

CARVING OUT SUCCESS



How can merchandise tackle
the challenges of 2023? **P14**



THE INDUSTRY HAS CHOSEN

THE BPMA
PRODUCT AWARDS
WINNERS **P22**



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MARKETERS

MEETING WITH PURPOSE P36
THE BPMA'S NEW
NETWORKING OPPORTUNITY

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WELCOME



Welcome to this issue of *Product Media* magazine – our new year edition and one where we are finally looking at a year which will go to plan. It's looking like a game of two halves as we approach 2023 –

anticipation and some trepidation as the global economy shifts through the latest uncertainties with supply chains but with a following wind on face-to-face events showing no signs of slowing down, our industry is one that looks ahead with some semblance of positivity.

At the end of 2022, the BPMA conducted its Product Awards, opening the entries to the industry for the first time, recruiting panels of over 50 judges who concluded their results in time for this issue. Read on for more fantastic award-winning product stories.

The recent AA/WARC figures showed that not only are large brands continuing

to keep up the investment into events and experiential, but the B2B community is also looking at face to face as an area they cannot afford to let drop, with conferencing being high on the agenda for many companies.

Attending the most recent B2B Marketing Expo in November 2022, the mood and tone was for relevant, useful, and sustainable items to demonstrate values and commitment to customers. Unsurprisingly, digital is playing a far larger role in the communications mix, but those responsible for allocating budgets and spend are focused on the 'brand in their hands' power that comes from well thought through branded messages to remain front of mind.

The margins may be smaller, but demand is still strong. Sustainability is now no longer a 'nice to have' with end users expecting and demanding more solutions and traceability – an aspect the industry needs to get on board with. This is following the widely held view that

if your business is not on a sustainable pathway within the next five years, this will be life limiting for your organisation. Embracing and changing behaviour is now essential and the promotional merchandise industry should and can be part of this journey for everyone. Look out for the commentary on sustainable buying in this issue.

So what's next for 2023? While the UK has entered a recession, the forecasts predict it will not be as deep and severe as first thought – cold comfort for some but facing a dive in Q4 will be followed by steady recovery according to some of the major financial think tanks.

In this issue, look out for our look to the year ahead, our views on adoption of sustainable best practice with reports from Ad Net Zero plus your usual pre-show guides for Merchandise World and of course the stunning results from the BPMA Product Awards.

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

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DTB expands into digital print with Arc acquisition and new team members

Garment and bag supplier Direct Textiles + Bags (DTB) has acquired Arc Textiles, a supplier of digitally printed textiles.

The acquisition continues DTB's strategy of expanding its expertise in branding, across clothing, bags, and general promotional items.

Alan Chidgey, the owner of Arc will take on an expanded new role at DTB in recognition of the rise in demand for transfer print. He will lead the development of DTB's new digital offering including further expansion of the tranSMART brand of direct to paper sustainable digital transfers.

Clive Allcott, commercial director of DTB said the synergies of products and staff would significantly enhance opportunities to serve customers.

"Our two companies have shared a close relationship for many years and will combine their products to bring the best of these to the industry," he added.

Alan Chidgey said: "The collaboration perfectly complements DTB's already innovative branding methods, which combined with ARC's digital product range will significantly support the continued growth of DTB."

DTB has also invested further in machinery and staff, adding a 10-head oval printing machine at its Lincoln site to increase its capacity by about 6,000 units per day.

In addition, the company has invested in a new twin-belt Adelco dryer providing more flexibility as the split belt is reversible, allowing DTB to run another carousel alongside giving an extra 1,000 units of capacity per day.

The company has also appointed Sue Fells to the role of business development manager, responsible for the ongoing development of customer relationships, and ensuring DTB helps clients maximise their potential.

Fells brings experience from her various roles within the industry, working on both the supplier and distributor side.

She said: "I am thrilled to finally be a part of the DTB Europe team. They stand for everything I have always held in high esteem – excellent customer service, incredible print and embroidery quality as standard and always looking to grow, develop and invest into new territories. I'm looking forward to working with the 180 staff and also to meeting customers



Alan Chidgey and Sue Fells have joined DTB



both old and new."

Mark Somerfield, sales director at Direct Textiles + Bags added: "Sue is such a valuable asset to have in and amongst the team. The experience and relationships she brings with her will only elevate DTB to new heights."

Students' real-life lesson in manufacturing at First Editions

First Editions gave students an insight into the innovations and challenges of manufacturing when they visited the reusable drinkware specialist.

Year 9 pupils from Our Lady Queen of Peace Catholic Engineering School in Skelmersdale took a trip to the company's factory in Tyseley, Birmingham, to see First Edition's manufacturing and branding processes.

Students from the specialist engineering school were given a factory tour, followed by a talk about First Editions' ethical supply chain and the importance of sustainability

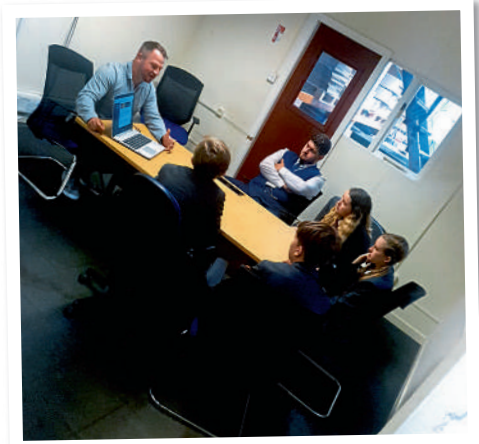
in business.

First Editions' operations manager Harry Walbaum said: "The children were really engaged during the tour – they asked a lot of questions and I was impressed with their existing overall knowledge about plastics and recycling."

Managing director Mark Alderson added: "The students of today will be the business leaders of tomorrow, so it's vital that

they see it's possible to run a profitable and growing UK manufacturing business built on genuine ethical and ecological principles. It was a pleasure to have them visit us."

Teacher, Sophie Devlin, who supervised the school trip, said: "It was a brilliant experience for the children to see a working factory and the sustainable way the company manufactures."



P&P moves back to February and the NEC

Registration for garment decoration show Printwear & Promotion LIVE! has opened with show moving back into its traditional February slot after this year's Covid postponement to April.

There are expected to be more than 100 exhibitors at the show, with feature areas including two seminar suites in the shape of the Decoration Advice Suite and the Knowledge Centre providing advice from industry speakers.

Topics covered will include everything from social media advice to tips on transfer printing, with timetables to be



released soon.

The Video Wall also makes a return for 2023 allowing visitors to sit and relax while watching the latest promotional videos from key suppliers from across the industry.

The show is on 26-28 February, which is generally a quieter time in the garment decorator's busy calendar, allowing more visitors to attend Hall 20 at the NEC.



Geiger growth sees new team members added

Geiger has welcomed several new starters to support the continued growth of the UK business.

Recruits have joined across multiple disciplines, including five new sales and customer service coordinators, plus two warehouse operatives, working from their West London office and distribution centre. In addition, the company added two production coordinators to their expanding team in the Philippines.

Geiger has also welcomed on board account director Nikki de Bruin (pictured below), who has almost 20 years of experience within the promotional merchandise industry.

De Bruin said: "I am very excited to be working at Geiger. I am very passionate about promotional merchandise and look forward to working with all my new clients."

Managing director, Vicky Kinasz added: "I am delighted to have so many new employees join us in this exciting growth period of Geiger UK. I can't wait to see what each of them bring to the team and am looking forward to working with them all."



The Outdoors Company celebrates 15 years in business and looks to Europe



The Outdoors Company has celebrated 15 years supplying promotional merchandise, gifts and corporate wear solutions from leading outdoor brands.

Set up in 2007, directors Paul Morley-Smith and Mark Dix spotted a market opportunity to supply high-end premium outdoor brands to the corporate B2B market while running a skiing company in France.

After a year of planning and negotiations with outdoor retail brands, The North Face was the first large company to back the big idea, kick-starting the business.

It now presents a one-stop corporate supplier for outdoor brands in the UK, thanks to relationships with leading outdoor players such as The North Face, Berghaus, Patagonia, Montane, RAB, and Columbia.

Many businesses are attracted by the idea

of their brand sitting alongside recognised and respected brands, aligning a brand with the values and ideals of leading companies such as the environmentally conscious Patagonia sends out a powerful message.

The Outdoor Company team has a wealth of knowledge and expertise when it comes to range of products each brand offers

As well as supplying premium outdoor wear, the company also offers embroidery and print services, ensuring these expensive garments are personalised to the highest standard.

From 2023, The Outdoor Company will be operating a dedicated EU distribution hub in The Netherlands and will be able to offer promotional distributors an end-to-end service of garment supply with decoration and delivery direct to the end-user client.



Laltex celebrates 60 years in merchandise

Laltex Group is celebrating 60 years of its UK division this year.

The company, which was established in November 1962 when Harold Macmillan was prime minister has grown from one division to seven, and now distributes products around the world.

Chairman Rajan Mulchand is the longest serving team member and is now supported by 200 members of the Laltex family in the UK alone.

Neil Horner, managing director, said:

"What an amazing journey it has been so far, from selling flip over calculators and light pens to what feels like pretty much everything else. We've developed and changed so much over the course of the last 60 years and we are looking forward to what the next 60 years have in store for us."

As it enters its seventh decade, Laltex would like to acknowledge and give thanks to its customers, the BPMA, catalogue groups and other trade

suppliers who participate in its Premium Portfolio catalogue, all of whom have collectively been part of its journey.

The team at Laltex Group celebrated its anniversary at a gala anniversary in November.



New look for Recognition Express as it focuses on dynamic and varied future

Merchandise company Recognition Express is launching its the new-look corporate identity from January 2023.

The previous logo served the business well for more than 40 years, but no longer reflects the dynamic business and variety of products the business deals with.

