are from internal events for employer engagement. HR isn't always linked to marketing so distributors may not have focused on this area.

Some of the company's biggest orders have been for internal events – 40,000 for Sky, 55,000 for Amazon – and the use of its products for internal projects is something that is likely to persist, says Poar.

Employee engagement is a more important subject than ever with growing skills shortages. Companies have to be able to keep their staff engaged and show that they care, or they will walk.

Generating a warm feeling is important, and few things are more emotive than a tasty treat.

With sustainability a hot topic, Eat My Logo has introduced eco flow wrap and

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right there should be no delays. We have added an extra week to all delivery times to be on safe side," he says.

A REFRESHING CHANGE

With business not as usual over the past 18 months, The Sweet People took the opportunity to reinvent itself and its product offer. It has been challenging, admits director Mandy Hastie.

"The entire landscape of our business changed. Overnight we went from

producing high quantities of low value items consigned to an individual address – to higher value 'gift items' going to individual addresses," she says.

A new range of edible gifts saw individual pots of jelly beans and mints replaced with postal style gift boxes filled with delicious treats including chocolate bars and truffles made in Leighton Buzzard.

With budgets switching from marketing to HR, the company produced gift packs to incentivise, motivate and retain people working from home.

"We anticipate that this trend is going to continue as companies look to new ways to communicate, motivate and retain staff now working from home," says Hastie. "Our most popular gift boxes included afternoon tea boxes, breakfast meeting boxes and we even did a Pancake Day edition."

Other changes include offering a fulfilment service for the first time, a rebrand

bio compostable donut pots. It has also invented a new style of cupcake that is individually wrapped to ensure foods are kept safe.

The company tried to educate distributors about the potential for edibles through webinars during lockdown.

Although distributors understand the long-term branding effect that something like a mug has, they're less clued up on how a transitory product like a cupcake or donut works, says Poar.

"The effect is different, but people love it. There's the 'tweet before you eat' effect where you get to interact with it," he says. "It engenders good will."

GREEN BOTTLES... CARTONS AND CANS

Drinks specialist Justadrop has looked to innovation and sustainability to keep forging ahead.

It supplies water packaged in bottles made from recycled plastic (RPET) and glass, due to the demand for eco 'green' products, and has introduced water in 330ml cartons and 330ml cans. It also supplies a variety of drinks including beer and Prosecco in 250ml cans.

Due to sustainability there is a growing demand for restaurants, hotels and corporate boardrooms to have refillable glass. Justadrop supplies refillable bottles, with an extensive range offering four colours branded directly on to the glass.

The company exports world-wide, but some countries are more difficult to export food and drink to than others, says managing director, John Godfrey.

"Due to Brexit there has to be careful completion of all the paperwork to avoid rejections at the borders. In particular we must not overlook that Northern Ireland has to have special paperwork due to the Northern Ireland Protocol," he says.

With exporters having to familiarise themselves with such concepts as country of origin, product codes and EORI numbers, getting the paperwork right has become essential.

"If you get the paperwork





and website refresh, and moving to a more sustainable product offering.

"We no longer buy packaging from the Far East and are now sourcing almost all of our product range from within the UK," she says. "We are moving to a more sustainable product range which doesn't use any plastic."

With business returning to pre-COVID levels very quickly the challenge is to increase resources, both people and stock to meet demand.

SENDING CAKE TO THE WORLD

Popkavery has noticed that indulgence is getting a healthy makeover with a boom in sales of vegan products which have gone up by 32% reflecting trends in eating.

"We are repeatedly being asked for products that cater for various diets and tick all the boxes – dairy free, egg free, gluten free, and so on," says director Melissa Damjanovic Darbari.

With so many different dietary requirements the vegan range makes it easy for corporate clients to cater for different tastes and needs. Products clearly display all ingredients and possible allergens.

The letterbox has proved to be the new route to market and an expanded range of letterbox products are easy to send anywhere in the UK and further afield into Europe or the rest of the world.

"During the pandemic we have almost exclusively been sending postal edible gifts in the UK as well as Europe and further afield," says Darbari. "We have sent our products as far as Hong Kong, Australia and South Africa. We can fully brand the postal boxes as well as personalise and brand the products inside therefore offering clients a complete solution for a promotional product."

Latest products are boxes of delicious muffins, a breakfast pack and hot chocolate stick with marshmallows, which also has a vegan version. A new range of Christmas products has also been launched.

CHRISTMAS IS STILL COMING

With more employees than ever working from home last year, advent calendars assumed a new importance as companies looked to give staff a little boost going into a period that is usually about more face to face celebration.

Despite the arrival of more and more advent options, from Lego to craft gin, the traditional chocolate version still holds sway, says Lara Leech of Distinctive Confectionery.

"Absolutely – 100 hundred per cent. Our shaped calendars are very popular for businesses as they are so premium. Chocolate advent calendars have held up really well."

Distinctive Confectionery has a massive selection and specialises in chocolate brands such as Lindt, Milka and Mars, and the shaped versions such as trucks, hearts, and this year, three versions of advent laptops.

As well as the new shapes, there is plenty of innovation in the materials used. Yet again, eco is important with compostable and biodegradable inlays. Branding can be front and back, and behind the calendar doors.

Beyond Christmas, there is still plenty of sweet temptation, with the company having launched a new range of retro sweets which can come in sweet bouquets.

This year, more than ever, the message has been to order in a timely fashion, with supply chain disruption hitting related areas such as cardboard and tinfoil. With Valentine's Day and Easter looming, it's a message worth heeding.





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MONKEY BUSINESS

Will raw material cost and transport cost increases turn you into a wise monkey, asks **Mike Collins**



In our previous article, we highlighted the impending post-pandemic liabilities that companies were now forced to meet such as CBIL/ bounce back loans, and deferred tax payments, and warned that inevitably late payment of invoices would become more common as companies are forced to find extra monies from a reduced revenue stream.

Sadly many companies are now to be hit with a second 'Double Whammy' of increased costs, making further late payments all the more likely.

It was recently announced that inflation has risen from 2% to 3.2%, the highest single rise in decades. The Bank of England doesn't believe the increase will stop until it reaches 4%.

This rise has come about from a general and sustained increase in the cost of the most common raw materials. Petrol prices are the highest they have been since September 2013, tariffs on imports are in uncharted territory, wholesale electricity prices have doubled since March and almost all steel products prices have increased by at least 10%.

