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2021!

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WELCOME



Welcome to the latest issue of *Product Media* magazine. You will notice this issue and the next will be digital only, returning to print later on this year as we come back together for our first

face-to-face shows and meetings. We encourage you to pass the link to colleagues so they can enjoy articles and thought leadership – signing up for future digital and print copies.

It's over a year since lockdowns began in the UK and many countries all over the world, and our thoughts turn to those who have lost their lives and loved ones to the virus, and those suffering long-term effects long after it has left them. With so much to contend with both personally and professionally, the people and businesses behind our industry have found inner strength to keep going. As we head out of lockdown measures to

a path which promises a long-awaited regeneration of lost incomes and livelihoods, we trust in the science and facts helping open up society again.

But it's still a hard road ahead and we must be aware that this virus may still have surprises in store. With trade shows delayed until later this year a cautious pace will keep us on track until we can meet in person.

Managing expectations is key; we have now got to grips with the tariffs and taxes associated with the end of our transition out of the EU however many of our end-users are not aware of the impact. Confidence in our ability to innovate, inspire and deliver exceptional products to a hungry end-user audience is to be celebrated and promoted to capture the pent-up demand reported from sectors across the UK.

The pitches and incoming requests for quotes have picked up over recent weeks driving much needed demand in the industry. However, we are in a very different chapter where previous

delivery times may not always be possible or in fact more expensive to deliver than before. Our expertise will come to the fore, advising and preparing the ground to ensure we deliver brilliant products and service to clients.

In the next issue we will be exploring the current position on sustainability, why the importance of understanding of product impact on the planet has never been more central to our industry's future, how the BPMA is leading the charge in this area and what the industry is already doing to bring excellence and invention to the market. If you'd like to contribute to this or any future features, please get in touch with us via editor@productmediamagazine.co.uk. Read on to find out more about innovations in stationery and branding, key issues of the day plus our regular features.

Carey Trevill
BPMA CEO

Product Media Magazine is available to the whole promotional merchandise industry. It is the official magazine of the British Promotional Merchandise Association (BPMA).



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Apprentice award for Listawood's Ella

Listawood customer service team member, Ella Regan-Dennis, has been named Business Administration Apprentice of the Year at the College of West Anglia.

Since joining Listawood in 2017, she has worked in different areas of the business enabling her to gain a broad understanding of the business, its culture and products.

"We're incredibly proud of Ella and this award demonstrates her hard work and dedication to the company and her apprenticeship course," said Alex Turner, managing director. "We feel that Ella's work within different areas of the business, supported by the apprenticeship training provided by the College of West Anglia helps Ella to provide a high level of service to our customer base."

Listawood supports internal and external training for its team members throughout the business.



PF Concept adds clothing company to portfolio

PF Concept has purchased Westbury-based print-on-demand company T Shirt & Sons.

The Dutch importer took over the British company, which is one of the largest digital printing and fulfilment companies in Europe and serves numerous global marketplaces, ecommerce platforms and retailers.

T Shirt & Sons will continue to operate from its headquarters in Westbury. All of the employees have been taken over. The business units of T Shirt & Sons, including the sales and marketing division are to remain autonomous.

Phil Morgan, senior country manager of PF Concept UK (pictured), has assumed the role of managing director of T Shirt & Sons Europe. He is responsible for the growth strategy of T Shirt & Sons throughout Europe with immediate effect and will be supported by the existing management team, including commercial director, Adam Golder and the finance director, Darren Newman.

Neil Ringel, CEO of Polyconcept, said the acquisition offered attractive opportunities to provide additional services to B2B customers and promotional distributors.

Ralf Oster, CEO of PF Concept, said: "Our joint expertise in high-quality digital decoration as well as the possibilities of the further individualisation of one article upwards will open up new sales areas for our B2B customers. We look forward to supporting our customers in this increasingly demanded segment of the market."



midocean obtains A-score amfori BSCI standard

midocean's European print facility in Ruda, Poland is the first in the promotional industry to achieve the highest achievable amfori BSCI audit score.

The audit looks at a company's supply chain performance to improve working conditions worldwide. Accredited companies perform independent and recurring audits at midocean suppliers. The findings of each audit are used to develop an improvement plan and the factory is given a set amount of time to implement these improvements.

Monitoring looks at a range of indicators including discrimination, remuneration, working hours, health and safety, the environment, and child labour.

An independent auditor noted a significant improvement compared to midocean's previous audit in 2019. As well as being the only company in the industry to undergo an amfori BSCI audit, midocean is also the first to achieve the highest possible A-score audit result.

The midocean collection is produced according to European laws and regulations, and all products are safe and tested with reports available directly on the midocean website at item level. The audit helps confirm that the people who produce and decorate items can do so under safe conditions.

Safety of working conditions is checked according to local law and regulations and that now includes COVID-19 measures.

Audits of both amfori BSCI and SEDEX Smeta 4P at the Ruda facility in January audit resulted in the A-score achievement. The independent auditor noted improvements in business processes in the field of working hours, environmental requirements and safety in a relatively short time.



Galpeg goes Dutch with new facility

Back office solutions specialist Galpeg has opened a new office in the Netherlands to help mitigate disruptions caused by Brexit.

The company believes the move will help smooth over customs issues created by Britain's exit from the EU.

Its new Dutch office is a full-time, dedicated local resource. Galpeg chose the Netherlands because of its advanced transport infrastructure, in particular Amsterdam's Schiphol airport and the Port of Rotterdam, Europe's largest.

Galpeg MD Paul Green said: "This is a challenging time for many distributors. Our new office in the Netherlands will help many of our members who have European customers, as well as helping those looking to expand their presence within the EU."



Desktop Ideas pitches up with golf range

Desktop Ideas is teaming up with golf accessory brand Pitchfix, to bring it back to the UK promo market.

Pitchfix products are used the world-over, by golf courses, venues and corporate brands and have sold more than five million tools worldwide.

Matt Pluckrose, managing director of Desktop Ideas, said the popularity of golf increased between lockdowns, and brands should consider the opportunity as businesses return to more familiar operations.

"I envisage a new trend for branded items that can be used when meeting business contacts at golf clubs or when attending golf events. So, we've decided to represent Pitchfix to our network across the UK promo industry," he said. "Golf is booming right now, with more people playing the game than ever before, and more business contacts meeting on the course than ever before."

Desktop Ideas will have some of the most popular product lines available from stock in the UK from April, and can supply branded tools within three days with an MOQ of just four pieces.

The full range of colours and products is accessible via Desktop Ideas from stock in Holland.

A range of customisable marketing materials, social media posts, and client presentations are available to be over branded with the logo of the client or distributor.

Fluid acquires Reflex and looks for more

Fluid Branding acquired Reflex Marketing and Promotions on 26 March, to further grow the business and client base.

The team will work day to day from the office in Brighton when current restrictions allow, adding a south coast location to Fluid's UK and European offices.

Having built a successful merchandise business over 25 years, Reflex owner, Jon Walker said: "With my co-director, Don Hinkins, retiring after over 40 years in the industry this was the perfect time to look to expand the company's horizons, being part of the on-going success story at Fluid was a no brainer."