Recognition Express managing director, Chris Masters, said the new look would take the company into the next phase of its development.

"Our longevity in the marketplace and ongoing success of our franchisees speaks for itself. The future of Recognition Express is looking as bright as our new identity," he said.

The rebrand was unveiled to franchisees at the Recognition Express annual conference in September and is the result of focus group input from across the network of Recognition Express business owners.

Branding agency Creative62 developed the new corporate identity to deliver flexibility across print, digital and social media.

"We quickly agreed the name Recognition Express should be retained. It is well known

in the marketplace, and we believed both elements of the name were still very relevant. Recognition is about recognising prospects, customers and staff by giving them branded merchandise, name badges and uniform, awards and gifts," said Masters.

The new logo retains the blue and orange colours of the original but moves to a more contemporary and vibrant palette, with a subtle nod to the lines in the previous logo.



The strapline was also updated to 'Partners in promoting your brand' to encompass the relationships with customers.

Recognition Express is one of the longest serving members of the BPMA. Established in 1979, the company introduced Europe to the concept of name badges and has been expanding its range of promotional products and branded clothing ever since.



Listawood targets European growth with personnel and plant investment

Listawood has appointed Grzegorz Kasperek as head of operations in the Polish manufacturing plant it has established for its growing European customer base.

Kasperek has more than 20 years' experience in manufacturing management, operations and quality control, having previously worked as director responsible a large international manufacturer's multi-site operations.

Alex Turner, Listawood CEO, said it was part of the company's European growth strategy.

"Additional investments in team members as well as the implementation of fully automatic colour glazing lines, digital print technology and automatic

direct printing machinery continues to strengthen our offer, delivering innovative and affordable drinkware products to our distributors worldwide," he said.

Listawood's extensive drinkware collection includes well-known staple styles and many unique and patent-protected lines. Continuous investment enables Listawood to be on-trend while simultaneously providing an environment which can react to the increasing demand for European-made products at competitive prices.

With manufacturing facilities in the UK and the EU, the company stocks more than six million drinkware items available for quick turnaround.



Shorter pen provides a longer life

Prodir is making the case for sustainable writing instruments with its new DS6 S Mini pen.

The Mini is 24.4mm shorter than comparable models and uses up to 20% less material, claims the Swiss pen company.

As well as taking up less space in a bag, the pen is made from 100% recycled ABS, and is produced with 40% lower CO2 emissions than standard ABS thanks to a special process.

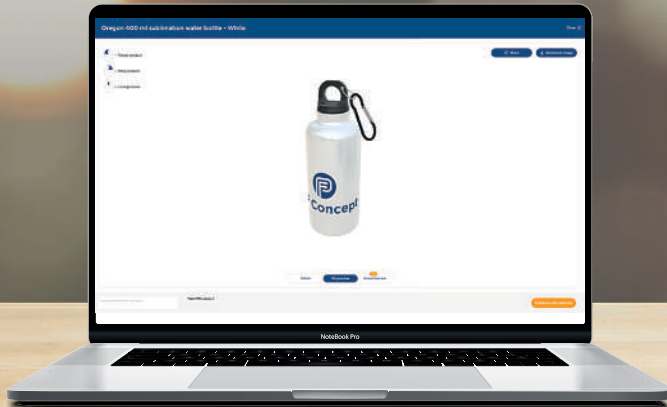
The CO2 reduction symbol is applied in relief on the DS6 S cap alongside the recycling logo to demonstrate its credentials.

A floating ball 1.0 refill with lead-free tip and low-pollutant ink can be replaced when the ink runs out, prolonging the life of the pen.

It is available in eight standard colours and any PMS special colour from upwards of 10,000 units.



TRY OUR EASY TO USE DIGITAL TOOLS

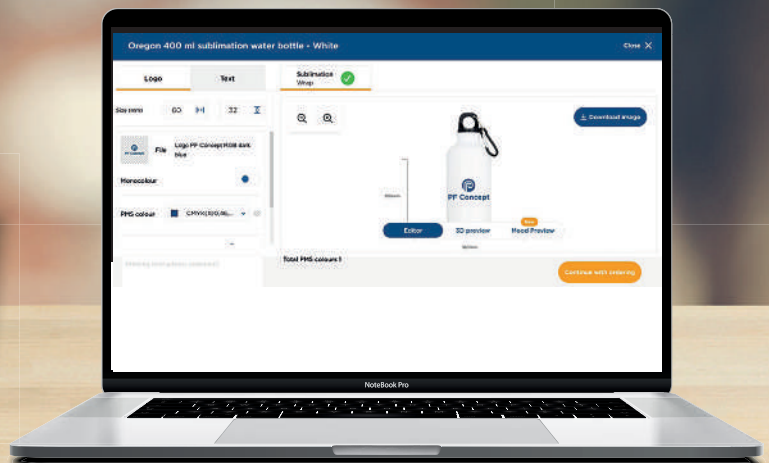


3D Tool

- 1 Create a 3D model of a branded product
- 2 Share! Create a URL of the design and send to your customer

Mood scene generator

- 1 Branded products placed in multiple mood scenes
- 2 Click to download and inspire your customer



SET YOUR CREATIVE INSTINCTS FREE

Branding options have advanced to the extent that the only limitation is your imagination, says **Clive Allcott**



Over the many years that I have been associated with the promotional sector on both a distributor and supplier side, there has been a noticeable progression within the branding industry especially in garment printing. It wasn't too long ago that printers would tut and shake their heads when a start-up business would design a logo with more than four colours. In fact, in many cases more than one colour would get an "it's going to be expensive printing that" response.

Fast forward 20 years and it's now a world of digital print and acronyms. DTG (direct to garment), DTF (direct to film), DTP (direct to paper) to name but a few. The designers of today only see a world of colours and a digital palette meaning that the branding industry has had to work hard to keep up with demands.

One of the products that has improved



over this period is the dye sublimation market from off the shelf to full bespoke cut and sew projects. On top of this, the addition of sustainable and eco RPET polyester have provided the perfect branding solution in full digital colour.

As a result, dye sublimation allows artworkers and creators a full artistic licence in colours and design. This aligned with an extensive product range of knitted goods including clothing, blankets and towels makes dye sublimation printing a great choice for that 'Wow!' factor.

Contact your dye sublimation or



digital print specialist and impress your customers with what can be done.

Happy Selling
Clive the clothing Guru. 

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Fluid recognises friends and family with annual awards ceremony

Fluid celebrated its 2022 annual conference and awards dinner at The Celtic Manor Resort with a theme of Growing Together.

The team celebrated this through a supplier showcase and a Great Gatsby-themed awards dinner.

Fluid managing director Miles Lovegrove delivered a keynote address focusing on Fluid's 2030 vision and defining operating rhythm.

He went on to announce that Fluid had planted nearly 50,000 trees through its A Tree With Every Order campaign, and congratulated the team on the organisation receiving B Corp recertification. This followed an evaluation and verification process across the four areas of governance, workers, environment, and customers.

B Corp status means a company is recognised as having met high standards of social and environmental performance, transparency, and accountability.

Fluid was the first promotional merchandise company in the UK to gain B Corporation certification in 2019 and has been recertified three years on by B Lab UK.

"B Lab UK recognises recertified B Corps as businesses that are leading by example," said Jon Birrell, Fluid's marketing & sustainability director. "There's lots more work to be done as we move forward with our ongoing commitment to purpose beyond profit."

To celebrate Growing Together over the previous year, the Fluid 2022 Family & Friends award winners were also announced.

Paul Maye from XD Connects, which picked up a brace of awards, said: "I just wanted to say congratulations to you and the whole team on a fantastic and well-organised (again) conference over the weekend. We are delighted and honoured to receive the Supplier of the Year award and Sophie is over the moon to receive Account Manager of the Year so thanks to everyone at Fluid."



FLUID AWARDS

- Customer Service Team of the Year – Pinpoint
- Finance Team of the Year – CHX
- Best Marketing Support – PF Concept
- Fluid Futures Leader – WCM&A
- Deadline Champion – Laltex Group
- Account Manager of the Year – Sophie Kelembeck, XD Connects
- Specialist Supplier of the Year – Juniper
- Supplier of the Year – XD Connects

FLUID FAMILY AWARDS

- Bright Beginnings Award – Nicola Grant

- Company Values Award – Nicki White
- Learning & Development Award – Tommy Wills
- Most Profitable Sales Person – Vicki Crosby (global & strat) & Josh Bristow (online)
- Support Hero – Dan Avery
- Sales Hero – Kevin Wickett
- Team Awesome – Sales
- Stand Out Moment of the Year – Booking.com onboarding team
- Special Achievement Award – Finance (Special mention to Jo Mitchelmore)
- Inspirational Leader of the Year – Marc Barbary
- Pinnacle Award – Bronte Creary

SALSA stamp of approval for Eat My Logo

Eat My Logo has once obtained SALSA Accreditation for the fifth year.

SALSA stands for Safe and Local Supplier Approval and provides customers with peace of mind and ultimate confidence when placing orders with the business.

The SALSA audit investigates all aspects of the business from food production to packaging, storage, allergen labelling, traceability and even suitability of the building.

Eat My Logo undertakes an audit by SALSA every year to check that high standards in all areas are being

maintained and has invested a substantial amount of both time and money into ensuring that its products meet high industry standards, as well as the requirements of buyers.

Director Ruth Poar said feedback was fantastic with the auditor praising the standard of record keeping and also the teamwork.

"The culture at Eat My Logo is at the heart of everything we do and to hear fantastic feedback on how invested the production team are in maintaining standards through this culture was amazing," said Poar.



A RETURN TO GERMANY

After a two-year break, PSI is putting its focus on an extensive supporting programme for its comeback in Düsseldorf from 10-12 January



The European promotional merchandise showcase PSI will be divided into the thematic blocks of 'Sustainability', 'Added value', and 'Practical knowledge', with experts providing international trade visitors with strategies for meeting new developments and current challenges.