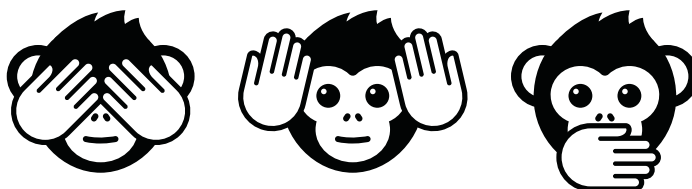
These factors, added to the struggles in freight and distribution means there is an imbalance between supply and demand and this too can drive up the prices of even the most basic of items.

This means that a business is faced with paying more money to purchase the same quantities which puts a squeeze on a company's budgets.

Add to this the fact that many companies are experiencing less sales revenues because of either a declining customer base, or because what customers they do retain are buying less. This leads to a lot of companies falling into the dire economic equation of:

Reduced revenue income + increased purchase costs = Lesser retained cash reserves.

Having less money in the business means that a



company has to select who it pays. Who does it need the most? Which supplier is crucial to its operations?

Sadly, if you don't fall into the first two categories and your debtor is not cash rich, then quite simply you won't be the first to be paid.

So how do you maximise your chances of being paid, if not first, at least first of the second batch.

We love our fables here at Direct Route AccountAssyst and one that is especially appropriate at this time is the tale of the Three Wise Monkeys.

Let's us provide you with a few simple steps to follow and aid you in NOT becoming a business monkey:

1. Don't be Mizaru (Sees no evil) – You must identify your exposure and risk.

Run a quick analysis as to which of your customers are taking a little longer to pay you and who perhaps has ordered more than normal. This could be an indicator that they are 'over-trading' and are spreading themselves a little too thinly. Remember, until you are paid, it is you that is carrying the burden of your customer's business, not them.

2. Kikazaru (Hears no evil) – You should act upon the facts.

There's no point in understanding where your company is at risk if you don't do anything about it. Every time is a time to act in business but now it is especially important. Don't be scared to discuss your outstanding accounts with your customers. It won't all be bad news you hear. The best

case scenario is they agree a schedule to pay you. Worst case scenario, they admit they don't have the money to pay but you reach a payment proposal that you can budget towards.

3. Iwazaru (Speaks no evil) - Don't let sentiment get in the way of your business.

If you are not getting any response from your actions, or indeed you don't want to

address, or don't know how to address these challenges, then don't simply sit back and employ the insolvent companies methods for credit control... crossing your fingers and hoping.

Help is at hand to utilise skilled, expert recovery partners who will both maintain your cash-flow and maintain your customer base, both business essentials in a financially challenged business economy.

For free support and advice on all things credit management contact Ian Jenkinson on 07860 197476.

Mike Collins is managing director of AccountAssyst

Local Support Contact Details

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

London and South East

David Barker
dbarker@directroute.co.uk
07766 545871

South Wales and South West

Ron Dingle
rdingle@directroute.co.uk
07976 675420

Midlands and East Anglia

Ken Brown
kbrown@directroute.co.uk
07795 214426

North Wales and North West

Ian Jenkinson
ijenkinson@directroute.co.uk
07860 197476

East Pennine Lincolnshire & Yorkshire

Shaun Egan
segan@directroute.co.uk
07801 108402

North East, Scotland and Northern Ireland

Mike Collins
mike@accountassyst.com
07866 427363



10 STEPS TO ECOMMERCE FULFILMENT

When choosing an outsourced fulfilment partner, a methodical approach is wise, Whistl explains

Ecommerce fulfilment is the process of storing, reworking, managing inventory, picking, packing and distributing fast-moving consumer goods, printed matter, promotional or business (B2B) items for sale and resale. Fulfilment services can be facilitated in-house by the retailer or brand, but are often outsourced with a fulfilment specialist.

The global ecommerce fulfilment services market size was valued at \$70bn in 2019 and is expected to expand at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 6.5% from 2020 to 2027. Right now, demand outstrips supply for retail warehouse space.

Before you decide to take the plunge, consider the 10 key stages of ecommerce fulfilment.

1. ONBOARDING

If you choose to outsource your fulfilment processes, onboarding is a crucial first step. Your business and selected outsourced fulfilment specialist should be aligned in terms of your offering, their expertise and the technical infrastructure of both parties.

Finding a fulfilment house that integrates seamlessly with your ecommerce platform, marketplaces and order management system will ensure all order and product data is orchestrated with the greatest accuracy.

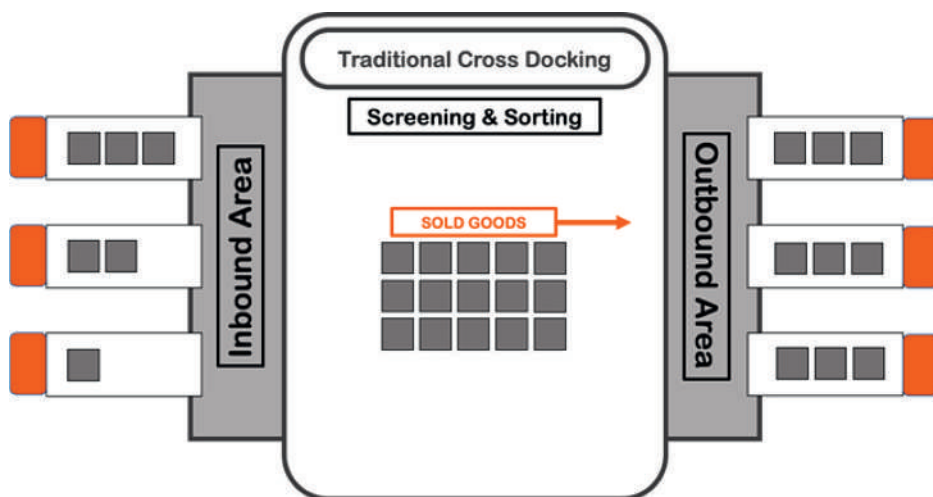
The onboarding stage should include a review with your account manager and integration specialist to map out your current product range, order volumes and SKUs to determine how much warehouse space you will need throughout the year, including potential peaks and troughs in demand.

Whistl can offer added value, such as contact centre support and the selection of the appropriate parcel carriers.

2. RECEIVING

The first time your products arrive at the warehousing and fulfilment facility will be the first 'receipt of goods' from your suppliers. Once your products arrive, the goods-in team will sign a confirmation note so that you have documented proof that the team has received your goods, along with the time and inspection details. The goods-in team should also check receipt of goods against the inventory, to ensure volumes and products match.

To maximise revenue opportunities,



inventory management should be set to allow triggers that generate orders with suppliers when stock levels fall below set volumes. Well-optimised order fulfilment and inventory management will ensure maximised sales from managed stock levels.