Kyle Scott, Fluid's director of strategy said the deal was a strategic acquisition. "Reflex has consistently been regarded as one of the top 25 distributors of promotional products here in the UK and

to have Jon and the team on board will add to our exceptional portfolio of clients and help further strengthen our award winning team."

He added: "As we see trends towards greater consolidation within our industry during these difficult times, we are currently looking for additional merger and acquisition opportunities. We hope to further bolster our position and offering within our industry in the near future."

Miles Lovegrove, MD of Fluid, said: "It was evident from the very beginning of our conversations with Don and Jon, that they ran a great company at Reflex and their culture and values are very much aligned to that of our own. We are very excited to welcome Reflex to our Fluid family and are thrilled to be able to provide a platform for the team to grow and prosper within our company."



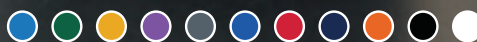
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Leadership change at GCP

Great Central Plastics founders Tony Phillips and Darryl Brown have announced their retirement from the Daventry-based company.

The directors have been with the business for 23 years, as managing and technical directors respectively. Achievements in that time have included moving to larger premises, implementing solar powered energy, moulding eco-friendly products for brands around the world, and building a team of great people.

Tony Phillips (pictured) said: "Having grown Great Central Plastics from a new start company back in 1998 to what is now a major player in the plastic manufacturing industry, it gives me great pleasure and pride to be handing the reigns over to the next generation led by an experienced and dedicated MD in Bal Phillips who has been associated with the business since day one. I am confident that the company will go on from strength to strength."

Darryl Brown added: "We have spent 23 long, hard years building a very successful business, working on some



great projects and producing many interesting parts for all sectors of the plastic moulding world."

Current director Bal Phillips will be taking over as managing director with the support of Kiron Phillips, Zan Phillips and Philip Brown.

Bal Phillips said: "We wish Tony and Darryl a thoroughly well-deserved retirement and look forward to further developing our family-run British business, with the solid team we have around us."

New role for Cooper at Abbeygate

Abbeygate, trade only, manufacturer of diaries, notebooks, calendars and leather goods, has appointed Sarah Cooper, as its new sales and marketing director.



She brings 30 years of sales management and promotional products experience to the Walsall business.

Cooper will assume full responsibility for all sales, marketing, distributor development and training throughout the UK and Ireland as well as coordinating product development at Abbeygate's factories in the West Midlands, England and Nashik, Maharashtra, India.

John Jordan, Abbeygate chairman, said: "We are excited to welcome Sarah's wealth of experience and leadership talents to Abbeygate. Her customer-led focus and training support ethos will further enhance our service commitment to all our trade distributors."

Made in Britain tag sells to the world

A new report has underlined the global appeal of British goods in major export markets.

The potential added value for British goods in 10 markets is £3.5bn according to Made in Britain, a report from Barclays. It found that perceptions of British goods were good in many markets and that consumers were prepared to pay a premium accordingly.

Consumers in most of the markets studied said they were buying the same, or more British goods than they were five years ago. In some key growth markets, such as China (64%) and India (69%) the majority of respondents said they were buying more British goods.

The research found that British goods on average commanded a price premium of 9.6% across a range of eight categories, with food, alcohol, automobiles and homewares scoring particularly highly.

Commenting on the findings, Mark Alderson, operations director at First Editions, and chairman of the Briman Group of British merchandise manufacturers, said: "British made goods have a world-leading reputation. We regularly rank in the top five countries for product quality, design, and innovation all whilst ranking number one for minimising our environmental impact. Brand Britannia continues to carry a powerful sustainable message."

#madeinUKday

First Editions' purpose-built UK facility allows the company to design, test, manufacture and brand its sustainable and reusable drinkware entirely in-house in the UK.

As well as supporting the UK economy, buying British helps the planet too.

"British-made products start life with a smaller carbon footprint, because the energy used to make them is greener – and that's before you even think about the thousands of extra miles to bring in similar items from the Far East."

Briman company, UK Lanyard Makers highlighted some of the benefits of British manufacture as part of Made in UK Day.

A product that is made in the UK has a reduced environmental impact and carbon footprint as it avoids airfreight. The company's factory is partly powered by a 40kW solar array and it has a biomass burner that provides the heating to lower the carbon footprint further.

The business can also deliver to tight lead times, as quickly as next day, with rapid quotes and proofs.

Customers won't get any unexpected customs charges or exchange rate surprises, and the business is a Living Wage employer.

Rutland returns to Headwear

Former Headwear managing director Roddy Rutland has returned to the Essex business after stepping down several years ago.

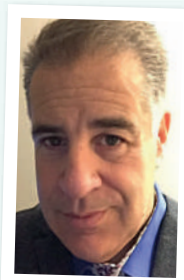
Rutland retired in 2016 due to illness but has regained full health and chosen to re-join the company.

Simon Ogilvie-Harris, managing director said Rutland's proven ability to deliver value adding solutions to clients would add another string to Headwear's bow, improving the customer service offering.

"We are thrilled to have Roddy back and this will only strengthen our position in the market. Roddy brings a wealth of knowledge that can only benefit both Headwear and our clients," he said.

Rutland said rejoining Headwear is an exciting opportunity to do something that he was passionate about.

"While never losing interest in the industry I have spent the past couple of years working on getting my health back and am now ready and raring to go," he said.



New catalogues launch

A number of companies have launched new product catalogues.

Spring greens

Sow Easy's Spring 2021 catalogue is full of seed and plant promotional products for client campaigns. The digital catalogue makes it easy to browse the range of eco-friendly promotional products, including its Seedsticks brand.

Sustainable products include Seeded Paper Postcards, and the catalogue highlights products where mailing and fulfilment service is available for direct mail campaigns.

The company's Express Seedsticks are now available as a custom express item to UK-addresses only with a lead time of either two or three working days, depending on order quantities. They measure 38mm x 46mm and are available with a choice of either mixed herb or wildflower seeds.

Marketing manager Shaheen Shakeel said: "We're pleased to offer these shortened lead times during a period when end-users and distributors alike have faced frustrations with fulfilment delays. Because we make our signature Seedsticks in Britain, we're able to manufacture these popular eco-friendly items in record time."

Oldeani is right on time

Oldeani has launched its 2021 watch catalogue. The company offers a full design service to deliver a watch that

reflects brand qualities. Watches are popular in merchandising ranges or make ideal gifts or rewards.

Watches can be personalised on orders of only 12 pieces on many models. All watches are made with Citizen or Seiko quality movements and are guaranteed for one year.

The catalogue is available online as a neutral end user version to be shared with clients.

Personal first from Goldstar

In what it claims is a first for European promotional gifts, Goldstar is offering every distributor their own personalised digital catalogue to share with their clients.

As well as being branded for the company, each catalogue is bespoke to the members of the sales team with their contact details.

Companies just need to provide their logo and the contact information they want on their catalogue.



Mantis World supports IWD

Female-owned promotional clothing company, Mantis World, partnered with Clothes 2 Order to celebrate International Women's Day this year.