According to the organisers, the current visitor registrations for the first face-to-face PSI since 2020 reflect how happy we are to see each other again.

"We are very pleased with the response from home and abroad," said PSI director Petra Lassahn. "Demand has noticeably increased and particularly in terms of quality, the visitor registrations so far have given us an enormous boost in motivation."

Above all, the show celebrates the personal exchange of knowledge and experience - with around 400 exhibitors, and over 30 guest speakers in the PSI Forum. There are also the top-class representatives from international industry including the BPMA's Tom Robey, as well as the Association's Merchandise World partner Sourcing City in the International Lounge.

THINK INTERNATIONAL

The promotional products industry is an industry that thrives on trade and exchange across countries and continents. As an

international network, the PSI supports its members in establishing new markets and good contacts - not least through its close cooperation with industry associations all over the world.

German-based promotional products GWW, will be represented with its own stand. High-ranking representatives from aimfap, ASI, BAPP, FYVAR, IFEMA, IPPAG, PIAP, PPP, and SBPR are also available for personal exchange in the International Lounge in Hall 10. Among them Michele Bell (USA), Michel Debout (Bel), Gabriel Moese (ESP), Jason Grenham (GBR), Lars Dahlstrom (Swe), Marijke van Hoorne and Joop van Heelen (both Ned).

PRACTICAL KNOWLEDGE

In the PSI Forum, renowned experts will provide guidance. Digital is a big theme of course, and includes a session by Dennis Arntjen from KMU Digital with his keynote 'Hybrid sales in times of digital change' which will demonstrate how digitisation can be used for sales success.

Michael Bromberger from GERNET Printpack GmbH will deliver 'Digitization as a business guarantor. This is how business works in times of Industry 4.0', looking at standardised workflows to guarantee secure order processing, reliable production processes and binding delivery times.

KNOWLEDGE SHARING

An important pillar of the PSI framework programme is the added value and the experts will show interesting opportunities and possibilities in hot topics such as packaging and sustainability. A highlight is the keynote by Alexander Stork. The deputy head of economics and consultant for energy, sustainability, mobility and logistics at the BVMW, Der Mittelstand, is dedicated to the question of 'Sustainability: a flowery topic or a business booster?'

Hendrik Habermann from the habermann hoch zwei agency shows how special series offer emotional added value for the customer by presenting the best practices of this profitable genre of promotional products.

WORKWEAR AND PROMOWEAR

Textile Theme Day will be on 11 January and will focus on sustainable areas of workwear and promotional clothing. A panel discussion of the Academy for Textile Finishing will feature Aiko Wichmann from the city of Dortmund discussing with consultant Maike Ewuntomah and Stefan Roller-Assfalg from Aka Merch und Textil GmbH what the status of sustainability requirements is in public tenders. A big question is, are ecological criteria such as seals, textile tenders and contracting changing?

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

In addition to the concentrated theory, trade visitors can gain practical experience of current lettering and finishing techniques at the special show on finishing and personalisation. Specialists such as Roland DG and Stahls' Europe invite visitors to personalise various products, from pencils to T-shirts, with their own hands.

For more information, go to
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www.bio-labs.co.uk



Welcome BACK

The industry is set to gather once more for the biggest event of the merchandise year

Finally, we seem to be getting back to some level of 'normality'. With the latest Merchandise World back in its traditional start of the year slot and in the centrally located Midlands venue, the CBS Arena, the industry can start to build again after the disruption of the past two years.

As our industry sages predict elsewhere in this issue (the year in preview, p14), early indications are that 2023 will be another challenging one with rising inflation fuelling costs, supply challenges, and labour shortages all to be contended with.

It would be understandable if businesses were to stick their head in the sands, but that's not what we do in this sector. We dust ourselves down, get out there and do business.

And what better place to do so than in Coventry where the industry assembles to network, find out what's new, and celebrate success. This year, more than ever that makes good business sense.

As David Long, founder of the BPMA's Merchandise World partner Sourcing City puts it in this issue, it is a time to be brave and embrace the possibilities of the market as we find it. Let's face it, if you don't then your competitors definitely will.

"Exhibitor numbers are very good, as are the numbers of distributors already registering, so it is clear that distributors are eager to see the latest products, and suppliers keen to do business," Long said. "A positive attitude and brave investment should drive the best companies through whatever happens."

The start of the year is the time when professional distributor companies wish to meet suppliers to discover the new and best-selling promotional products for the new selling year.

Over 1,700 professional distributor companies with approaching 4,500 visitors are invited to the UK's largest promotional merchandise trade exhibition at the perfect time to see the latest and hottest promotional products for the coming year.

With sustainability an ever more common ask from end users, exhibitors increasingly feature products tailored to the ESG requirements of buyers. The show's Eco World area assembles some of the best for ease of comparison – this year should feature more sustainable options than ever.

The show will also be the first chance to see all of the BPMA Product Award winners in the flesh. The BPMA stand will feature all of those chosen through the most exhaustive and comprehensive judging process in the industry (see p22 for full details of the winners).

One award that has not yet been revealed, and will be announced on the night, is the Grand Prix – the best product of the year. This will take place at the gala BPMA awards dinner on 25 January when the industry will also learn who is the best of the best.

So, despite the headwinds, there are plenty of reasons to attend Merchandise World – to celebrate the best in the industry; to find out what products will make the running in 2023, and to get back in touch with peers and colleagues.

We look forward to seeing you there.



The Essentials

- **Where** - CBS Arena, Judds Lane, Coventry CV6 6GE
- **When** - 25-26 January 2023. Show opens from 8.00 and closes 17.00 on Day 1, and 15.00 on Day 2. There's free lunch, tea and coffee, and breakfast is served on both days from 8.00-10.00.
- **Why** - The start of each year is the main time when everyone involved with sales in professional distributor companies wish to meet suppliers to discover the new and best-selling promotional products for the new selling year.
- **How** - visitors can register at merchandise-world.co.uk. There is a free station transfer shuttle bus to and from Coventry station every 30 minutes between 08.00-17.30 on Day 1 and 08.00-15.30 on Day 2. Free airport transfers from Birmingham International are available by prior arrangement. Call 0844 504 5006 for details.

2023: *the challenge ahead*

Sustainability, supply chain, budgets, and making the case for merchandise. How will the industry cope with a tough year?

You could be forgiven for not feeling overly optimistic as we face 2023 head on. With media reporting a veritable diet of facts and stats on the economy that leave most needing a lie down in a dark room, let's look at this again from a different perspective. We're in recession, it's official, however as we're in the business of behaviour change, we should represent a shift change in approach.

Many sectors thrive in recessions such as cinemas and on the back of restrictions on our behaviour hampering the ability to get out and about this is no surprise. We're still looking at face to face interaction as being a critical ingredient in success

for many businesses and with demand still high, could promotional merchandise be set to continue avoiding budget cuts?

Brands reported their intentions in the latest IPA Bellwether report at the end of 2022. The survey, undertaken





by over 1,000 marketers every quarter which looks at marketing spend and importantly market confidence, said they would continue to invest in face to face and activity which requires interaction alongside other channels.

Sustainability in the mix is also no longer a 'nice to have' tick box – it's part of the financial success for companies to not just say they have a policy but demonstrate it too. Businesses who don't follow their sustainable plan in the next five years will damage their long-term success.

With the raw materials markets still fluctuating, many economies including the UK are set to experience a dip in Q4 22-23 but with major financial think tanks forecasting a steady climb out of recession, the dark days of January are followed by the promise of brighter times ahead.

DRIVING THE INDUSTRY AHEAD

Budgets, sustainability, and supply chains are three pretty chunky themes for the year ahead, so what is the industry association doing to help members tackle a challenging year ahead?

Plans have been in the works for some time at the BPMA to further work on research and standards.

Recent member surveys showed more materials, more reasons to believe in the power of merchandise in the mix are needed and whilst many of the results which already show the effectiveness of merchandise haven't fundamentally shifted, the need for updated studies to detail the economic impact will uplift the industry purpose and presence.

The BPMA has three key working groups bringing together the BPMA Board and senior industry practitioners to drive the agenda forward. Look out for more on standards and compliance, sustainable best practices and studies on merchandise.

While 2023 will undoubtedly be a challenging one for our sector, has it ever really been any different? In an ever-evolving business world, merchandise cannot afford to stand still. The year ahead will be tough for some, but it will also present opportunities to show how merchandise can help out customers to tackle the challenges that they face. It is time to rise to that challenge.

LET'S SUPPORT OUR INDUSTRY

HAYDN WILLETS, CHAIR, BPMA

So, what a roller coaster of a year 2022 turned out to be! Almost everyone I have spoken to has had an extremely positive year in terms of numbers achieved and invoiced. But boy has it been hard work at times – every facet of the supply chain has been under pressure, it seems, as the demand for promotional merchandise went into overdrive. Personally, it seems as if I have never worked so hard in my life. Luckily, I had no hair at the start of the year as I may have lost a few over the last few months.

As the accountants close the books on 2022, we now look forward to hopefully a positive 2023. The reality is we truly do not know how it will pan out. I try to always be positive but there will be financial challenges ahead. Costs will continue to increase along with interest rates and inflation. Will this mean that the recession we



HAYDN WILLETS
BPMA CHAIR

are in will flick the switch in a negative direction for our industry? It is often stated that merchandise is a quick win for companies looking to save on or cut budgets.

The BPMA and the whole industry has to demonstrate to a wider audience how relevant, compliant, and sustainable merchandise can be. How it can support, help to deliver and drive home the marketing message companies and brands are trying to achieve. The BPMA will look to continue to deliver this message and supply tools our members can utilise to convey the benefit of investing in merchandise.