Cross-docking might be required for part-sold or fully sold inventories. The process of cross-dock can minimise or remove some of the steps below if the goods are fully sold. For fully sold inventories cross-dock fulfilment allows for products to be received into the fulfilment centre and despatched accordingly.

3. REWORKING

Following the receipt of your goods, the fulfilment house can perform a series of pre-agreed audits and inspections, including:

- Box numbers and pallets match your packing list
- Product volumes match the consignment orders
- Inventory management processing can include thorough inspections
- Checking the correct amount of apparel items are in each box
- Item quality and checks for imperfections or damages
- Checks for variable elements including sizes and colours have been supplied as per the order.

Inventory checks should always be coordinated based on the retailer's unique needs. Many fashion retailers offer personal shopping subscription services, where

they take the customer's clothing and style preferences along with demographics and tailor their clothing in a monthly or quarterly box. This might require the need for each order to be completely bespoke, requiring fulfilment teams to 'rework' the products into custom arrangements, to suit each customer's requirements.

Some retailers may require boxes to be broken down and items moved into different packaging; in this instance the reworking can be carried out between the 'receiving' and 'inventory storage' stages, but with bespoke fashion retailers, typically the picking and packing team will need to work with the reworking specialists to collect and return items from their stored locations to prepare a customised order.

4. INVENTORY MANAGEMENT

After the auditing of your products, received inventory stock is updated into the fulfilment provider's warehouse management system. Software solutions should easily integrate with the retailer's order management platform, ensuring complete transparency of the supply chain journey.

This would be from the order picking, packing to the final destination via delivery despatch. Delivery to your final location and customers are typically sent via UK and international parcel carriers and mailing partners.

Integration with the retailer's order management platform, allows the fulfilment house to analyse the product range and sales data to store the product appropriately,



to ensure the fast-selling 'in-demand' products are the easiest to access.

5. PICKING

There are a wide variety of picking methods deployed by fulfilment centres and retailers, including:

- Zone picking is the most commonly used method for complex orders that contain multiple items. Products will typically be pre-stored in locations called 'zones' to maximise the efficiency of this process.
- Batch picking is a method employed by picking staff that need to travel long distances throughout the warehouse. If they're already making that journey, they might as well collect other items in that area while they are there. Pickers will typically group orders at the same time, eliminating the need for multiple trips.
- Discrete picking is the most popular method for smaller warehouses and retailers with a limited number of SKUs. While more distance needs to be travelled on average to fulfil an order, picking accuracy is typically higher because each picker can focus on one order at one time. As the business scales, the discrete picking method is not as efficient.
- Wave picking is similar to discrete picking in that one order is picked at one time. However, this method introduces scheduling windows as a means of optimising the picking team's time depending on the time of day. Wave picking is also useful for when picking staff are also responsible for packing, reworking and other areas of the order fulfilment process.

6. PACKING

While your products will arrive at the fulfilment warehouse in a container and/or pallets, the products themselves will be in boxes. However, these boxes aren't necessarily the packaging that will be used to deliver to your customers. Often the packaging will arrive from a separate supplier or the fulfilment house will offer packaging of their own.

Your products may be pre-packed before being selected from inventory, or packed to the specific criteria by the packing team. It is important to decide whether you want to use generic packaging in the early stages of your business's growth.

As your business scales, it is likely you will look to implement bespoke packaging to enhance your customer experience and reinforce your brand.

Packing isn't just about putting an item in a box. You may also include surprise gifts to delight your customers, discount vouchers to encourage impulse purchases, and returns information.

7. LABELLING

Once the item is packed, the next stage is to print a shipping label from your carrier management system to apply to the parcel.

If your product is being delivered domestically in the UK, this is usually all you will need. However, if you are shipping internationally you will need to ensure you are meeting the guidelines for that country. For example, if you are shipping in to the European Union, you usually will have to include commercial invoices with the shipping label, along with stating your product HS code, and your own EORI number.

Depending on the item's insured and actual value, product type and country of manufacture, your customer may be required to pay customs duty to release the item.

8. SHIPPING

Once your items are labelled and include all

the correct documentation, the fulfilment house will group parcels by carrier and destination.

Each parcel will travel along a conveyor belt and delivery fulfilment specialists will scan and sort each parcel to ensure it is ready for when each carrier partner arrives at the fulfilment house.

9. RETURNS PROCESSING

As many as 30% of products ordered online are returned, compared to less than 9% for brick-and-mortar stores. Work with a fulfilment centre to help minimise the incidence of returns happening in the first place, and manage them when they happen.

Ensure the returns process offered by the fulfilment centre assists the process of improving revenue and supports the opportunity for resale of products. This might mean working to pre-stated product and quality guidelines.

For example, this could mean prioritising impeccable condition products for immediate resale, or refurbishing slightly damaged items before re-introducing them to their respective warehouse locations.

For fashion retailers cleaning processes such as garment steaming or shoe cleaning and re-lacing might be required. These specialist services will support the insight to business, with quality checks including inventory logging of returns codes, stock volumes and any issues of faulty products sent back to the manufacturer on the retailer's behalf.

10. ONGOING CUSTOMER SUPPORT

Whistl research found that 46% of consumers stopped using a company/organisation based on a poor call centre experience. While many fulfilment companies purely handle the storage and distribution of products, at Whistl we also offer ecommerce customer service to complement fulfilment, so that you can deliver a consistent omnichannel customer experience.

DECIDING WHETHER TO OUTSOURCE FULFILMENT SERVICES

Getting fulfilment right requires fastidious attention to detail and so whether you are managing it in-house or with a specialist, it pays dividends to have an expert taking care of each of these processes.

Above all else what's important is that you can process orders as quickly as possible, utilise the correct delivery services and respond to peaks and troughs in demand by minimising overstocking and understocking. Get one of the ten elements wrong and this can be the difference between a repeat customer and a one-star review. ^{2M}





DEAL OR NO DEAL

Getting ready to dispose of your business needs proper preparation, says **Peter Hill** of Mark Holt & Co

As businesses now start the path to recovery, many are considering a change in direction or deciding whether it's time to cash in the chips and sell up. The BPMA asked Peter Hill of Mark Holt & Co, a regular contributor to member webinars and *Product Media*, to give his view on what business owners should consider when the option to sell presents itself.

The basic principles of selling are the same whether you are selling branded mugs or the business that makes them. Of course, the details are much more complex than sending a quote and signing off an order form.

So, let's explore some of the key principles to selling a business for the best price possible.

WHY ARE YOU SELLING?

Start by being crystal clear on your motivation for selling.