The company donated 200 T-shirts to Smart Works, a charity dedicated to helping women build their confidence and get back into the workforce. The pandemic has been particularly hard for women, with figures from the ONS suggesting that working mothers in England have been 47% more likely to lose their jobs in comparison to working fathers.

Smart Works provides women with interview training, as well as with the right wardrobe to look the part.

Prama Bhardwaj, Mantis World founder, said: "When I founded Mantis World in 2000, I never imagined that 21 years later we would still be the only promo-wear brand that is owned by women. I've had the privilege and pleasure of working alongside so many wise,



talented, and dedicated women and this IWD we acknowledge the often unsung effort they make. We are always available to 'pay it forward' – helping women succeed and gain the confidence to fulfil their true potential."

The Mantis World team, including senior management, is mostly female, and has a focus on female-friendly policies in the office to make life easier. The understanding of needs, such as flexibility for those with children, has helped to create a culture of openness and support.

Women are at the heart of textile production and too often pay the greatest price in a historically unfair industry. It's important to look at every step of the supply chain and to understand how women and girls throughout can be helped to reach their full potential.

Women also make up the majority of the workers on the production line. Providing support such as maternity pay, sick pay and assistance with childcare helps women and their families.

Beans means creativity for promo companies

Merchandise companies latched on to the recent Weetabix and baked bean social media phenomenon, which kicked off when the breakfast cereal manufacturer suggested some contentious new serving suggestions.

Manic Merchandise kicked things off with images of a plate of beans supplemented with popular merchandise items such as pens and leads. They then challenged their industry peers to come up with their ideas.

Not to be outdone, Fluid Branding dreamed up its own beany offering with the tinned legumes artfully drizzled on Fluid-branded product.

Willsmere Wagg then got wind of the idea and came up with the concept of the 11.30 bean break, complete with everything a baked bean lover could desire, including donuts and beans, and beany cupcakes.

Frankly, we're blown away with the idea.



Dickinson marks 20 years at LSi

LSi sales director Chris Dickinson has celebrated the milestone of 20 years with the Yorkshire distributor

Joining LSi as a fresh-faced sales executive at the age of 21 back in 2001, he was the 12th employee to join the company. He was promoted to sales manager in 2007 and made sales director in 2013.

"Chris has played a major part in the success and continued expansion of LSi over the past 20 years, and is a well-known and respected figure throughout the industry," said managing director Lloyd Simpson. "Throughout this pandemic Chris has been at the sales coalface and without his energy, passion, loyalty, enthusiasm and total respect from his sales team, I don't believe LSi would have been able to get through the last

year unscathed, or be in the position we are today without him. I owe him a great debt of gratitude."

Celebrations may be muted or

postponed for a few months, but the staff at LSi would like to say a massive congratulations to Chris.

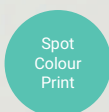


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IS THERE ANOTHER OPTION?

You may want a fully bespoke clothing range, but lack the budget or time frame to get it. It's time to think smarter, says **Clive Allcott**



Marketing results are often calibrated on the impressions and impacts that the brand will incur from the activity that has been planned. With current attention drawn to promotional items that have minimal handling in use, branded clothing has become the ideal solution, hence the realisation that fashionable well-branded clothing will deliver ideal results.

This deliberate choice of promoting a brand or message means companies are now looking to create a range of garments that represent their brand whether it be in the branding, the

colour or the detail on the clothing.

The current marketplace in the promotional clothing sector has bridged the gap of standard form into being very close to following retail trends and fashions.

With this trend towards retail quality clothing and branding, a new customised sector is gaining traction. This fits between the off-the-shelf branded garment and the fully bespoke product.

So, what are the main differences?

Your selected clothing decorator takes a blank, off-the-shelf stock garment and makes retail style changes to it in-house rather than at source. These can take the form of a neck label change, adding a hem label, changing the zip pull toggles, stitching on rubber or leather badges to name but a few.

These changes along with general branding techniques in non-standard positions such as left shoulder 'Superdry style' or down the arm, are turning standard promotional clothing items into bespoke retail like products.

This can be a great alternative to the fully



bespoke item as it offers benefits such as shorter delivery times, manageable quantities and easier reordering. Ask your decorator to help you think outside the box with creative designs and garment choices. Why not put together a complete clothing range from head to foot of matching customised products that identify with the brand but offer retail style.

Offering these branding solutions will help you in the sales of promotional and branded clothing.

**Happy selling,
Clive (The Clothing Guru). 🇬🇧**



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UNRAVELLING the thread

Organic cotton is seen as a 'good thing' by environmentally conscious consumers and brands, but is that the full story.

Richard King
thinks not

Following the article on 'organic cotton' in the last issue of *Product Media* ('It need not cost the earth', p9), I think that we need to dig deeper in our research when buying any product. This will create a greater understanding of the impact a purchase is having on the planet.

As we have all seen in the media there are certain countries where ethical and environmental practices are less than satisfactory, but this cannot be said for all cotton producing countries.

The real issue comes down to the ability to trace cotton back to the original source and here there is a problem. Most fabric producers can trace cotton back to the spinning mill or perhaps to the ginnery, but an individual ginnery in countries like India and China may be supplied by thousands of small family farmers who may or may not be accredited for GOTS (Global Organic Textile Standards), and may or may not be using harmful fertilisers. So, can we really trust that all the cotton is organic? Ethical standards are a wholly different question.

DON'T BELIEVE THE HYPE

Marketing speak would have us believe that organic cotton is better than conventional, particularly where water consumption is concerned. However, a recent Cotton Inc report quoted USA Department of Agriculture statistics that while production of an organic cotton T-shirt required 660 gallons of water, a conventional cotton t-shirt needed just 290 gallons. So, can we really trust everything we are told?

It is generally overlooked that all cotton farmers are always looking to increase the harvest yields, they are also all mindful of long-term soil quality. Those in developed nations are bound by rules that prevent the use of many chemicals.



The REACH rules, for example, ensure that the likes of formaldehyde are not used in the production of textiles, and these rules are adhered to in developed nations.

The best way to start your product development is to buy direct from the farm. At the Cotton Textile Company, we now source direct from farms in Australia and will shortly be buying direct from farms in the US. This allows us a completely traceable supply chain and the ability to confirm where the raw cotton was grown even years after the finished product has been supplied.

As always, the downside of this level of control is price. Because corporations place profits and shareholder happiness above the environment they will always take the 'cheaper' option.

There is an increasing demand for 'organic' cotton, but to get beyond the media noise about conventional cotton's supposedly negative effect

on the planet, we need to dig deeper to find textiles that are responsibly sourced and reduce our footprint.

Independent analyst and consultant, Veronica Bates Kassatly, points out that for millennia we have used cotton, silk, linen, and wool without any apparent harm to life and nature. While any industry needs regulating, if we are to clean up the planet, we need to focus first on reducing reliance on the most polluting fabrics and industries.