There will be lots of business to be won in 2023 but we may have to fight a bit harder for it, up our game and approach to clients and with the items that are presented. Suppliers and distributors will need to work together to meet and exceed the expectations of the end customer and to help our industry to move forward in the ever-evolving marketplace.

Support the industry attend events that take place engage and learn with and from each other. Let us all try to maintain the momentum for 2023.

Top 3 things to focus on for 2023

- 1 Bring your sustainable strategies to market:** our industry needs to embrace a sustainable best practice approach to stay ahead and provide the communication routes for end users to realise their own sustainable goals
- 2 Keep communication up:** we've got tough times ahead and our ability to communicate well will continue to see us through the undoubtedly rocky waters ahead
- 3 Don't be afraid to say no:** we're not always going to be able to trade in the same way we did a few years ago but we can provide a range of solutions even if the ask isn't initially possible – keep the options open for better relationships and outcomes



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DAVID LONG
SOURCING CITY CHAIRMAN

A TIME TO BE BRAVE

**DAVID LONG, CHAIRMAN,
SOURCING CITY**

After three tumultuous years it is hard to predict what awaits in 2023. In recent years so much unexpected has happened, so who really knows what awaits in the coming months?

What we do know is that we face inflation, increasing interest rates, weak sterling, a potential recession and an ongoing energy crisis. Add to this war and political unrest, and making any prediction becomes much more a guess.

Contrary to what might be expected and in spite of all that has happened, it has been a successful 2022 for many in the promotional merchandise industry. End users returning to spending post-Covid and catching up on postponed projects, along with leaner companies in the industry, has meant an increase in profits for many – alongside the pain of having stretched resources to fulfil the opportunities. The resilience of our industry always gives reason for optimism, this remains the case, but we are not immune to outside influences.

At the beginning of the new year we will see Merchandise World taking place. Exhibitor numbers are very good, as are the numbers of distributors already registering, so it is clear that distributors are eager to see the latest products, and suppliers keen to do business. If the economy stabilises and inflation comes under control, 2023 could be a close repeat of 2022. However, if recession hits hard that will be reflected in the industry. A positive attitude and brave investment should drive the best companies through whatever happens.

THE SUPPLY CHALLENGE

**ANDREW LANGLEY,
MANAGING DIRECTOR
JUNIPER TRADING, BPMA
BOARD DIRECTOR**

The supply chain is facing battles on many fronts and managing this and providing consistent and reliable service to our clients continues to be a challenge. Following Brexit and Covid, we now face double digit retail inflation, but often 25% plus rates on raw materials. Some commodities have doubled and then we have the impact of exchange rate movements. Shipping times have increased dramatically from the Far East, with regular four-week sailing times now looking more like 6-8 weeks at best. The world is simply not functioning in the way it was pre-Covid, with war in Europe creating new issues and further disruption.

From a UK manufacturer's perspective we also have dramatic increases in energy costs, and wage demands to be met in what is still a tight labour market.

So given all the multiple hits that the supply chain is facing, it is imperative that we maintain communication and build in contingencies to manage this process. One such mitigation would be to stock more and employ more people.

However, increasing capacity and stock holding, tying up cash (which now costs more) and incurring more overheads when advised by the



media, the government and the Bank of England that a recession is coming, and will last until 2024, is a difficult and very brave call for suppliers to make.

The supply chain needs to be cautious and not over promise based on past experience, but recognise that we have to adjust to the new normal. Distributors in turn need to manage expectations of end users, both in terms of price rises and potential lead time extensions.

It has been hard this year and I



ANDREW LANGLEY
BPMA BOARD DIRECTOR



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believe will continue to be difficult for the foreseeable. China remains liable to local lockdowns and has seen many factories close, reducing supply options. The global shipping lines are showing no signs of increasing supply to speed up sailing times, and the war in Ukraine appears to be sadly with us for some time. This will impact on longer term energy costs which has knock on effects on so many industries. Governments all over the world are facing paying off debts from lockdown which is pushing taxes up, reducing global demand, as will interest rate rises.

On a more positive note, the supply chain has shown remarkable resilience to come through the last few years and continue to develop innovative and crucially, whole ranges of new sustainable merchandise. Our industry is leading the way in recognising that merchandise needs to be meaningful. Conversations I have had with major US and EU distributors demonstrates that the UK is way ahead on this crucial issue. This provides a great opportunity for UK based businesses.

This country has a great mix of suppliers, from skilled and specialist UK manufacturers to extremely professional wholesalers of high quality, compliant imported product. Both suppliers and distributors have proven that they can bounce back



brilliantly, from Covid, and will meet these challenges of inflation and recession. Past experience tells us that our trade contracts sharply in recession but then rebounds much

faster on the other side. Now is the time to deepen those brilliant relationships and to work with each other especially in communicating regularly 

Industry makes sustainability pledge

Environmental, Social and Governance or ESG is now a top priority for business and customers – the need for action even greater. At the start of 2020, the BPMA was setting out its sustainable plans at a specially convened meeting in London not knowing a few weeks later, the pandemic was to unfold. Delaying the urgent plans the Board had agreed, the BPMA Board has been working away on revised plans taking into account the accelerated pace of climate activism and need for action.

At this year's Merchandise World, the BPMA will be asking its members to take a pledge. A pledge centred on the present and future role of merchandise, its industry commitment to embrace the direction of travel and a recognition of the steps needed on the journey. Citing the three anchors of any activity, the BPMA has said it will:

- Deliver a unified position, understanding and commitment on supply chain sustainability towards suppliers, distributors and stakeholders
- Develop and implement common activities and tools that can drive change and impact
- Strive to embed sustainability into company procurement processes throughout the industry and with end users

STEPPING FORWARD FOR THE INDUSTRY

Called the BPMA StepForward Pledge, the backbone of principles is summarised in key points, embracing the very different stages all organisations may find themselves at. The StepForward Pledge aims to encourage members to take steps in embedding sustainability within their products, services, operations and in the communities in which they operate (wherever they are on their journey).

- To integrate sustainability considerations into all our business decisions
- To minimise the impact of sustainability within our products, across our operations and transportation activities
- To comply with locally legislated requirements and continually strive to improve our sustainability performance

By signing on to the pledge, BPMA members will commit to measuring and tracking their sustainability performance each year (between now and 2030). The BPMA appreciates every organisation is at different stages on their sustainability

journey and therefore, adoption of the Pledge will be subject to each company's current status.

Members visiting the show in January can visit the stand to register their interest in the Pledge before it's official launch in Spring 2023. Involving providing a statement of their environmental, social and governance policies which will be registered with their member profiles on line, the inaugural year of the Pledge will see the BPMA asking all current members to voluntarily sign up with the agreement to the Pledge mandatory for all new members joining in 2023.

Serious about the commitment to forging an industry fit for future, BPMA Board Director Melissa Chevin who is working on the long-term sustainability plans for the Association commented recently when taking part in a panel about sustainable buying: "Looking for the BPMA logo and now the inclusion of the Pledge will give buyers confidence our industry is with them on their sustainable journey."

To find out more, visit the BPMA stand at Merchandise World in January 2023.

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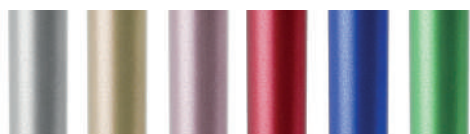
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Winners of the Technology (left) and Work & Play awards



A WINNING *combination*

This January, the long-awaited results from the BPMA's Product Awards are being announced. *PM* details the categories, the winners and what the judges thought

The BPMA Product Awards 2022-23 embraced a step change in the latest chapter of the BPMA's development of its Award programmes. Opening the Product Awards programme up to the wider industry was a very calculated move to provide the basis of a fair competition said Tom Robey, the BPMA's Membership Director.

"Since migrating the Awards from the Merchandise World Awards to Product Awards which featured those exhibiting at Merchandise World, we've now invited the whole industry to take part to ensure we capture all the exciting, innovative development this sector has to offer delivered in a simple to enter, well executed competition," he said. "This is year one of this wider scope and as we announce this year's winners, we hope we will inspire more suppliers to get on board and be recognised in this competitive scenario."

Thanking the judges for their contribution, Brian Hayward, the Award Chair for the Product Awards, Hayward noted the importance of an impartial process and the quality of judges participating in all three rounds.

"We've taken the judging process into another level now – we had over 50 judges participating from the industry and special guests from other Associations and member bodies such as Made in Britain," he said. "We wanted to show suppliers we were taking this seriously, putting their products through their paces with a scoring process which

was rigorous and thorough at each stage to determine the winning entries. We were also able to select a Grand Prix this year – another first but you'll have to wait until the BPMA Awards Dinner on 25th January for that result."

A CATEGORY FOR EVERY PRODUCT

Revising the categories for this Awards, suppliers could choose from 15 possible category options with the theory that each product could be entered into their sector category plus additional category to reflect their specific position such as sustainable innovation or UK Made.

THE PRODUCT AWARD CATEGORIES FOR 2022-23

- Apparel Product of the Year
- Award & Gifting Product of the Year
- Bag & Folder Product of the Year
- Drinkware Product of the Year
- Food & Drink Product of the Year
- Health & Travel Product of the Year
- Innovation of the Year
- UK Made Product of the Year
- Writing Instrument of the Year
- Stationery Product of the Year
- Sustainable Innovation of the Year
- Sustainable Product of the Year
- Technology Product of the Year
- Work & Play Product of the Year

JUDGES TOOK A HARD LINE WITH ENTRANTS' CLAIMS

Overall, the judges found the entrants had put forward some well thought through entries, citing prices, USPs and providing a wealth of information to help present their entries in the best light. CEO Carey Trevill briefed the judges to look for the evidence to back claims on results, sustainability and more.