If you think the business is distressed or heading towards big challenges, you may want a quick sale before these things hit. If you want a big cheque to reflect your life's work, then it may take longer to find the perfect buyer. If you want to 'cash in' your chips and live off the money, then consider where you would invest that and what returns you might get. If you are simply exhausted or have age or health

concerns, then there may be more focus on the timing of the sale than the value.

Do you want to exit completely, or remain partially involved? What will you do with your time afterwards? Travel, golf, sailing?

What will your lifestyle cost to support? Is there a big mortgage on your house to clear? Do you plan to take 10 holidays a year?

We see many business owners look to sell without any thought to what their life would be like after the event, or without thinking through the values they expect or need to be able to achieve their future plans.

30 years ago, the vast majority of business sales would be a 100% disposal to a single buyer for an immediate lump of cash. Sellers then invested that cash for double

digit returns and lived off the passive income that their capital could generate.

Interest rates and investment returns have completely changed that dynamic.

Don't go any further with the selling process until you are 100% clear on the reasons you are selling, your post sale plans, and the financial realities for your future. It may be that selling is the wrong answer.

WHO MIGHT WANT TO BUY?

The most obvious buyers are competitors that want to grow their market share and take out some competition in the process. They want economies of scale by cutting out duplicated costs and getting better buying deals.

It may be a supplier looking to add another link into the supply chain, and increase profit by offering a wider service to customers.

It could be your management team who are ready to step up and buy you out, or a management team buying in that thinks their management skills can improve your business.

It could even be an entirely unconnected buyer that just sees a good business with profit potential. As investment returns have plummeted, there are many more investors with cash that want the better returns they can earn from a well-run business rather than passive investment in the stock market.

Again, it is really important to consider who the most likely buyers

of your business are and what their motivation for buying is. This might be a list of your 10 biggest competitors, or largest suppliers, or an honest assessment of your management team's ability to run the show.

Who you are selling to will affect how you sell and how you prepare the business for sale.

WHAT ARE YOU SELLING?

This may seem obvious, but there are some really critical issues to consider.

Are you selling all the business, a small part of it, or a majority stake but hanging on to a slice? Are you selling shares in a company, or the trade and assets of the business? Is it a simple generator of profits, or do you have something people would buy for strategic reasons (a branch network that dovetails with theirs, a trademark or patent they want, or a customer list they would die for?).

These issues will affect the tax you pay, the expectations of the buyer, and of course the headline price.

Get external input on these elements as those running a business often see all the flaws rather than the positives, or don't have a wide enough experience to know what the market place values in the business.

PREPARATION

These three critical aspects should all be clearly understood long before you go out looking for buyers. In many cases it will change completely how you take the business to market, and in quite a few it may even mean you don't seek to sell now, or at all!

But let's just explore some of the practical things that can be done in advance of a typical sale to help with the process.

There are two important aspects to understand.

Firstly, if you improve what you have to sell, then more buyers may be interested and a higher price may be achieved. Some of this is real and some cosmetic. If you are selling a house, you should certainly fix a leaking roof and deal with any damaged parts of the building, as these may turn away many potential buyers. But a good declutter and a good clean will also improve the initial impact and keep more interest from more people.

The second point is that the longer a deal takes to get done, the greater the chance it falls over before completion. Delays may mean the buyer's circumstances change, funders may pull offers of finance, or better deals may come along instead of yours.

So, while preparing your business for sale is partially about presenting it in a favourable light to attract more buyers and maximise value, it is also about trying to make the buying process simple so a deal can be done quickly.

POINTS TO CONSIDER

- Buyers want your turnover to stick around. The cleaner the list of customers, the better you are at staying in contact (and demonstrating that), and the more who are locked in on annual sales agreements or retrospective incentive schemes, the better.
- People are a huge part of any business. Is there a clear list of people, roles, salary packages and performance grades? Are the contracts of employment up to date and compliant? What notice periods do they have, and how locked in are they with bonus schemes and benefits packages? Have a very clean set of people data that a buyer can review and check easily.
- A good financial pack. Historic accounts for the last three years, up to date management accounts, and other key performance indicators (KPIs) that report underlying information (such as occupancy rates in a hotel or quality rejects in a manufacturing business).
- The fixed asset register should be a clear list of all assets owned, and where they are. Many businesses

find that accounting records of fixed assets show no relation to the reality of actual assets. Computer equipment that has been replaced may still be in the accounts at some written down value.

- Good supplier lists and details of any negotiated buying deals may be really important to a buyer. Can supply be maintained on the same terms under new owners?
- All legal matters are resolved. If there are any complaints in progress, resolve them. If there are any employment issues of concern (recent dismissals, discrimination complaints etc) resolve them or make sure they are clearly documented. If you own property make sure you have all the legal title issues resolved (we often find historic anomalies in older businesses where restructures have occurred but detail is not properly followed through).
- Do a tax review. Basic due diligence process (the buyer checking what they are buying) will uncover any tax concerns, such as whether required tax elections are in place, or the need to evidence the tax values of assets bought many years ago. If there are any grey areas on tax, the buyer may want you to indemnify them against any HMRC action, so try and clean up the situation before the due diligence process finds it.


DUE DILIGENCE

If you do find a buyer wishing to proceed, they will almost certainly ask their advisors to do a 'due diligence review'. This is the process of them checking that what you say you are selling is in the condition you say it is and that you own what you say you own. That process is quite standard, and it may therefore make sense to do a due diligence review on your own business before you take it to market.

Flush out all the potential issues that may reduce the price or make the buyer nervous, and resolve or clarify any that you can. Even if an issue can't be fixed, a clear explanation of the background, the risks, and the current situation, may be enough for the buyer to simply ask for you to provide a warranty that you will sort it (and pay) if it blows up later. Buyers are frightened by the unknown, not by risks.

TAKE YOUR TIME

As you can appreciate from the brief guidance above, selling a business can be complicated and take time. You should ideally be looking at least a couple of years ahead of an exit to try and manage the reported results to demonstrate a good trend of upward performance, and have the time to do all the tidying up on critical issues.

So, if you are thinking of selling at any point in the future, have a plan. Set deadlines and milestones. Prioritise key issues and get expert advice from people who have done it before. Getting this right may mean plus or minus 20% on any deal value, and can often mean the difference between 'deal or no deal'. 

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A CASE OF *over-legislation?*

The BPMA has teamed up with another trade body to examine how the implementation of new competition legislation could be having unforeseen consequences on the ground

What does the funeral sector have to do with promotional merchandise?

This is a question that the BPMA has been mulling over recently following an approach from members who have been affected by new legislation introduced by the Competition & Markets Authority (CMA).