MAN MADE PROBLEMS

Since the Seventies, Bates Kassatly says the greatest growth in textile fabric has been polyester. Microfibers from polyester and her poly cousins have been reported in Antarctic Ice, the Mariana trench, the deepest Mediterranean, and in some of the most isolated areas of the US wilderness, transported by wind and rain. Most of these particles are from clothing.

Our focus should perhaps look more closely at the greater impact of all clothes and textile accessories. Whatever the fibre used, you need to talk to the producer and get the information direct from them.

If they cannot provide what you need to know, then your 'organic' T-shirt may be costing the earth after all.

Richard King is managing director of The Cotton Textile Company 



GOTS

Teasing out THE TRUTH

With critical and high profile reports on the possible human rights abuses in Chinese cotton production, clients are nervous about where their garments come from. However, finding out can be difficult

Apparel is one of the largest product categories in the promotional merchandise sector. BPMA research has shown that 91% of companies used branded clothing in their businesses. It also found that 58% of consumers owned a promotional T-shirt.

However, in the past year, the clothing sector generally has come under greater scrutiny due to allegations that the cotton used in many of the garments bought by consumers and corporations has been farmed and produced using forced labour.

Widespread reports of coercion among Uighur Muslims and other ethnic minorities in China's Xinjiang region are causing businesses – and governments – to address more examples of exploitation in fashion.

A report published in December by research institute the Center for Global Policy (CGP) revealed that coercive practices went further than previously thought.

Dr Adrian Zenz of the CGP, said: "Previously, evidence for forced labour in Xinjiang pertained only to low-skilled manufacturing, including the production of textiles and apparel. This report provides new evidence for coercion specifically related to cotton picking. These

findings have much wider implications, affecting all supply chains that involve Xinjiang cotton as a raw material."

China is the second largest producer of cotton in the world after India, and Xinjiang accounts for 85% of China's and 20% of the world's cotton, the report found.

COERCIVE SCHEMES

Hundreds of thousands of ethnic minority labourers are being forced to pick Xinjiang's cotton by hand through coercive government schemes. They can be forcibly taken from their homes and relocated to labour camps in cotton producing areas. Some regions put Uighur children and the elderly into centralised care while working-age adults are away on state-assigned cotton-picking work.

According to the BBC, up to half a million Uighurs are involved in seasonal cotton picking as well as the making of garments.

Human rights groups and governments have already been critical of the treatment of Uighur people and other minority groups in China. The Australian Strategic Policy Institute says there are 380 suspected internment camps in the Xinjiang region

BPMA advice

Carey Trevill, CEO, BPMA says:

"Understandably, many end users are very concerned that the cotton they may purchase via supply chains originating in China is tainted with Uighur forced labour from the Xinjiang region. With a complex supply chain, it is not possible to 100% guarantee cotton coming from these regions is not affected by the widely reported abuse of Uighur and other Muslim groups, said to be involved. We are unable to find a credible way to state how members can avoid this cotton within their supply chain.

The BPMA recommends all supply chains are closely monitored on a continuous basis to ensure due diligence is always up to date, checking standards, assurances and legislation is in order for any type of product being procured.

For those concerned about cotton originating from these areas in China, request from your suppliers information to help.

Work with a credible recognised BPMA Charter Supplier or BPMA Supplier who will secure supply from credible, assured sources.

If you are sourcing from China and the Xinjiang region:

- Request information and confirmation of the area where the cotton was grown and picked, and evidence of labour used
- Ask for supply chain assurance certification (noting Better Cotton Initiative has now suspended assurance activities in the Xinjiang region in 2020)
- Decide based on the evidence provided if you are satisfied the traceability of the cotton is assured before you buy.



Mantis QR codes provide traceability information



– 40% more than previous estimates.

It is thought that at least a million people have been incarcerated in a system that China has called 're-education camps' designed to tackle religious extremism. The camps have been associated with human rights abuse including torture, sexual abuse, and forced sterilisation of Uighur women.

The US government has described the treatment of the Uighurs as genocide. The UK government is looking at strengthening Modern Slavery legislation with fines for companies who don't comply.

Ministers will also launch a campaign to encourage UK businesses to address the Xinjiang risk, and the government is reviewing the need for export controls applying to the region.

For businesses, the issue of Xinjiang-produced cotton has forced a rapid reassessment of their supply chains. Some, such as Marks & Spencer, have committed themselves to working with organisations that tackle the abuses in the system. M&S was the first retailer to sign the Coalition to End Forced Labour in the Uighur Region's call to action in January.

ALTERNATIVE SOURCES

Other companies have looked to where they are sourcing cotton and tried to avoid Xinjiang. Clothing retailer H&M Group told a UK government select committee it was focusing on traceability and sustainability. Head of supply chain David Sävman said the group has full traceability globally of all its direct suppliers, garment and fabric manufacturers.

Companies such as Ikea, Muji and Uniqlo were named as using cotton from the area in a submission to the HMRC last April. They have either stopped sourcing from the area or have maintained that their supply chains are free of forced labour.

However, some observers say that it is hard to be this confident about traceability. While companies may have traceability to suppliers, they often don't have traceability of ginners, who process raw cotton, and fabric spinners.

As Richard King of the Cotton Textile Company points out in this issue (see p13), cotton is produced by millions of farmers around the world and sold to ginners, who mix different fibres into large bales.

Chinese cotton is exported to countries including Bangladesh, India and Vietnam, where it is made into clothing.

This results in a situation that human rights group, The Coalition to End Forced Labour in the Uyghur Region, said means that "Virtually the entire [global] apparels industry is tainted by forced Uighur and Turkic Muslim labour".

Clive Allcott, *Product Media* columnist and commercial director at Direct Textiles and Bags, describes the situation as "a minefield" in terms of mapping and traceability.

"The problem is that there are so many people in the chain that by the time we receive it as a finished product to brand we are reliant on the information that has been passed down the chain," he said. "We have obviously completed due diligence with our supply partners and they have also done similar upstream. However, to get full clarity is hazy at best. Buying from credible sources is also a key factor as some suppliers like Neutral, Stanley Stella do have full traceability from the farm to the factory."

For companies looking for reassurance, there is no overarching stamp of approval to provide a clean bill of health.

The Better Cotton Initiative (BCI), which worked with licenced suppliers in the Xinjiang region, suspended activities last

March and ceased all field-level activities in October, following the allegations of forced labour and other human rights abuses.

CERTIFICATIONS

GOTS (Global Organic Textile Standard) has a number of social requirements, such as employment being freely chosen, no child labour, and no harassment and violence. According to GOTS, in 2019, China showed a significant increase in terms of the total number of certified facilities with 448 (301), an increase rate of 49%. It has the fifth highest number of GOTS certifications in the world.

Another initiative aims to eliminate forced labour from cotton supply chains. The Yarn Ethically & Sustainably Sourced Standard (YESS) looks to guide or spinners to avoid purchasing cotton tainted by forced labour.

Using a similar approach to that taken with conflict minerals, YESS has identified nine countries that have a high risk for using forced labour in cotton production: Benin, Burkina Faso, China, India, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

Tracing the journey

Mantis World has a traceability map that goes as far back as the raw cotton. This was established many years ago and in the face of current events, both in Xinjiang and other parts of the world.