"Feedback from judges this year was incredibly thorough and insightful showing us that a well-crafted entry is about more than the words – we asked for entrants not to just say it but show their evidence," she said. "Judges were on the lookout for the information that would set the winning entries apart. We know as an industry sector, like many, we are still sharpening up on having all the certificates and tests available on demand and the judges fed back the expectations they had of seeing the belt and braces of every product which helped an entry hit the top scores or languish in the lower ranks."

Receiving a lot of feedback on the judging, Trevill added: "It was a tougher competition this year and it was meant to be. These Awards should represent the best and we set out to ensure every step was watertight. We invested in new Awards software to help us carry out the process which allowed us to score each entry with a series of questions and rounds to determine fairly the final



winning entries and of course introducing the Grand Prix at the BPMA Annual Awards this year."

SELECTING THE WINNERS

The final judging process took place at PAGE's offices in late November after two rounds of tough online judging which produced a shortlist. The final panel meeting face to face consisted of: Diane Jaggard, Encore; Richard Pettinger, Ignite Incentives; Lawrence Angelow, Advantage Group, plus members of the BPMA Board; Angela Wagstaff, Allwag Promotions (BPMA President); Melissa Chevin, GF Consulting; Graeme Smith, Cyan Group; Helen Brennan, Brand Addition; Jamie Marshall, Premier Print & Promotions, and Neal Beagles, Roantree Incentive Marketing.

The proceedings were overseen by the BPMA's CEO Carey Trevill and Tom Robey, and chaired by Brian Hayward.

THE WINNERS

Announced on 4th January 2023, the BPMA Product Award winners 2022-23 are:

★ APPAREL PRODUCT OF THE YEAR ★

- **Platinum winner:** The Outdoors Company Rab Downpour Eco Waterproof Promotional Jacket
- **Gold winner:** United Brands of Scandinavia Hiker Jacket
- **Silver winner:** PromoCollection Full Size Sublimation Bucket Hat

★ AWARD & GIFTING PRODUCT OF THE YEAR ★

- **Platinum winner:** WCM+A Oak Column Award with Metal Wrap
- **Gold winner:** Laser Crystal President Award - 3D Engraved & Printed
- **Silver winner:** WCM+A Real Wood Pillar Awards
- **BAG & FOLDER PRODUCT OF THE YEAR ★**
- **Platinum winner:** Jute Bag Ninga Recycled PET (RPET) Recron GreenGold Tote Bag
- **Gold winner:** samedaybags.com Salvage Recycled Shopper Tote Bag
- **Silver winner:** Juniper Trading Ltd COMO recycled PET A4, A5 Folder and Binder Range
- **Highly commended:** Oldeani Shield RPET Laptop Bag

★ DRINKWARE PRODUCT OF THE YEAR ★

- **Platinum winner:** PF Concept H2O Active Eco Tempo 700ml Flip Lid Sport Bottle
- **Gold winner:** Oldeani K2 650ml Bottle
- **Silver winner:** Premier Impressions Topi Reusable Coffee Cup

★ FOOD & DRINK PRODUCT OF THE YEAR ★

- **Platinum winner:** Eat My Logo Canvas Cake
 - **Gold winner:** Eat My Logo Cake Jars
- A silver winner was not awarded in this category.

★ HEALTH & TRAVEL PRODUCT OF THE YEAR ★

- **Platinum winner:** Bio Laboratories The Little Brown Wellbeing Kit
- **Gold winner:** midocean Charm
- **Silver winner:** CHX Products PopCoin Trolley Keyring

SHORTLIST

- Eco Natural & Coloured Cotton Shoppers
- A5 Business Journal UK Made Eco Notebook
- Aladdin Aveo Leak-Proof Advanced Drinks Bottle
- Aluminium Clutch Pin Badges
- Anton Advanced ENC Earbuds
- Artic Ball Pen
- Ascend Eco
- Bamboo Coaster
- Bamboo Column Award
- Bamboo Medal
- Cake Jars
- Canvas Cake
- Charm Keyrings
- Charm Unisex Travel Gift Set
- Christmas ECO-RATION Plus+ Bauble
- Classic SD Wood
- COMO recycled PET A4/A5 Folder and Binder Range
- Custom Expandable Multipurpose Sponge
- CYCLO®+Aware Falusi Tote Bag
- D-Base Bluetooth waterproof speaker
- Direct to Paper - DTP Transfers by transSMART
- DS5 Shell Pen
- Eternal Bamboo pencil with eraser
- Eternal Pencil
- Foosball Table Cooler
- Full Size Sublimation Bucket Hat
- Genie Packaging
- GOTS Organic Cotton Socks
- Grille Bluetooth Speaker
- H2O Active® Eco Tempo 700ml Flip Lid Sport Bottle
- HIKER JACKET
- HIP RPET Bottle Bag
- Impact AWARE™ RPET lightweight Rolltop Backpack
- Impact Soft Cover Stone Paper Notebook
- K2 650ml bottle
- Karst® 5-pack 2B Woodless Graphite Pencils
- Karst® A5 Stone Paper Hardcover Notebook
- Leuchtturm Change Journal
- Matrix System Jacket XB-4 | XB-4W
- Miyo Lunch Box
- MR BIO FAST Charge Cable
- Mr BIO Smart (NFC) Charge Cable
- Nature Plus Bio Ball Pen
- Ninga Recycled PET (RPET) Recron GreenGold Tote Bag
- Oak Column Award with Metal Wrap
- Ocean Bottle
- Ocean Bottle Original BOB (1 Litre)
- Photon hardwood 3-in-1 Multi Charging Cable

From left - category winners for Apparel, Health, Award & Gifting, Drinkware, Food & Drink, and Bags



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Aligned with the growing need to support social and responsible production, recycling and reutilization, we continuously re-examine the way we approach our product and material selection, manufacturing and print production processes. Many materials have found a second life by being recycled. In our new collection we offer more organic cotton options. Check out these new trendy items made from organic cotton.





PRODUCT AWARDS 2022-23



BPMA Product Awards

★ INNOVATIVE PRODUCT OF THE YEAR ★

- **Platinum winner:** Direct Textiles & Bags Direct to Paper - DTP Transfers by tranSMART
- **Gold winner:** Oldeani HIP rPET Bottle Bag
- **Silver winner:** Desktop Ideas Xoopar MeetAIR Home Conference speaker

★ STATIONERY PRODUCT OF THE YEAR ★

- **Platinum winner:** Juniper Trading Wellness Journal Notebook
- **Gold winner:** XD Connects Impact Soft Cover Stone Paper Notebook
- **Silver winner:** Premier Impressions Leuchtturm Change Journal

★ SUSTAINABLE INNOVATION OF THE YEAR ★

- **Platinum winner:** XD Connects Impact AWARE™ RPET lightweight rolltop backpack
 - **Gold winner:** Desktop Ideas Mr BIO Smart (NFC) charge cable
- A silver winner was not awarded in this category.

★ SUSTAINABLE PRODUCT OF THE YEAR ★

- **Platinum winner:** CHX Products rHIPS.b Product Range
- **Gold winner:** Jute Trading CYCLO+Aware Falusi Tote Bag
- **Silver winner:** Juniper Trading Recyco+ Notebooks
- **Highly Commended:** Senator Pens Nature Plus Bio Ball Pen
- **Highly Commended:** Great Central Plastics Recycled Chewing Gum Dog Bowl
- **Highly Commended:** Ocean Bottle Ocean Bottle Original BOB (1 Litre)

★ TECHNOLOGY PRODUCT OF THE YEAR ★

- **Platinum winner:** Desktop Ideas MR BIO FAST - charge cable
- **Gold winner:** Oldeani Venture Travel Adapter
- **Silver winner:** Baby USB Recycled Paper Charging Pad
- **Highly Commended:** PF Concept Anton Advanced ENC Earbuds

★ UK MADE PRODUCT OF THE YEAR ★

- **Platinum winner:** PF Concept Miyo Lunch Box
- **Gold winner:** Juniper Trading A5 Business Journal UK made Eco Notebook
- **Silver winner:** WCM+A Aluminium Clutch Pin Badges

★ WRITING INSTRUMENT OF THE YEAR ★

- **Platinum winner:** PF Concept Karst® 5-pack 2B Woodless Graphite Pencils
- **Gold winner:** Prodir DS5 Shell
- **Silver winner:** Pencom Eternal Bamboo Pencil with Eraser

★ WORK & PLAY PRODUCT OF THE YEAR ★

- **Platinum winner:** Oldeani D-Base Speaker
- **Gold winner:** Disrupt Sports Foosball Table Cooler
- **Silver winner:** Victorinox Swiss Card Lite

- PopCoin Trolley Keyring
- President Award - 3D Engraved & Printed
- Promotional Ring Light
- Rab Downpour Eco Waterproof Promotional Jacket
- Real Wood Pillar Awards
- Recycled Chewing Gum Dog Bowl
- Recycled Flexi Desk Mat for Work, Home or Play
- Recycled Paper Charging Pad
- Recyco+ Notebooks
- Repeve Baseball Cap
- Repeve Ocean Commuter 15" GRS RPET Laptop Backpack
- rHIPS.b Product Range
- Salvage Recycled Shopper Tote Bag
- Samoa Recycled Eco Notebook
- Shield RPET laptop bag
- Spork Branded
- Sugar Cane Ice Cube Trays
- Sustainable Cardboard Mobile Phone Stand
- Swiss Card Lite
- The Little Brown Tube Mental Health Kit
- Top1 Reusable Coffee Cup
- Tree Free Pencil
- Trento Matt Recycled Ball Pen
- UK Made 100% Natural Cotton Shopper Tote Bag
- Upcycled Socks
- Venture Travel Adapter
- Wellness Journal Notebook
- XD Design Flex Gym Bag
- Xoopar MeetAIR Home Conference speaker
- ZENS Liberty Wireless Charger

From left - category winners for Writing Instrument, Innovative Product, UK Made, Stationery, Sustainable Innovation, and Sustainable Product





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BUYING WELL, BUYING SUSTAINABLY

A discussion at B2B revealed the greater need for accountability when it comes to selecting and buying merchandise

Expertise in buying is something we're all seeing dwindle as the skills gap grows meaning industry professionals are needed more than ever. Thousands of B2B marketers gathered at London's ExCel for the return of B2B Marketing Expo. The two-day event was heavily focused on digital and direct with many BPMA members exhibiting at the show as the demand for merchandise shows no sign of slowing down.