When setting out any new legislation, guidance, directives, orders and rules for an industry, clarity is essential for those making the rules and for those expected to adopt and implement them. Taking an entire industry through new legislation and compliance is no mean feat and with the recent Funerals Market Order 2021, this is no exception.

Like many industries across the UK, funeral directors look to promote themselves and the Competition & Markets Authority (CMA) helps regulate and promote best practice and competition in these areas – pricing, favouritism, inducements. Where previously there were guidelines, now we have law.

The new Funerals Market Order has caused a ripple across the funerals sector when it comes to deciding how they can communicate with care homes and hospices, leaving a few confused and many unable to progress with their communication

plans through fear of breaking the terms the new Order. This has led to cancellations of orders of merchandise.

"The Funerals Market Order is clearly welcomed by its industry and those receiving its services and at the BPMA we support the long overdue change this Order brings. However, as we have seen in previous cases, there is theory and interpretation in certain parts of the order regarding communication where what is needed is succinct instruction and clarity," said BPMA CEO Carey Trevill.

The Order seeks to ensure individuals are not induced when it comes to communication materials left with care homes, hospitals, hospices or similar parties connected to the sector. What is not clear is what you can or can't do – even down to the humble business card.

Many funeral directors print calendars at this time of year to send to clients but are now cancelling orders in droves. The BPMA approached the National Association of Funeral Directors (NAFD) for advice. Both parties have been in discussion on how best to advise, looking to secure a clear framework of how to apply rules in reality.


The CMA's position on branded materials is based on the scenario of "what if the care home or hospice places item X within visibility of a family?"

Taking a pragmatic view on the area of the Order in question Article 6 and 7; the BPMA comments: "This is about applying common sense. Far too often the reality check only hits home once you try to implement new legislation and despite consultation, this was one area not fully explored.

"We are not quite in tobacco territory here where everything must be unbranded so a degree of realism must be applied. The calendar is just one example that should not be condemned to the bin just in case something might or might not be interpreted or seen. We understand the outcome the CMA is striving for with the new Order however to disallow these types of items based on a 'what if?' scenario is not only beyond the CMA's control, is it assuming the actions of others."

Rachel Bradburne, NAFD policy and public affairs manager, said there were lots of grey areas around promotional material and that the CMA needs to provide further guidance to allow funeral businesses to advertise their services.

"We've talked about calendars but this could extend to pens, notepads, and other materials that funeral directors have for years routinely given away. The problem is that a care home, for example, is allowed to use a local funeral director for support and so is likely to have those contact details readily available for staff to view – a business card pinned on a noticeboard for example. If, during the course of the arrangement, a member of staff picks up a pen or similar and then uses that within a care setting, the funeral director would have absolutely no ability to control that."

At a broader level, there is the concern that over-legislation could creep into the funeral sector and potentially other sectors in future. The BPMA will always take a proactive and practical stance when it comes to monitoring the effect of legislation on its members. 

MAGNETIC ATTRACTION

A new Apple technology looks set to offer interesting promotional opportunities, says **Matt Pluckrose**



One of the fastest growing new technologies trends in both consumer and promotional markets is MagSafe charging. MagSafe is a magnetic technology from Apple, built into the internal engineering of iPhone 12 models. Originally created as a safety feature for MacBook charging cords, MagSafe was incorporated into the iPhone 12 to create a new range of accessories for easy attachment and faster wireless charging.

A series of magnets around the internal charging coil sense other MagSafe compatible accessories and snaps seamlessly and securely into place. MagSafe will only attach to other compatible accessories, so other magnets won't interfere or get stuck to your phone.

While the iPhone 12 upwards will still work with other Qi-enabled wireless devices, chargers with MagSafe can deliver faster wireless charging up to 15W when locked in with an iPhone 12. Other wireless chargers deliver up to 7.5W.

That means users who are gifted this promotional technology spend less time

charging, and the perfectly aligned snap-on attachment eliminates the worry that the phone might not charge fully. Aside from simplified and enhanced wireless charging, the MagSafe snap-on attachment creates exciting accessories such as multi-device desk units, magnetic car vents, fitness mounts, power banks, wireless pads and even face motion trackers to widen the experience.

Apple approved/licensed products that are 'with MagSafe' have the official MagSafe technology from Apple inside them. Such products will be marked with a 'Made for MagSafe' badge, which means they have been developed and rigorously tested to MFi guidelines and optimised for iPhone 12 upwards. They will charge at up to 15W.

Other magnetic accessories that are 'MagSafe compatible' meet industry standards and still provide the convenience and precision of snap-on attachment with a magnetic ring, but don't have the official MagSafe technology inside, so wireless chargers will only charge at 7.5W. These products are often made to good standards and will offer lower costs so



are acceptable to certain client budgets.

The challenge with an Apple only technology for the promotional sector is that marketers/end users don't always know what type of phone their target market have but with Apple still having a dominant market share and the likely expansion of compatible technology this is likely to be an area to watch and be ready to offer.

Matt Pluckrose is managing director of Desktop Ideas

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UKCA: MORE TIME FOR businesses

PM has covered the new UKCA marking previously and we're back with a reminder after the Government has recognised that businesses may not be ready for the change. The 2022 deadline has been extended to 1 January 2023.

However, the BPMA is still encouraging the industry to keep on track with its UKCA marking plans.

WHAT IS THE UKCA MARK?

Now the UK has left the EU, CE marking no longer applies to UK-made goods. As a result, there are changes to how businesses place manufactured goods on the market. The UKCA (UK Conformity Assessed) marking is a new product marking for goods being placed on the market in Great Britain (England, Wales and Scotland). It covers most goods which previously required the CE marking and demonstrates that all the requirements of the legislation have been met.

WHAT DOES THE NEW DEADLINE MEAN?

Businesses placing goods on the market must be ready to use UKCA marking from 1 January 2023 for most goods and the industry is encouraged to start using UKCA as soon as possible. The Government will introduce legislation so that the UKCA marking can be placed on a label affixed to the product or on a document accompanying the product until 1 January 2024.

WHAT DO BUSINESSES NEED TO DO NOW?

Step 1: Check whether your product needs the UKCA mark. If it was previously CE marked or used the reverse epsilon marking, you will need to use the UKCA mark.

Step 2: Check the appropriate route for conformity assessment. There is guidance available to help you work out if you can self-declare or need to use a third party conformity assessment. Again, if you previously used a CE mark, you should follow the same rules to choose your method of conformity assessment.