The company claims that its cotton comes only from certified and known organic farmers in India and Tanzania. The supply chain is backed up from field to finish by third-party certification bodies.

In 2020, the introduction of QR codes in Mantis garments allowed the wearer to see the journey of production and understand the origins of the cotton used. This gives consumers

confidence in their choices, and is encouraging an open conversation in the industry about honesty and clarity.

Mantis World continues working with organisations who are investigating and shining a light on the human rights abuses the Uighur people are facing. Organisations such as the Fairwear Foundation are committed to working with brands that manufacture in the region, helping them to spot injustices and eliminate them at the source, whilst Fashion Revolution continues to give a voice to the Uighur people and put a spotlight on the atrocities being committed.

Platinum prestige for Galpeg

Galpeg has been awarded Platinum Status by EcoVadis, the world's largest and most trusted independent provider of business sustainability ratings.

The accolade means that Galpeg now ranks in the top 1% of the 75,000 companies rated worldwide each year by EcoVadis.

EcoVadis has become a long-established partner for more than 200 global multinational companies including L'Oréal, Coca-Cola Enterprises, Nestle, Pernod Ricard, and Johnson & Johnson.

Galpeg has held gold EcoVadis status since 2015. To gain the highest medal of recognition, it was assessed on a range of criteria across four key 'pillars' – environment, labour and human rights, sustainable procurement, and ethics.

Theo Bell (pictured), Galpeg's sustainability project lead, said the company continuously looked to improve its 'triple bottom line' of people, planet and profit.

"When we submitted our latest EcoVadis assessment, we set out ambitious plans and targets. Our Platinum status recognises our continuous improvements across the business and supply chain, and the fact that sustainability principles feature in everything we do."

Galpeg MD Paul Green added: "Encouraging sustainable operations across the entire value chain has been a key part of our corporate strategy for many years. I'm delighted that we have been awarded Platinum accreditation by EcoVadis, which recognises our work in reducing environmental impact across our entire business."



Workplace testing adds to COVID secure environment

The Pen Warehouse and Snap Products have started COVID-19 workplace testing as part of the government scheme to use lateral flow testing kits to help identify positive cases of COVID-19.

The new scheme aims to reduce the spread of the virus and protect both employees and their families.

It is in addition to the companies' existing COVID-secure measures, which include providing reusable face masks; hand sanitising stations and sanitiser at every workstation; an infrared thermographic camera at the staff entrance; acrylic screen guards; signage, and contact tracing measures.

Helen Dyl, operations director, said: "Employee health and wellbeing is of the utmost importance and we have made every possible effort to keep our staff

members safe."

She added: "We manufacture many of these products in-house which has meant we can adapt quickly to the government's changing requirements, without impacting operations."



Kingly adds to eco-friendly sock range

Kingly claims a first in launching reflective neon socks made from 100% regenerated nylon, or polyamide.

Polyamide is obtained from waste raw materials in the production phase. If not recycled the material would have to be disposed of in a waste plant.

Another eco-friendly line of socks Kingly has launched is created by PET bottles. Three bottles can be transformed into a pair of socks, when combined with 5% cotton and 3% elastane.

Polygiene, an odour-control fabric treatment is also added to inhibit the growth of bacteria.

Kingly has been awarded the Promotional Gift Award for creating upcycled socks from textile waste, packed into compostable self-seal bags. It also supplies organic socks, which are biodegradable, and bamboo socks that keep feet dry by effectively wicking moisture away from the skin.

The company is SEDEX SMETA Pillar 4 and GMP certified.



Patent granted for Listawood AntiBug drinkware

Listawood has been granted its latest patent application, for antimicrobial drinkware in India.

Sold as part of a range of products under the AntiBug trademark, the company first introduced antimicrobial drinkware products to the promotional market back in 2012, responding to concerns about the transfer of pathogens in commercial settings, hospitals, care facilities, and at home.

Since then, Listawood has invested in research and development and global patent protection to support its innovations. It also has patents and

patent applications covering matt dye sublimation drinkware, toner transfer coloured drinkware, and the award-winning ColourFusion range.

The company is in the process of laboratory testing and expects to be able to release application specific data shortly to show how the technology utilised in antimicrobial drinkware is proving effective in the reduction of the SARS-

COVID-2 virus.

Alex Turner, managing director, Listawood, said: "It is important that our customers are aware that they are supplying products whose performance is supported by robust independent laboratory test data, meaning that they can pitch Listawood products with complete confidence."

L I S T A W O O D

KILLS 99.9% OF BACTERIA
ANTI BUG

MERCHANDISE WORLD IS BACK IN SEPTEMBER

After a year of virtual contact Merchandise World is bringing the industry back together

The planned June edition of Merchandise World will no longer take place, and all efforts are being focused on the next exhibition taking place at Marshall Arena, Milton Keynes on Wednesday 8 September 2021.

Although the Government has announced a roadmap which indicates the UK could be out of lockdown by 21 June, this is contingent on everything going to plan. Most importantly, not all age groups may have had the opportunity for a vaccination by then.

Show organiser, Ella Long said: "We know our industry loves the opportunity to get together, and our utmost priority is to ensure that this can be done safely for all at Merchandise World. We want our next event to be a real celebration for our industry, and

we feel that this can happen in September. In the meantime, we will putting new procedures in place, and we will also be able to assess events taking place before ours to make sure that Merchandise World is not only successful and fun, but also a model on how a show should be run 'post-Covid'."

As each day passes confidence grows for the future, and now is a key time to be looking ahead and plan to re-engage with customers and suppliers not seen for many

months.

To allow time for the show planning to be meticulous, stands for the September event will not go on sale until Monday 19 April 2021. However, bookings can be made now for January 2022 at the Ricoh Arena, and discounts will be available for those booking to exhibit at both events.

Angela Wagstaff, chair of BPMA said: "There is no better way of doing business and building relationships than face to face, and the appetite for Merchandise World once again is clear. With the extra measures planned to keep us all safe and well, September is the perfect time for us all to come together to plan for the future."

UPCOMING MERCHANDISE WORLD EVENTS

Wednesday 8th September 2021 at Marshall Arena, Milton Keynes

Wednesday 26th & Thursday 27th January 2022 at Ricoh Arena, Coventry

Merchandise WORLD

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Weds 8th September 2021

at Marshall Arena, Milton Keynes

Where the trade come together again!

THE *write* STUFF

Technology has run our lives for the past year, but stationery and writing instrument have coexisted. *Product Media* spoke to key players

The popular narrative runs that during lockdown we have all turned to technology as our saviour.

Zoom calls, Team meetings, Google Hangouts, WhatsApp groups, video conferences, webinars, virtual quizzes... we've done them all, and in some ways, they have kept us sane, while driving us to distraction.

But there's another storyline that's emerged in lockdown as we have rediscovered tools and pastimes that have been set aside. Witness the growth of gardening, baking and even knitting in the past year, as people have turned to distractions to help them

cope with a more reduced world.