The BPMA hosted a face-to-face panel to discuss the skills of buying, the role of procurement and importantly the need to put sustainable business at the top of the agenda. BPMA CEO Carey Trevill was joined by Board Director and consultant Melissa Chevin, Matt Bourn director of communications for the Advertising Association and Ad Net Zero champion, and Piscari founder and negotiation and buying expert, Mike Lander, well known for his procurement series 'Ask Mike' in The Drum magazine.

WHAT'S ON THE BUYER'S MIND?

Addressing the mindset of today's buyer, the panel discussed what challenges buyers are facing and why. Tackling first the conversion rates, CPI-U, staff and supply chains, Lander warned the mix of factors was a heady cocktail driving decisions about holding stock on- or offshore, leading to significant margin erosion.

Add staffing retention and salary increases and it wasn't a pretty picture for any buyer. However, demand for events isn't dropping with organisations putting great store in the value of face-to-face. Visitors to B2B openly discussed how the need for events to help drive customer engagement was a priority so planning ahead was high on the agenda.

THE SUSTAINABILITY CHALLENGE

Examining the role of the buyer, the panel discussed the need to manage risk, deliver the best deals and the fact they are there to secure the right price. Matt Bourn pointed out that the buyer can drive behaviour change by adopting the right approach to sustainability. Buying intelligently is at the heart of the decision-making process and something every part of the supply chain needs to take responsibility for, he added.

Melissa Chevin spent some time discussing the common terms we're all



using and importantly the meanings behind them. Explaining how much has moved forward in material choice, Chevin provided examples of bottles with social enterprise stories to the way the promotional merchandise industry has innovated to play its part in the sustainable movement.

Reflecting on the amazing results promotional merchandise in the communications mix can achieve, the panel discussed the firm belief the change in behaviour must come from within to ensure we all move towards sustainable goals.

Urging the audience to consider the cradle to grave journey of the product, the panel called on them to seek and ask suppliers for assurance on the traceable aspects of products and select businesses to work with who already incorporate sustainable practices in their production methods and packaging.

TIME FOR ACCOUNTABILITY

Asking the panellists for their thoughts, Matt Bourn said the time for action is now – a message reflected at the November Ad Net Zero Summit (see page 32).

"We must account for the carbon impact of every promotional product we distribute on behalf of businesses around the world, both from the way the product is made, but also through the positive impact it can have on the customer's behaviour and so the planet we live on," he said. "Those


businesses that move fastest to a sustainable footing will secure an essential competitive advantage, not just with their customer base but also in attracting and retaining the very best talent."

WEIGHTING GAME

Addressing the role of the buyer, Mike Lander concluded: "Sustainability should now be a core feature of any procurement/sourcing activity. When writing RFPs or negotiating with suppliers, think carefully about the relative weightings/importance of your key negotiating variables, such as savings, sustainability, DE&I, quality, reliability, innovation and risk."

Representing the deep dive the BPMA is undertaking, Melissa Chevin said buyers increasingly favour suppliers focused on sustainability when making purchasing decisions.

"This makes our environmental, social and governance efforts crucial in delivering long-term value creation and growth. The cost of inaction could be potentially high, both financially and reputationally. A transparent supply chain is one of the ways companies can set themselves apart from their competition and fortify their sustainability strategy," she added.

The BPMA is now working hard on varied workstreams to help the industry keep on track for a sustainable future. Look out for more information at Merchandise World in January 2023. 

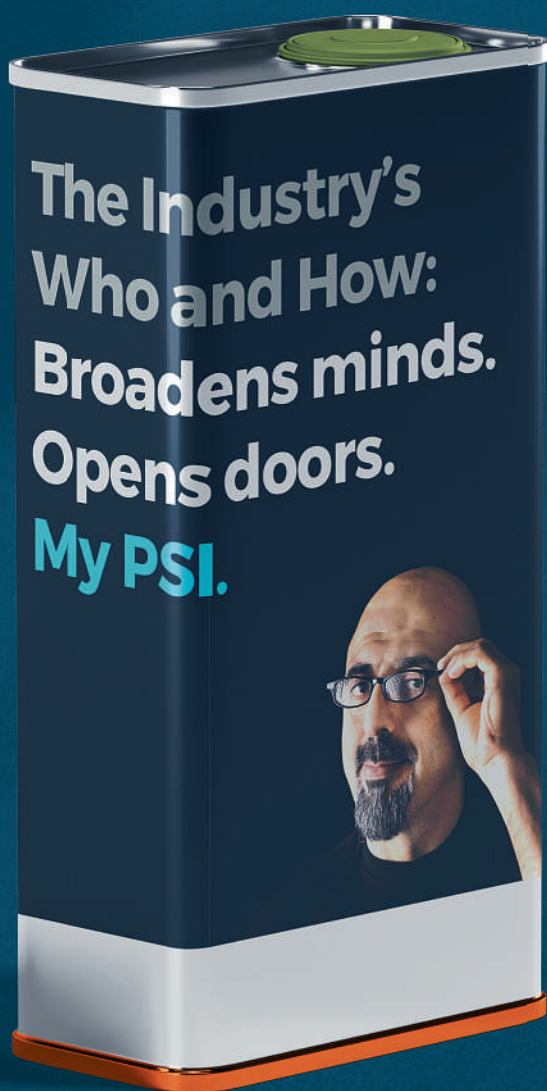
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A DIVERSE APPROACH

The BPMA is kickstarting efforts towards greater diversity with a special event in March

As an industry, anecdotally, we're roughly 50/50 when it comes to the split and representation of women. When we consider the diversity of the promotional merchandise industry, we may have a mental image of the wider industry as perhaps white and of a certain age. Like many industries, diversity is a topic of priority for firms as they seek to enhance and grow their work force.

As an entrepreneurially-driven bunch, we tick the 'talent from working class backgrounds' box very firmly but what about black or Asian talent? Older talent? Do we understand and improve the experiences of disabled talent? And what about LGBTQ+?

It's true that whilst we may be a little late to the party on these areas, an approach from a group of strong-minded women to the BPMA's CEO, Carey Trevill has set in motion a movement to not only improve the experiences and representation of women, but also participate in a UK-wide study of diversity and inclusion in business.

ALL IN

The BPMA is in the midst of becoming an All In Champion – a movement which involves the wider marketing industry and has been surveying thousands of organisations

on their experiences, understanding more about the diversity goals our businesses need to embrace and helping the promotional merchandise industry benchmark its progress.


Part of a longer-term diversity project, the BPMA is kick starting this process in 2023 with a members-only lunch to celebrate the women of the promotional merchandise industry in March 2023 and launching the first All In census to BPMA members in the same month.

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

Joining the lunch in March is Kathryn Jacobs OBE, CEO of Pearl & Dean and co-author of *The Glass Wall: Success Strategies for Women at Work and Businesses That Mean Business*. Receiving the OBE for her services to women in industry, she will be sharing some of her strategies for success and joining a Q&A. Other speakers from the industry will be

joining the line up to share experience and advice.

BPMA members can look out for more information from the Association and booking

details on the BPMA events page for the March lunch and all members will be invited to contribute to the All In Census on 15th March 2023. 



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This is mini.

New DS6 S

The body of the new DS6 S Mini is up to 24.4 mm shorter than comparable models. It's made from 100% recycled ABS produced with 40% less CO2 emissions compared to standard ABS.

Less material, less CO2, full performance.

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ADVANTAGE MEMBERS GATHER TO LAUD INDUSTRY



More than 100 diners enjoyed a lively, hybrid event of World Cup fever, early Christmas festivities and awards at the 23rd Advantage Group annual members meeting and celebration dinner at The Belfry Hotel and Resort, Sutton Coldfield.

Prior to the Advantage Awards, member Promo Brand took the opportunity to celebrate its 10th anniversary in business by rewarding two suppliers for their digital innovation. These went to PF Concept and XD Connects and were collected by Rob Durant and Paul Maye respectively.

This Group's much anticipated main awards followed and were presented as follows:

- **Group Supplier of the Year:** Winner for the second year running was XD Connects.
- Highly Commended – Laltex Promo and Preseli.

- Commended – Bagco, Hainenko and Impression Europe.

Two new awards were also introduced this year. Account Manager of the Year went to Alex Daniels of Midocean Brands, and Customer Service Team of the Year which was awarded to Laltex Promo.

Members awards were also presented on the night.

- **Best use of Advantage Website:** Beeline Promo Products
- **Group Member of the Year:** Taking the Winner's position for the third consecutive year was Mojo Promotions, an incredible feat in the face of some strong competition.
- Highly Commended – Nadel and Willsmer Wagg.
- Commended – Galpeg, Promo Brand and Stay Sourced who got a special mention for being the most consistent performers in the awards since they joined the group.

Earlier in the day, at the members meeting, Vibrant Colour was awarded Catalogue Cover of the Year for its Masters of Merch concept. The meeting also featured presentations from Senator Pens and the BPMA.

Advantage director, Lawrence Angelow said: "I am delighted to report on another fantastic and well attended event. I feel for the first time since the pandemic that we are truly getting back to some sense of normality and that the appetite for networking has returned, which has to be good news for the industry overall."

He added: "Although we no doubt face a challenging year ahead, I hope this confidence and positivity can remain strong. Finally, I would like to thank our wonderful members and suppliers for their ongoing support, something we never take for granted."



Fourth time best for Total Merchandise

Sourcing City has also been handing out awards, with Total Merchandise winning the large distributor category for the fourth year in a row.