Step 3: If you are using a third party for your conformity assessment, you must identify an appropriate body. There is a

database called the UK market conformity bodies (UKMCAB), at gov.uk/uk-market-conformity-assessment-bodies

Step 4: Draft the technical documentation and declaration of conformity which shows the manufacturer or authorised representatives have ensured the safety of the product.

Step 5: Affix the UKCA marking. As the manufacturer, you must place the UKCA marking on the product itself or where the rules allow it, on the packaging or on accompanying documentation. You may appoint an authorised representative to do this.

EXISTING STOCK AND OTHER AREAS WHERE THE MARK APPLIES

Are there areas where other rules to UKCA marking apply?

It is mandatory to use the UKCA marking in most cases from 1 January 2023, except for medical devices, which must use the UKCA marking by 1 July 2023.

What is the status of existing CE stock that has not been placed on the market before 2023 in Great Britain?

Government legislation allows products bearing the CE mark to continue to be placed on the market until 1 January 2023.

Define 'Placing a good on the market'?

A product is placed on the market when there is an offer or an agreement, verbal or written for the transfer of the ownership, possession or any other kind of right, excluding intellectual property rights, concerning the product. It applies to each individual good. For more details on this, search 'Placing manufactured goods on the market in GB' on Gov.uk.

What about Northern Ireland and the UKNI mark?

The UKNI marking is a new conformity marking for products placed on the market in Northern Ireland (NI) which came into force on 1 January 2021. You need to use it on your products, alongside the CE marking, if they have undergone mandatory third-party conformity assessment by a UK-based body.

When should the UKNI mark be used?



Third-party conformity assessment: If you are using a UK Notified Body, you need to apply both a UKNI marking and the CE marking. If you use an EU recognised Notified Body, you only need to apply the CE marking.

Self-declaration: If you self-declare, you should continue using the CE marking when placing goods on the market in NI and you must not add the UKNI marking.

Will UKCA marked goods be accepted on the NI market without the UKNI marking?

No. The valid markings for placing goods on the NI market will be the CE marking or the CE+UKNI markings. The UKCA marking can appear alongside the CE or the CE+UKNI markings if you are planning on selling your good on the GB and NI market and both sets of relevant rules have been met.

Can you sell CE+UKNI marked goods in the EU?

No. If your product requires mandatory third-party conformity assessment, you will need to use an EU Notified Body and then can CE mark your products. Under unfettered access, qualifying NI goods that are CE marked from an EU notified body can be placed on the GB market without any requirements.

MORE INFORMATION AND SUPPORT

BPMA members can access detailed advice when logged in at bpma.co.uk, or go to gov.uk/guidance/using-the-ukca-marking.

GET FEATURED IN 2022

At *Product Media*, we love preparing our Special Features to showcase the best the industry has to offer and celebrate innovation and development in the sector. During 2021, we received great feedback from the industry on the fantastic content to promote UK business.

For 2022, we have a range of topics we'll be exploring and welcome contributions across the following topics:

For each special feature, we explore the issue theme, looking for the latest news, opinion and of course innovative merchandise. Kicking off the year with a 'back on track' theme, we look at how

the industry is striving for success, why it matters and views from businesses across the country.

Moving on Apparel & Bags for the March/April edition, we deep dive into this sector, with views on sustainable materials, production values and homegrown talent. The May/June edition swaps focus to Sustainability and the future in promotional merchandise. Innovative production, processes and materials continue to evolve and in this issue we reveal the solutions every end user should be considering in their planet friendly plans.

In the second half of the year, we look at Writing Instruments, Stationery, Food &

Confectionery, Drinkware & Ceramics. As we search for the latest news and views, why not schedule these features in your own marketing calendars and contribute today?

We are already taking submissions for the January/February edition and March/April editions. If you'd like to get involved or discuss special feature advertising, contact the editor for more information at editor@productmediamagazine.co.uk.

ISSUE	EDITION	ISSUE THEME*	EDITORIAL DEADLINE	PUBLICATION DATE
40	January-February 2022	Getting Back on Track – 2022 and beyond	22 Nov	8 Jan
41	March-April 2022	Apparel & Bags	21 Jan	1 Mar
42	May-June 2022	Our Sustainable Future	25 Mar	6 May
43	July-August 2022	Writing Instruments/Stationery	20 May	4 Jul
44	September-October 2022	Food & Confectionery	22 Jul	5 Sep
45	November-December 2022	Drinkware & Ceramics	26 Sep	4 Nov



ON THE ROAD *again*

BPMA membership manager Tom Robey has been itching to meet members face to face again

We've all had a busy 18 months in terms of adjusting business practices according to the challenges throughout the COVID pandemic, remaining in contact with our clients, networking remotely and sourcing the forever changing goods end users require at any given time.

One thing we couldn't do throughout much of that period was speak to another human being, industry colleague or not, face to face. As much an advocate of digital communications as you can be, face to face contact leads to so much more in a conversation.

FACE TIME

These last few weeks have been a relief for me and colleagues. We've been able to arrange and hold face to face meetings with industry suppliers and distributors that would have happened in 2020. We're playing catch up and quickly remember how beneficial these critical meetings can be.

Here are a few of my recent meet ups:

My first trip around the M25 in a long time was to Elstree to discover the power of H2XTREME breathable waterproof fabric. Stormtech's Andrew and Audrey welcomed us to the office and show room, presenting H2XTREME waterproof technology and looking at how the UK and European business is expanding in 2022.

In Aldershot, The Pen Warehouse's Helen, Matt and the team ran us through the challenges of production, procurement, fulfilment and sales through COVID. There are a lot of lessons learned and certainly challenges that are mirrored in many UK supplier businesses.

To Merchandise World in Milton Keynes.




We didn't know what to expect for the September show. The one point I took away from the show after speaking with so many industry colleagues since is – encouraging... really encouraging. The next few months are vital to our shared recovery and we are all experiencing an upshift in enquiries with order conversions following. Many suppliers' machines are running the most they have been since COVID hit. Some are even hitting pre-COVID sales volumes.

The Big Promotional Trade Shows, Epsom and Manchester. Although the fuel crisis and adverse weather conditions haven't made it any easier, I've just about managed to keep up with our travelling suppliers. It's been a long time since we've made it up to Manchester and what a fabulous opportunity to meet up with

distributors after such a long time and some new faces as well.

My travels continue over the next few months. We have the PAGE Partnership awards to look forward to, the BPMA Golf Day and a few other supplier meetings booked for October and November.

Member visits are critical to the association. It provides us the chance to understand your business operations, take on board your challenges, aid in finding solutions and being an informed voice for the industry.

If you'd like to book in an association visit, let me know by email at tom@bpma.co.uk and we can look at options. 