Another area that has enjoyed something of a boom has been letter writing. According to stationery company, Papier, its sales increased by 300% at the start of lockdown with demand for greeting cards, notecards and writing paper rocket. Google data reflected this also, with searches for birthday cards, for example, increasing by 400%.

And what is paper without writing instruments? Despite offices being closed for the past year and a focus on all things digital, the future looks rosy for pens. Research by Technavio claims the global writing and marking instruments market size is poised to grow by \$6.07bn during

2020-24, progressing at a CAGR of over 5%.

Product personalisation will be a major driver, according to the report, with vendors leveraging rapid advances in printing technologies and designs to offer personalised products. Multi-utility pens that can be used with digital devices are another area for potential growth the report claims.

There's no doubt that some stationery use has been stymied by the closure of offices and live events such as conferences, which are big users. Although some of these sales have been diverted to notebooks and pens for WFH employees, the return to the office will be a massive boon to the market. And when it happens, suppliers stand ready.



The Pen Warehouse

Writing instruments' sales have been affected by the pandemic due to the shutdown of the hospitality sector. Hotels, exhibitions, conferences, and general face-to-face meetings have been put on hold for the last twelve months and writing instruments sales have reflected this fact. However, writing instruments still hold huge sentimental value and offer a high brand impression rate, with the cost per impression for a mid-range pen at £0.001.

With the return to school, our pencil case kits have been a go-to product for our distributors. Students require individual stationery kits, and our pencil cases can be easily wiped down. Antimicrobial writing instruments have been incredibly popular too, as well as our executive pen range with individual personalisation.



PRODUCT SHIFT

The Pen Warehouse maintained a steady flow of pen business throughout lockdown, albeit at a lower level than normal. Our technical team steamed ahead and developed Biomaster: an antimicrobial printing ink for our antimicrobial writing instruments, another industry-first and unique offering from us. The team also focussed on developing products for Snap Products, including hand sanitisers, protective face masks and many others in the pipeline yet to be launched.



HYGIENE HERE TO STAY

We believe that hygiene and antimicrobial products are here for the long-term and we continue to develop a comprehensive range. Whereas the sales of these new products did not compensate for the drop in traditional business, it made a huge difference to our ability to weather the worst part of the pandemic storm. Sales of our new product ranges continue to be popular.

TRENDS

When customers are looking at writing instruments, they are increasingly looking at their reusability and writing length. Our in-house R&D department is able to put products to the test, including accurately examining the writing length of pens. We offer a wide range of pens which are refillable, and individuals can now purchase additional refills to extend the life of their favourite pen via Refillio.com.



With regards to writing and stationery, there is definitely a trend for antimicrobial products. It is important to note that the ink that is placed on those products will affect their antimicrobial efficacy, as standard printing inks do not offer antimicrobial protection. Our in-house formulated Biomaster spot colour print ensures complete antimicrobial protection for the lifetime of the product.

Notebooks continue to remain popular and hold huge sentimental value. People have fatigue from being sat at desks in front of computers all day, and there has been a huge uptake in products around mindfulness and mental wellbeing.

We are processing a lot more orders for branded bundles and letterbox-friendly packs. With many businesses still working from home, this has been the biggest contributing factor to the increase in sales for packaged products. We also offer fulfilment services as this is much in demand currently, which complements our individual

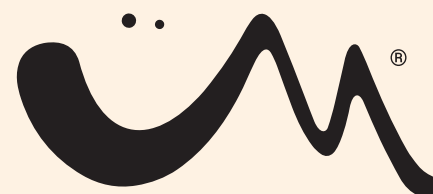


personalisation options. Sustainability is still prominent, with eco-friendly options and our responsibly sourced, UK made packaging becoming increasingly popular. We have also seen high demand for gift boxes holding a bottle, notebook, and pen trilogy. Businesses are preparing employees for the return to the office so are readily sending stationery and gift packs out to them.



The award-winning Mood Collection established itself very quickly as a leading and best-selling brand in the promotions industry.

Sales for the range have remained constant throughout the pandemic and because of its long-standing success, we continue to evolve the collection, with our latest additions being just as successful: the Mood Gift Box, Mood Motivation Cards, Mood Pocket Notebook and more landing soon.





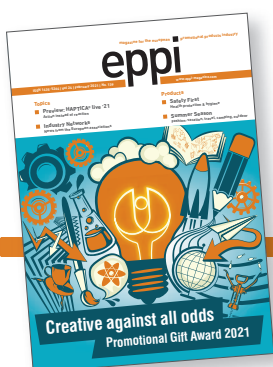
Marcin Pawłowski

CEO of badge4u

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What's new?
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Senator

Technology augmentation is cropping up in traditional products such as writing instruments.

New from the Harlow-based company is the Senator Connected Pen which has an NFC tag in it – so the pen can connect to any URL the customer wants to and they can change the URL as many times as they like for up to two years. This allows users to link recipients of the pen with digital information which could include basic company details, videos, special offers, or sales catalogues.

The company has also brought out a new Challenger recycled pen with mix and Match options, as well as two new recycled pens coming out in May called the Evoxx and Trento. It notes a growing interest in its recycled and bio ranges as sustainability is a growing corporate priority.

In line with many suppliers, Senator has anti bac pens in three different designs. However, it claims its pens are different from most out in the industry as the anti bac isn't a coating that will wear off over time. The pens are classed as PPE so a lot of distributors have added them to PPE ranges.

At a time when resources are stretched at many suppliers, the company's website, my.senator.com has helped customers prepare visuals and order printed samples to create a reason for a call or discussion.

Senator has introduced a new CRM system in the past year to allow it to have customer data at its fingertips for repeat orders and to be able to work closer with them on projects.

While in the pre-Covid days, pens were used primarily as giveaways at events or on sales calls, the past year has seen them used more in WFH packs, or welcome back to the office packs, according to Senator.

Branding had a flurry of 'Stay safe' style messages last year, but this is starting to die down a bit now, the company reports. A lot of more recent orders have reverted back to normal branding to send out to customers.



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NEW **NFC INSIDE** **MADE IN GERMANY** **MADE WITH GREEN ENERGY**

SENATOR CONNECTED PENS

DIGITAL ADDED VALUE IN CLASSIC BALL PENS.

Get your personal pen with NFC tag now and impressively combine haptic and digital advertising.

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NEW **BIO BASED**

LIBERTY BIO

TOP DESIGN MADE OF BIOPLASTIC.

Made from renewable raw materials, durable and biobased. The ball pen for your environmentally conscious brand presentation.

100 YEARS senator
Extraordinary Since 1920

Juniper's build your own option

Juniper has launched another option for sustainable materials, to sit alongside its award-winning Bio D PU, Eleather and Recyco. COMO is Juniper's first recycled PET material, made from recycled plastic bottles.

Following six months of development and trials, it has produced a composite material made up of 80% rPET, 16% non-woven organic cellulose, and 4% PU. The material is REACH compliant and vegan friendly.

COMO has a soft touch, leather effect grain, that has a very high-quality feel and handle, and can provide a fantastic deboss for clients' brands.