The Colchester-based company, which has just celebrated 18 years in business this year, won the award which is voted for by the industry's professionals.

Director Jason O'Connor said the award was down to the efforts of the team of 50 that spans sales and customer service, products, tech, artwork, accounts and marketing.

"It means a lot. It's such a prestigious

award from one of the industry's leading voices. It's a stellar line up of winners this year and we are glad to be among these giants."

Fellow director Michelle Rae Stoddart applauded the efforts of the Total Merchandise team over the last two years of turbulence.

"This is a celebration of the staff as much as it is of the industry as a whole. It's a testament to their hard work and the relationships they've built across the industry," she said.

The company said it has big plans for

2023. "A very exciting year is coming up," said O'Connor.

In other distributor categories, Ross Promotional Products (£1-3m) and Big Bear (up to £1m) picked up awards.

Pinpoint Badges was specialist supplier of the year with XD Connects the major wholesaler of the year.

THE TIME FOR CHANGE IS NOW

With the 2030 targets for limiting greenhouse emissions getting ever closer, the marketing sector focused on required action at the Ad Net Zero summit

Back in 2019, the BPMA joined the Advertising Association as part of its end user connection. Going on to get involved in areas like UK Advertising Export to represent merchandise on the world stage, the BPMA also signed up as Ad Net Zero supporters. Since then, it has been representing merchandise in the very present and developing conversation about net zero targets with the ability of merchandise take a sustainable position, educating end users on what is possible.

In November 2022, the Advertising Association hosted its second summit and BPMA members were given access to attend the online sessions free of charge. The summit is part of the catalyst for change which is coming from a top-down end user drive to change the way we work and the work we make. Asking those attending to reflect and re-look at every aspect of the work we make, the firm message was change wasn't coming – it was here now.

Thanking those attending, Ad Net Zero stated its commitment to helping the wider industry change to help tackle the climate

crisis. Echoing the strapline, All for None, this globally attended summit was hosted at the same time as COP27 over two days covering everything from ensuring claims were marketed correctly, making your business more sustainable by taking steps to change, to panel discussions addressing how big business is changing and expects its supply chain to do the same.

GREEN CLAIMS

On advertising claims – and for advertising read all marketing materials from social to direct to catalogues – speakers from the Competition & Markets Authority (CMA) and The Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) reflected on the Green Claims Code and the CAP Code sections dedicated to setting out the way claims must be laid out and why. Speakers on this session demonstrated some obvious examples of claims that definitely didn't do what they said on the tin with grabs at headlines

to capitalise on a climate claim to appear sustainable.

Citing the need for customers to be given the right information and keep it simple, Cecilia Parker Aranha, director of consumer protection at the CMA urged every business to not only get to know the Green Code but consider why the clarity of claims was so important to a customer. Echoing the comments, Justin Davis, climate change & environment project manager at the ASA, explained its research showed the level of confusion and rejection of overly complex claims from consumers was palpable as they struggled to get their heads around the information presented about claims or offsets, linking the relevance to them or ability to understand the actual impact that might be created.





Green claims code checklist

1. The claim is accurate and clear for all to understand
2. There's up-to-date, credible evidence to show that the green claim is true
3. The claim clearly tells the whole story of a product or service; or relates to one part of the product or service without misleading people about the other parts or the overall impact on the environment
4. The claim doesn't contain partially correct or incorrect aspects or conditions that apply
5. Where general claims (eco-friendly, green or sustainable for example) are being made, the claim reflects the whole life cycle of the brand, product, business or service and is justified by the evidence
6. If conditions (or caveats) apply to the claim, they're clearly set out and can be understood by all
7. The claim won't mislead customers or other suppliers
8. The claim doesn't exaggerate its positive environmental impact, or contain anything untrue – whether clearly stated or implied
9. Durability or disposability information is clearly explained and labelled
10. The claim doesn't miss out or hide information about the environmental impact that people need to make informed choices
11. Information that really can't fit into the claim can be easily accessed by customers in another way (QR code, website, etc)
12. Features or benefits that are necessary standard features or legal requirements of that product or service type, aren't claimed as environmental benefits
13. If a comparison is being used, the basis of it is fair and accurate, and is clear for all to understand

The message was that marketing and advertising needs to consider its role in the climate crisis. If you're going to make a claim about your supply chain, it must be evidenced, qualified, real and if you're making a claim, it's got to be understood by the person on the street.

MERCHANDISE TAKE AWAYS

With over 30 sessions during the summit, there were numerous topics to cover. Guiding BPMA members to listen to sessions such as How To Make Your Business More Sustainable, Getting Your House in Order and Jargon Busting and the Business Case with Steve Malkin of Plant Mark, *PM* has covered some key points from the summit below.

- In your journey towards net zero, consider Scope 1 (direct emissions), Scope 2 (indirect emissions from purchased energy) and Scope 3 (indirect value chain) emissions.
- Acknowledge the difference between carbon neutral and net zero – with the latter including Scope 3 emissions in its calculations.
- Activate your supply chain and consider consumption-based data to comply with Scope 3 emissions and achieve net zero.
- Don't underestimate the importance of robust, quality data when you are measuring effects, impacts and outcomes.
- Data is the key to achieving your climate objectives: the first thing to do is to start gathering data. Those who embrace using carbon calculators earlier on will find this easier.
- Every good leadership team today has sustainability on its agenda and the economic benefits in taking a sustainable position and acting on it should be part of every business plan.
- Choosing sustainability is futureproofing your business.
- Make sustainability a win-win for stakeholders: good for the planet and good for the future. The customer today wants to see companies take action on climate change and businesses need to support customers in making sustainable choices.
- The time is now, 2030 is the first milestone, but we need to keep innovating beyond that. The industry needs to come together and provide open-source knowledge on sustainable initiatives.
- Investigate how to become a B Corp company and/or Eco Vadis and think about how starting a certification journey in your office and other sites can act as a catalyst for action.
- Get your house in order. Take major advantage of this if you are moving offices and can further factor in sustainability measures. Also, consider getting your office buildings BREEAM certified.
- Shift the strategy of how you sell your products.

- Concern for the environment and sustainability is at an all-time high. However, there's a do-say gap and our industry is part of the dialogue needed to help close that gap.
- Enable & Engage: We can all help by closing the disconnect between microactions and the macro-issue, by enabling (shaping and stretching buying behaviour) and engaging (building knowledge and sharing progress) audiences.
- Sustainability is more visible and influential in product-led categories than in service-led categories. In the latter, there is a need to leverage education and transparency specifically. End users have been urged to consider audience attitudes and underpin their strategy with transparency and accuracy when it comes to sustainability claims.

GREEN WASH – DON'T BE CAUGHT OUT

Information is all around us and the old saying ignorance is bliss literally doesn't wash here. Making sure you know the claims you are making about sustainable products and processes are correct is your responsibility whether you manufactured the product or not. Your customers expect you to understand the claims made, provide the evidence which supports it wholly and make it clear. If your company is involved in an offset scheme, the same applies.

HAVE YOU ANSWERED 'NO', OR COULDN'T PROVIDE A CLEAR ANSWER, TO ANY OF THESE STATEMENTS?

If so, visit Gov.uk and search 'Green Claims Code' for more advice. For marketing claims, visit asa.org.uk and search 'environmental claims' to see the greenwashing advice and Codes which apply to the promotional merchandise industry.

WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU MAKE A CLAIM AND IT'S PROVEN TO BE UNTRUE?

If a business doesn't comply with consumer protection law, the CMA and other bodies – such as Trading Standards Services or sector regulators – may bring court proceedings.

The Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) can also take action for misleading green claims which appear in advertising.

If your claim is found to be in breach of consumer protection law you can be forced to make changes to your claim or make a payment of redress to any consumers that may have been harmed by the breach. It's therefore recommended that you seek independent legal advice.

More information about Ad Net Zero can be found at adnetzero.com.

STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

There are changes that all businesses can make to help cut their carbon footprint. Are you doing enough asks **Melissa Chevin**



World leaders recently converged on Sharm El-Sheikh for the COP27 climate change conference, providing an ideal opportunity to examine what our own businesses can do to make positive progress on this most urgent of issues.

Ditch the myths

Perhaps the most common misconception about 'going green' is that the changes needed are simply too costly for many businesses – but the truth is that the potential benefits go way beyond fulfilling legal or moral responsibilities.

Another fear is that implementing environmental measures might hold back business growth. However, in many cases, changing your operations to benefit the environment forces you to innovate and differentiate your company from the competition.

Switching to more local suppliers not only boosts efficiency, with soaring fuel prices it can also significantly reduce costs.

What's your goal?

When setting green targets it's important to decide what you want to achieve. Be sure to follow the most up-to-date scientific research on climate change so that you're making the right decisions

for the environment as well as for your company. Doing the right thing for the environment should be the biggest reason for going green, but there are lots of other benefits. Being environmentally-friendly can enhance your business's reputation with consumers, stakeholders and employees alike.

Fuel for thought

With heating and lighting bills increasing at a frightening rate, it's more important than ever to be aware of the amount of energy you're using, and consider changes to reduce it. Make sure you have an up-to-date Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) for your premises. This will provide you with a detailed assessment of your business's energy efficiency and highlight areas for improvement.

If your building has a lot of windows, take advantage of all that natural light. If you do need to have artificial lighting on, make sure you change over to energy-efficient alternatives such as LEDs. Consider using blinds and other shading products – these can both reduce heat loss in winter and control solar gain during the warmer months, saving on air conditioning.

Savings can be made in the most surprising places. For example, laptop computers can consume up to 80% less electricity than their desktop counterparts.

Waste not

Every business produces waste – what matters is how they go about reducing it. Some solutions can be simple – do you really need to print so much material? And for those things where you do need hard copy, how about using recycled paper?