Credit: WRAP

TAXING TIMES FOR PLASTIC

Government is introducing a tax that could affect suppliers or distributors in the merchandise industry. Are you one of them?

Plastic has been hitting the headlines repeatedly in the last few months impacting merchandise heavily as raw material shortages have plagued global industries. Plastic has been particularly hard hit due to petrol production being at an all-time low.

Whilst we might spend time discussing eradicating plastic from our lives, the reality is it's presently a material which performs important tasks for not only merchandise but food, drink, and everyday items. Despite sustainability initiatives in the sector receiving praise for forward thinking solutions, the UK Government has long been concerned about how companies use plastic in packaging – cue the new UK Plastic Packaging Tax.

WHAT IS THE PLASTIC PACKAGING TAX?

After long consultations with industries across the UK, the new Plastic Packaging Tax takes effect from 1st April 2022. The tax will encourage the use of recycled

rather than new plastic within plastic package production. The intended outcome of this tax will stimulate increased levels of recycling and collection of plastic waste, diverting plastics away from landfill or incineration. Packaging can only contain recycled content where it is permitted to do so under other regulations, such as those covering food safety.

Across the UK, the general view is this tax is long overdue and presents an opportunity for the UK to accelerate its steps towards a circular economy, but it has also got many companies concerned about who is now liable for this tax. With the majority of merchandise businesses already a long way into their plans for a sustainable and recyclable future, PM has set out who is impacted.

WHICH COMPANIES NEED TO PAY THE TAX?

The first thing to note here is as a business manufacturing or importing plastic packaging, you need to be doing

a lot of it to be considered within the taxable threshold. If you are a business that manufactures or imports 10 or more tonnes of plastic packaging over a 12-month period you will need to register for the tax. This is regardless of whether you will have to pay any tax.

This includes importers of packaging which already contains goods, such as plastic bottles filled with drinks. Where the packaging you import already contains other goods, the tax only applies to the plastic packaging itself.

WHAT TYPE PLASTIC PACKAGING IS AFFECTED BY THE NEW TAX?

Let's start with the ratios of recycled materials as this is a critical part of the formula about whether you will or won't pay tax. The tax will apply to plastic packaging manufactured in, or imported into, the UK where the plastic used in its manufacture is less than 30% recycled.

The rate of the tax will be £200 per metric tonne of plastic packaging.

You will need to keep records and, in

most cases, register for the tax, even if all the packaging you manufacture or import contains more than 30% recycled plastic.

BUSINESSES UNDER THESE CRITERIA WILL NEED TO REGISTER BY APRIL 2022

If you are a business that needs to register for the tax, you will need to pay Plastic Packaging Tax on any packaging that contains less than 30% recycled plastic. The tax will be charged at £200 per tonne. For example, if you manufacture 10 tonnes of plastic packaging, and 1 tonne contains less than 30% recycled plastic, you will need to pay £200.

The online service to register and pay will be available on 1 April 2022 when the tax takes effect. Companies who know they are liable for the new tax must register by 30 April 2022.

WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU DON'T KNOW WHETHER YOU WILL FALL UNDER THE NEW PACKAGING TAX?

After a long period of uncertainty, the question has cropped up several times as to whether a business will fall under the new tax – for example, are distributors liable as well as manufacturing suppliers in our industry? Realistically, distributors are highly unlikely to be within this profile and only some suppliers, dependent on volumes of plastic used.

WHAT SORT OF PLASTIC COMES UNDER THE NEW TAX?

Under the tax, 'plastic' includes bioplastics, including biodegradable, compostable and oxo-degradable plastics. You also need to account for single use plastic (SUP) within your calculations and packaging that contains multiple materials. Packaging that is made of multiple materials but contains more plastic by weight than any other single substance will be a plastic packaging component for the purposes of the tax. A list of other substances will be provided in regulations later this year.

- Example, if a 10 gram packaging component is made of 4 grams of plastic, 3 grams of aluminium and 3 grams of cardboard, all 10 grams will be considered plastic packaging under tax.

ARE THERE ANY AREAS WHERE THE TAX DOESN'T APPLY?

Yes, and there are several exceptions which apply to product sectors which could apply to the promotional merchandise industry.

There are several types of product where Plastic Packaging Tax will not be charged regardless of how much recycled plastic the packaging contains. There are 3 categories of products

which are not chargeable because they are specified in the law as not being classed as a packaging component for the purpose of the tax even though they fall within the general definition.

These are items:

- where the packaging function is secondary to the storage function.
 - where the packaging is an integral part of the goods.
 - designed primarily to be reused for the presentation of goods.
- There are four types of products which are classed as plastic packaging for the purpose of the tax but are exempted from being chargeable by the law. These are plastic packaging components relevant to the merchandise industry:
- used as transport packaging on imported goods.
 - that are permanently designated or set aside for use other than for a packaging use.

The last point must still be used when assessing whether you meet the 10 tonnes threshold of plastic packaging in a 12 month period for determining if you need to register for the tax even though the tax is not chargeable on these. It's also worth noting plastic packaging components which are exported from the UK may benefit from relief from Plastic Packaging Tax.

With some additional detail on how this thinking is applied to certain types of plastic use, this is where the tax is not charged:

- Plastic Packaging Tax is not charged on plastic packaging where the packaging function is secondary to the storage function. This is packaging designed to be suitable to contain goods at the time of sale to the consumer or user, where the product's role as packaging of the goods, is secondary to its use by the end consumer, to contain, support or preserve the goods throughout their lifetime e.g. earbud cases, manicure sets.
- Packaging Tax is not charged where the packaging is an integral part of the goods and is necessary to enable the goods to be used by the consumer or user e.g. dental floss cases.
- Plastic Packaging Tax is not charged where the plastic packaging is designed to be reused for the presentation of goods. This is packaging primarily designed to be reused for the presentation of goods to a consumer or user and have been permanently set aside for this purpose, before or as soon as they have been manufactured or imported e.g. sales presentation stands.

STILL NOT SURE IF THE TAX APPLIES TO YOUR BUSINESS?