Managing director, Andrew Langley, said: "We wanted to create a very high performing material that had robust sustainable credentials, and significantly could offer good colour potential and critically, great branding properties. We believe with COMO we have achieved this."

The material is held in stock at Juniper's UK and China factories. However, all notebooks using COMO are made at Juniper's ISO-accredited factory in Wellingborough and will be made with 100% post-consumer waste recycled paper. The material is best debossed, but can be screen printed, digitally printed or foil blocked.

UK production is a great story to help with carbon footprint, but also to support



the local economy, while avoiding supply line problems being faced during Covid.

An array of 'build your own book' features, include elastic pen loop and ribbon colours, as well as additional items like tip in pages, belly bands, individual personalisation, and boxes. Three traditional sizes, A4, A5 and A6 are available with a new Quarto size from June 2021.

Langley adds: "We are developing bespoke pantone colours in COMO for large client schemes. We have started with five base stock colours, but we envisage expanding this to 10 colours within the next 12 months."

The products are great for WFH, transforming any dining table, dressing table, or kitchen table into a professional workspace. Deskmats are flexible, and reversible with two-colour combinations,

front and back, and available in five sizes.

Juniper notes that sales of notebooks and desk top items, like mats, mousepads and coasters have held up well during these difficult last 12 months, as brands seek to provide their staff with well-made, locally sourced, and quality branded merchandise. Feelings of isolation and undervalue, are real concerns of lockdown and remote working, and branded merchandise is a great way of brands staying connected to their staff.

Individual names or initials can be added for the personal touch.

To that extent Juniper is also launching its first wellness and mindfulness journal, written by a leading therapist and author. It will be a notebook with a difference and aimed at companies who want to reflect the importance that mindfulness and wellbeing have.

Cross

As many people continue to work from home there is a need to ensure that they have the tools necessary to do their job including making notes while on Zoom or Teams meetings, keeping a market open for branded, quality pens.

Nicola Shepherd senior director, global marketing, Cross, says that the market appears to be gradually reopening with the Cross team answering increased numbers of enquiries.

"As pens are easy to ship, we are seeing companies shift towards pens as the perfect corporate gift," she says. "Pens are so accessible. They are a great branded gift, easy to post and still a must have tool in our day to day work. For companies they provide an opportunity for them to ensure a gift carrying their brand

is in the hands of their employees or customers every day."

With opportunities returning, Cross has launched the Cross Window, a high quality ballpoint pen, designed for the corporate gifting market that provides customers with multiple branding opportunities including 'through the window' in the specially designed clip.

"You can also place an emblem on the clip or laser engrave it and brand the side of the cap," says Shepherd. "We are also excited to bring to market the first ever quality writing instrument which includes an LED that allows you to switch the colour shining through the cap to match your mood. Cross Lumina can be branded with an emblem to

make it extra special."

As ever, branding is all important. All Cross pens and notebooks can be branded and the offer depends upon the product itself but can include industry leading emblems, deep cut engraving with the option to colourfill, drag and laser engraving and debossing on journal products.





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UPDATES ON BAMBOO PRODUCTS

Several European markets are taking a hard line on bamboo and melamine plastic products. *Product Media* outlines what you need to know

In February this year, it came to light that several European countries have withdrawn certain products falling under the 10/2011 legislation relating to bamboo/melamine products such as 'to go' cups.

Immediately affecting many suppliers, some promotional products have been withdrawn from the market despite holding safety certification. Here we detail the actions certain markets have now taken under this particular legislation and removing these products from free circulation. The majority of products on the market hold valid safety certification which is supplied at the time of sale and they are often listed as 'eco' due to the natural components.

It should be stressed that the risks identified from test conditions pose no immediate threat to life and as we have previously reported in *Product Media*, the challenge lies in the combination of plastics and fibres as set out in Article 5 of EU Regulation 10/2011.

PRODUCT COMPLIANCE

Approaching SGS in March for further comment, we have been unable to obtain clarification as to how the UK will now adopt this EU regulation although it is widely considered to mirror the current and amended legislation.

The current placed on the market guidance states, referring to Article 2, where products comply:

- Plastic materials and articles complying with Regulation (EU) No 10/2011 as applicable before the entry into force of this Regulation, and which were first placed on the market before 23 March 2021 may continue to be placed on the market until 23 September 2022 and remain on the market until the exhaustion of stocks.
- Please note: further information and guidance can be gained from notified bodies. BPMA recommend referring to SGS, Intertek or BSI for further guidance.

EUROPEAN COUNTRIES REMOVE PRODUCTS FROM MARKET

The Food Packaging Forum reported Belgium, Luxembourg, and Netherlands (Benelux) had published a joint letter calling for market withdrawal of 'bamboo melamine plastics' which do not comply with article 5 of Regulation (EU) No. 10/2011.

Many products with these combined materials have been found to often exceed specific migration limits set in the regulation for melamine and formaldehyde, therefore posing a potential health risk to consumers in certain test conditions. In the letter, the three national Government agencies criticise that a wide variety of products made from melamine plastics, e.g. kitchen and tableware, can still be found on the EU market even though such composite materials were found by the European Commission (EC) to not be authorised for food contact articles according to article 5 of Regulation (EU) No 10/2011.

With this letter, the authors want to raise awareness that these prohibited additives can still be found in products on the EU market and make it clear that "business operators will have

to withdraw 'bamboo melamine materials' and articles [...] immediately."

These markets announced in their letter that they will reinforce market controls and pursue violations of these products under current EU legislation from the second quarter of 2021.

In 2020, the Expert Working Group on Food Contact Materials (FCM) published a note¹ on the use and placing on the market of food contact plastic materials and articles containing ground bamboo ('bamboo-melamine') or other similar constituents.

INCREASED INSTANCES

There is a reported increase in the number of food contact materials and articles being placed on the market that are manufactured from plastics containing bamboo and/or other 'natural' substances. Common examples of these are kitchenware and tableware such as bowls and plates for repeated use, and coffee beakers ('to go cups').

The note concludes that ground bamboo, bamboo flour, and many similar substances such as corn are not in the Union List of Authorized Substances (Union List) in Annex I to Regulation (EU) 10/2011² (Food Contact Plastics Regulation, consolidated version to September 2020³). Food contact plastics containing these unauthorised additives are not in compliance with the compositional requirements of the Food Contact Plastics Regulation.

According to the Food Contact Plastics Regulation, an authorisation has been given for 'wood flour and fibres, untreated' (FCM No 96) and 'sunflower seed hulls' (FCM no. 1060).

WITHDRAW IMMEDIATELY

In February, 2021, a joint letter⁴ from the authorities of Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg (Benelux countries) notified business operators to withdraw food contact 'bamboo-melamine' plastics from the EU market immediately.

According to that announcement, the use of bamboo (or other natural constituents) in combination with polymers, such as melamine ('bamboo-melamine') for the manufacture of food contact plastics is not explicitly authorised under article 5 'Union List' in the Food Contact Plastics Regulation. Additionally, the specific migration values for melamine and formaldehyde on these products have often been found to be substantially higher than those permitted in the Food Contact Plastics Regulation.