When looking at equipment for your workplace, do you really need to buy new? Might a refurbished or lightly-used purchase make more sense, both in terms of cost and your company's carbon footprint? As for the tech you've done with, don't forget to recycle that too.

Use sustainable materials in your products, packaging and marketing – and try to use the minimum amount of such material. This doesn't mean you can't be eye-catching – you only have to consider how Apple has simplified its own legendary packaging in recent years for a prime example.

Think local

We're all increasingly conscious of the miles products and services we use every day have travelled to reach us. As mentioned earlier, putting the emphasis on local suppliers not only makes economic sense, it can also do wonders for brand reputation. Added to which, you never know what unexpected partnership opportunities might await on your doorstep.

Reduce your footprint

The UK is aiming to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050, so this should be one of your goals too. The first step is to measure your carbon footprint – this will tell you exactly how far away you are from net zero, so you can plan your environmental strategy in a more efficient, targeted way. You can find a carbon calculator at carbonfootprint.com/calculator.aspx.

Support your cause

As well as considering what targets your organisation can achieve in the short term, it's also important to think big and set longer term goals. How about supporting a charity that aligns with your eco-friendly goals? Again, it's not just about feeling good – getting behind a project can also appeal to potential customers who feel passionate about the same cause.

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



ENERGY SAVING TECH

As energy prices soar ever higher, can technology lend a helping hand, asks **Matt Pluckrose**



With crazy times currently in the global economy our market will look for new promotional items within the tech world to make life simpler or more cost effective for target clients and consumers.

Products that achieve this are more useful, contemporary and hence generate a higher ROI.

Most economies are suffering with raging inflation, as the cost of living spirals and the global energy crisis takes money out of every consumer's pocket. Given these worrying trends what better time for our industry to look for products which alleviate and help overcome the current trend. Energy saving gadgets will be the area to watch over the coming months.

So, let's take a quick look at the sort of items that may well be on many marketers shopping lists for their next promotion soon.

Solar power

Wireless headphones and earbuds are the must-have audio accessory for most families, so to stop the need for charging from batteries or mains power, how about solar charging models? Never stop to recharge again by relying on the sun.

Keeping with the solar theme will be the growing trend for gadgets with solar charging options whether speakers, power banks, back packs, torches and even phone cases. The solar panels on many of the better versions of these devices are now sensitive enough to charge through clouds and windows.



Smart gadgets

Energy saving gadgets can also be simple like a timer for the shower to reduce the amount of heat and water used or maybe something more sophisticated like a Wi-Fi plug to allow you to operate electrical appliances in the house while on the way home from work. There's nothing better than coming back to a house with lights and heat on when you walk in - which has been activated when you leave the office.

The power of your voice is also of course now very popular and devices such as Alexa, Siri and Google Assist mean that many devices in the house can be controlled and turned off with a simple voice command.

Let there be light

We are seeing many lamps suitable for decoration and fashion in the office or home now moving to LED bulbs to dramatically reduce the power needed to supply them. Coupled with the latest versions of Bluetooth these sometimes also include a built-in speaker - making an innovative gift and wireless charging a must for many households to stay connected.

Power to the people

One of the very latest all-in-one gadgets for the home and with possible power cuts around the corner is a home power station. These giant devices can store up to 300,000 mAh (1300 watts) of power and in the event of a power cut whether planned or from bad weather these gadgets can charge all phones, laptops and tablets in the home keeping everyone in touch and connected.

Sometimes costing up to £500 RRP they are not for every promotional budget but for the very, very top budget clients, who knows?

Energy saving devices for sure will become very popular and along with gadgets with a 'sustainable' story are likely to be very much on everyone's 'must have' list of promotional gadgets very soon. Watch this space for more Tech updates in the next issue.

Matt Pluckrose is managing director of Desktop Ideas



WORKING THE ROOM

As the industry starts to build again, distributors and suppliers had the chance to explore opportunities at an innovative BPMA event

The BPMA launched a new industry networking event format in November, providing a chance for distributors to catch up with leading industry suppliers.

Amongst a full BPMA calendar of events towards the end of 2022, the BPMA chose Gaucho in Birmingham as an ideal venue for catching the current flavour of the industry.

The speed networking themed event was well attended and provided a chance for 18 event sponsor suppliers to network with 30 distributors attending.

Cross industry support

All successful events are sponsored and the BPMA was fortunate enough to have a long list of event sponsors sign up within 72 hours of launch. XD Connects was the first to confirm within minutes with Kingly, Juniper Trading, Paul Striker, The Outdoors Company, EasyPrint T-Shirts, Cotswold Outdoor, Alvastone, Listawood, The Sweet People, The Pen Warehouse, CHX Products, First Editions, Eat My Logo, midocean Brands, Jadan Press, Direct Textiles & Bags, and Victorinox following rapidly behind.

Distributor companies attending included Branded4UK, ASP Promotions, Aardvark Promotions, Allwag Promotions,




Pro-Ad, Navillus Print Gifts, Premier Print & Promotions, Geiger, TC Branding, Heartlands Business Gifts, U Name It Promotions, Cyan Group, Involution, Jack Nadel, and Promolab.

Guest speaker

After many a constructive conversation, attendees had the chance to pause and reflect on the meal while listening to guest speaker, James Sandbrook, founder of Human and co-founder of Marketing Meetup on the importance of marketing through storytelling.

The BPMA would like to thank all event sponsors, attendees, the guest speaker and further industry partners in attendance such as Ignite Incentives, PAGE Partnership, My Advantage and Sourcing City for making this first networking event such a success.

With positive feedback and an obvious appetite for further events of similar format in 2023, keep an eye on the BPMA events page for details and confirmed dates. 



What they said

Distributors attending the new format event gave it the thumbs up with **78%** rating it Excellent and **22%** saying it was Very Good. Distributors came to develop relationships (**67%**), create new contacts (**44%**), to enjoy networking (**77%**), and to find out about new developments and trends (**45%**).

Distributors said:

"It was very ambitious a wet Tuesday afternoon but it worked and was well attended, which goes to show there is a renewed desire to network in our industry. Nice venue too."

"Everyone seems really happy to be spending time together and exchanging on how things are going at the moment."

"It was good to socialise again within the industry."

"Great vibe, good venue, with a very upbeat feel."

"Friendly, informal, informative." Suppliers rated it with **54%** calling it Excellent and **27%** saying it was Very Good (**27%**).

Of industry suppliers present, **63%** would attend a similar event again, with **77%** of distributors extremely likely to attend.

Suppliers said:

"Good to network during the day (its normally in the evenings!) Also, a good cross section of qualitative distributor members with which to engage."

"It was a really lovely setting and location - easy to get to and the venue itself had great service with fantastic food and drink. As well as drinking with those we know and like on Tuesday, what wasn't to like? The format with the swapping every course was very well done."

"Great to see so many distributors in a short space of time, in a relaxed environment."

"It felt more personal. You had more time so speak and communicate and have one-on-one attention."

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LEARNING ON THE JOB


Factory visits provide a great insight into promotional manufacturing and branding opportunities, reports **Tom Robey**

Learners on the BPMA Education Platform from Jack Nadel, Buypromoproductions, Promolab Merchandise and Bio Laboratories were welcomed in November to the Juniper Trading factory in Wellingborough. Andrew Langley, managing director and BPMA Board Director accompanied by the wider Juniper team, hosted a factory tour of the facility and after lunch held a presentation on Juniper Trading, leather goods decoration techniques and material options.

Covering the wide product range, including wellbeing journals, business journals, silk stone paper Como notebooks made from RPET reclaimed from waste plastic bottles and with wood free stone paper, the group accompanied Andrew through the fabrication and decoration processes at the unit.



A deeper dive into branding options, bespoke possibilities, challenges and limitations when working with leather, RPET and polyurethane products there were many questions and an increased understanding from the group on how these details affect client briefs and how to manage client expectations throughout the order process.

Fifteen points are accredited to learners taking part in each factory visit as part of their TPM or CPM course. Learners study at their own pace with six months access to the online learning platform and once enough points are earned, learners are able to book on to exams held monthly. 

The BPMA Education platform is open to BPMA members and their staff. Further factory visits are planned throughout 2023. For more information contact the BPMA team: education@bpma.co.uk



Sow Easy visit

The BPMA was the first industry visitor to Sow Easy's new Slough offices and factory unit. With only a few weeks of being at the new facilities, Tom Robey was invited to present an overview of the sector to Sow Easy staff and allowed a privileged look the company's new facility.

Having increased turnover fivefold since 2015, the company is continually investing in the business. With an expanding team of 25, more than three million products per annum are dispatched from the new Slough HQ.

Accredited BPMA supplier members since 1992 as well as engaged Briman group members, the company holds a much coveted 30-year BPMA logo. Other notable memberships and accreditations include Sedex, Made In Britain and The Climate Coalition.

A family run business, patented Seedsticks are only part of the company's range. With three generations of production machines and a vast stock at the new facility to fulfil any range of orders, the UK manufacturer can cover any enquiries for the foreseeable future. Continuous investment in production machinery allows Sow Easy to streamline the production process.

Pick and pack for client campaigns requires a lot of management and with the expanding team on top of the order process and fulfilment, orders leave the facility on time.

The promotional products and corporate gifts are for businesses that care about the environment. All products Sow Easy offers are sustainable

The BPMA group was introduced to the association's resources online as well as the education programme. Exporting overseas and options on improving freight and carriage times were discussed with the production team with possible actions and solutions to be implemented.

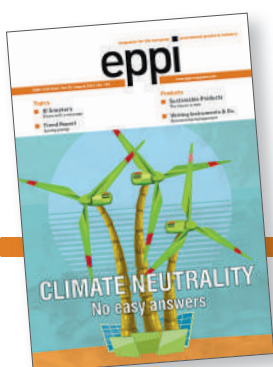


Mike Oxley
CEO of Prominate UK

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