Government has advised that if the

following conditions are met, then you should register in April 2022:

- at any time after 1 April 2022 you expect to manufacture or import 10 tonnes or more of plastic packaging in the following 30 days – you must notify your liability to register within 30 days of the first day that this condition is met
Example: on 15 July you accept an order to manufacture 15 tonnes of plastic packaging by 31 July – you would be liable to be registered for the tax from 15 July and would need to notify your liability to register before 14 August
- you have manufactured or imported 10 tonnes or more of plastic packaging in a 12-month period ending on the last day of a calendar month – you become liable for Plastic Packaging Tax from the first day of the next month and must notify your liability to register by the first day of the subsequent month
Example: if you go over the 10 tonne or more threshold during December, you become liable from 1 January and must notify your liability to register before 31 January

GETTING TO GRIPS WITH THE NEW TAX

There are some exceptions in the first year of the new tax rules and once a business has determined whether they fit the conditions, it's worth exploring whether the exceptions in year 1 could apply. There are a number of stages to assess whether the tax applies so if you think this applies to your business, how you import and export materials, the type of records to keep (such as conformity certificates) and what exemptions might apply, it's worth doing your homework on the topic so you don't get caught out.

REGISTERING FOR THE TAX

Like much of the new guidance published by Government in advance, the more detailed guidance and registration is not yet available at the time of publication. However, the helpful pages at Gov.uk do provide some plain English guidance – search 'Plastic Packaging Tax'. The section marked 'Further Information for Businesses' also covers off more detail about single use plastics and more guidance.

You can also contact HMRC via their direct email on indirecttaxdesign.team@hmrc.gov.uk

OTHER GUIDANCE

The British Plastics Federation also has a very useful and detailed FAQ section at bpf.co.uk/packagingtax which we recommend any business who thinks they may be liable should visit. BPMA members can also contact the Association for further support. 



Create the difference

A club-swinging corkscrew or a communicative coffee mug? Regardless of what makes your product something special – it deserves to be in the spotlight. The Promotional Gift Award has been distinguishing haptic promotional products that stand out from the crowd since 2003. The creativity label that is conferred by an independent jury of experts thus creates that certain difference – in the perception of the target group. The presentation at the HAPTICA® live, on March 16, 2022 in Bonn (Germany) attracts additional attention.

Register your creations for the Promotional Gift Award 2022 now!

All information, the terms of participation and application forms can be found at:

www.promotionaward.com

Entry deadline: November 26, 2021



PROMOTIONAL GIFT
AWARD **2022**

UK - UNBELIEVABLE KNOWLEDGE

Briman members are in a great position to help solve supply chain problems and increase the use of British made products

Being part of the UK – the unbelievable knowledge – group that is Briman means shared wisdom, skill, and collaboration amongst this strong collective of British-owned businesses. Formed many years ago to capture the essence of promotional merchandise excellence in the UK, the Briman Group has been steadily building a UK reputation as a supply chain to rely on.

In August, the Briman members gathered for their first face to face meeting and discuss the ways forward for UK manufacturing with eyes on the prize – building back better to serve businesses in this country and beyond. With ambitions to grow their footprint in the UK, Briman members have held clear objectives to increase the penetration of UK made promotional merchandise and with supply chains threatened globally, the group has been in poll position in the last

year to provide the exceptional service and quality distributors have come to expect.

So why is Briman such a successful idea?

Briman chair and BPMA board director Mark Alderson took the helm a few years ago with a drive to promote British promotional merchandise, positioning Briman members as a centre of excellence.

He says, the success of the Briman group has been built upon the continuing collaboration of its members. With each manufacturer facing similar business challenges across a range of issues, the knowledge of best practice shared within the group environment has enhanced the ability of its members to thrive.

"Learning about the experiences and problems of those working in different manufacturing backgrounds has been of great personal benefit in

both developing my overall understanding and enabling me to approach problems with a fresh perspective," he says.

"I am a firm believer in the benefits of buying British. The group voice has facilitated the creation of a thriving platform for members to both educate and share these benefits with those organisations further down the supply chain."

Briman brings together some of the UK's finest merchandise suppliers and all members are also BPMA members with many also boasting Charter standards.

The collective also works to secure recognition from Government teams, funding and platforms from which to shout about its expertise. Proud of their work and innovation, Briman members are at the forefront of sustainable production and the circular economy, to make merchandise part of our future.

Find out more about Briman by visiting bpma.co.uk/membership/BRIMAN-Group



Warwick return for Ignite

After a year's absence, the Ignite Group returned to its traditional autumn gathering at Warwick for its Ignite Exhibition and race day.

Despite the weather delivering the first ever wet day in over ten years, enthusiasm was not dampened.

Richard Pettinger of the Ignite Group, said: "Another magnificent turnout from our members, with endless comments of how wonderful it was to be out and about again. Very emotional for some; to see two of our suppliers hug and then burst into tears was exceptionally moving. Both Collie and I would like to add a massive thank you to our loyal supply base who had a very long week starting off in Manchester, on to Warwick and then to Celtic Manor for the Fluid weekend. Stamina indeed."

Attending companies included WCM+A, Fluid Branding, Geiger, Laltex, Listawood, TC Group, Hainenko, Prominate, ADCO, and Redrok.



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BACK CELEBRATING THE INDUSTRY

The return of PAGE's exhibition and awards was a chance to salute excellence in merchandise



The PAGE group's annual table top exhibition and awards dinner returned last month after cancellation in 2020 and postponement in June. After these missed opportunities there was an obvious appetite for distributors and suppliers to have an enjoyable day and to catch-up at one of the first trade dinners since the start of the pandemic.

More than 40 suppliers featured at the exhibition showing off their products and re-establishing relationships with PAGE members. Later, the Awards dinner saw more than 120 distributors and suppliers enjoying a long overdue event, creating a wonderful party atmosphere.

Awards were presented by Brian Hayward to some of the best suppliers and distributors in the UK recognising exemplary levels of service, commitment and product quality.

Supplier awards

Scores for supplier service and efficiency are taken from a recent survey of all PAGE members and highlighted the very best PAGE suppliers.

Supplier Silver awards were presented to Bizz Badge Company, Laltex Promo, and Midocean Brands. The overall winner and Gold award was won by WCM+A.

Distributor awards

The distributors awards were split into three categories based on turnover and scored by the suppliers, recognising their professionalism in the promotional products industry.

In the under £1m category, the Silver award went to ASP Promotions Ltd, with the Gold awarded to BH1 Promotions.

In the £1-3m category, the Silver award

went to Steel City Ltd, and the Gold award went to Sussex Promotions Limited.

Finally, in the £3m+ category, the Silver award went to LSi Ltd, and the Gold went to Allwag Promotions Ltd.

Entertainment

After-dinner entertainment was provided by a return visit from Alfie Moore (ex-policeman turned comedian) who last entertained a PAGE event 10 years ago.

In the meantime, Alfie has been busy hosting his BBC Radio 4 show 'It's a fair cop'.

Following this was a brilliant showcase of music from local multi-instrumentalist Thom Kirkpatrick. As ever, the event involved a serious amount of networking with a late night for many.





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