Importers who wish to place food contact 'bamboo-melamine' plastics on the EU market are obliged to submit an authorisation dossier according to Regulation (EC) 1935/2004 (Food Contact Framework Regulation, consolidated

version to August 2009). Further information on food contact material applications and the authorisation process can be found in the European Commission⁵ and European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) websites.

The Benelux authorities will take enforcement actions from the second quarter of 2021 and will pursue infringement actions for non-compliance.

In addition to the joint letter from the Benelux countries, several EU Member State authorities have issued similar announcements/concerns on the use of food contact plastics containing natural materials such as bamboo and/or other plant materials that are not in the Union List of the Food Contact Plastics Regulation. These include, but may not be limited to, the following EU member state authorities:

- The Finnish Food Authority (Ruokavirasto) prohibits the importation of food contact plastic materials containing bamboo fibre or unauthorised vegetable fibres and such products already on the market must be withdrawn from sale
- The Irish Food Safety Authority prohibits food contact plastics containing unauthorised additives derived from bamboo
- The Spanish Agency for Food Safety and Nutrition (Agencia Española de Seguridad Alimentaria y Nutrición, AESAN) emphasises that food contact plastics containing substances such as bamboo fibres that are not authorised under the Food Contact Plastics Regulation are not permitted on the EU market and urges economic operators to remove such products. Operators who wish to market such products are advised to submit a request to the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) for the relevant assessment.

Additionally, there were several 2020 notifications in the Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed portal (RASFF portal) on border rejections from Austria as the notifying country for cups and tableware made from a mix of bamboo fibres, melamine and maize.

If you are a BPMA member and require further guidance, please contact Carey Trevill
carey.trevill@bpma.co.uk

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- 5 - Authorisations | Food Safety (europa.eu)

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

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- BPMA Charter logo is a mark of trust, confidence and excellence
- BPMA Charter is an endorsement of your businesses' substantive professionalism
- BPMA Charter is a clear differentiating factor for your business, enhancing your USP

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



➤ Get in contact

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

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

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

WHY GREENWASH WON'T WASH

Legislation and changing consumer attitudes mean it will become harder to make misleading claims about the environmental credentials of products

As more consumers and businesses become alert to the importance of sustainability, it has become advantageous for brands and companies to use the language of environmental awareness to their own ends.

A raft of research shows that consumers increasingly seek out brands that have green credentials, and may be more likely to buy them.

Research from Getty Images of 10,000 people globally found 81% see themselves as eco-friendly, with 50% saying they only buy products from brands that try to be eco-friendly.

Energy company E.on found the pandemic has caused a big shift in consumer behaviour, with more than a third (36%) of Brits saying that they're buying products from companies with strong environmental credentials.

A further 80% say they are planning to purchase goods and services from businesses they know have made a concerted effort to be environmentally friendly.

GROWING GREEN MARKET

In 2019, UK consumers spent £41 billion a year on ethical goods and services – almost four times as much as two decades ago. However, as with any growing market it can attract players who are less reputable than others and whose claims can be hard to sustain.

The government's Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) is concerned about businesses making misleading, vague or false claims about the sustainability or environmental impact of the things they sell. In November, it launched an inquiry into green marketing and asked the public what they expect from eco-friendly products, how often they come across green claims, and how these claims affect their purchasing decisions. It also consulted with charities, businesses and other organisations.

Following these discussions, the CMA intends to publish guidance for businesses this summer to help them support the transition to a low carbon economy without misleading consumers.

The inquiry is looking across a wide range of sectors, with a focus on those industries where consumers appear most concerned about misleading claims, including textiles and fashion, travel and transport, and FMCG, such as food and beverages, beauty products and cleaning products.

ASA CODE

BPMA members are required to follow its code of conduct, and as such "must abide by all rulings of the Advertising Standards Authority, the Committee of Advertising Practice, and all relevant regulatory bodies supported by the BPMA".

The ASA code highlights the importance of ensuring all terms used are clear to consumers, so communications should avoid jargon or complex terminology. Any environmental claims must relate to "the full life cycle of the advertised product" as opposed to one part of the supply chain which may be more sustainable than the rest.

It also offers advice on recycling claims. Marketers must have evidence of their claims of recyclability, including the amount of recycled material in a product and the extent to which a product can be recycled.

DEFRA

DEFRA also offers guidance on making an environmental claim, although it does not have an enforcement remit. Similar to ASA, it focuses on the need for businesses to be clear, accurate, and transparent about data and evidence used for claims.

The department encourages the use of specific measurements or standards such as ISO or BSI and says relevant symbols, labels or certifications should only be used if they directly support the claim they are making about a specific product.


EUROPE

For companies marketing to the EU, it is important to be aware of the bloc's efforts in combatting greenwashing. The European Green New Deal, which launched in December 2019, states that "Companies making 'green claims' should substantiate these against a standard methodology to assess their impact on the environment". It has created a blueprint for the EU to achieve a climate neutral circular economy.

Last September 2020, the EU also launched an initiative to strengthen the role of consumers in the green transition. This will set minimum requirements for sustainability logos and labels, but will also work to prevent greenwashing and limit the sale of products with a short life span.

There is clearly huge interest in the area of sustainability, not least from BPMA members. The Association has set up its own Sustainability Group to examine what the industry is doing in this area and what it will need to do moving forwards.

Sustainability is not a flash in the pan. It's here to stay and rather than feeling browbeaten by the prospect of potentially more legislation, companies should view it as an opportunity to engage with changing markets.

End users are asking more questions of suppliers and distributors and will inevitably gravitate to those who can best show that they understand the changes that are coming, and provide products that fit in with both what they are required to do by regulation, and what they are compelled to do by the changing attitudes and tastes of their customers. 

Consumers want a sustainable choice

Research by energy company E.on found that consumers are actively looking out for companies that are acting in an environmentally responsible way.

- 36% of Brits said that they're buying products from companies with strong environmental credentials.
- 80% said they are planning to purchase goods and services from businesses they know have made a concerted effort to be environmentally friendly.
- 72% said they pay attention to whether a business acts in a climate-friendly way.
- 65% feel it's important the products or services they buy do not harm the environment.
- 34% have already knowingly paid more for 'green' products since the pandemic struck.
- 51% think the environmental credentials of a product or service are now just as important as the price they pay for it.

Source: Eon Renewable Returns report

A BITTER COCKTAIL

Although there appears to be light at the end of the tunnel, businesses will need to be wary over the next 12 months says **Mike Collins**



At Direct Route AccountAssyst, we're all about finding the positives in everything but every now and again, we also have to be the realists. After all, not only do we run a business, but we run a business that deals in no nonsense debt recovery.

Sometimes everything is simply not sweetness and light.

Now that pubs and restaurants are on the pathway

to fully opening, it could be considered by many as time to look forward to drinks and merriment. However, this is a note of caution – there is a 'perfect storm' coming.

PERFECT STORM

The black clouds are on the horizon and it is up to all business owners to try to navigate around the eye of the storm and hope

that they remain on the fringes to avoid getting windswept and soaked.

A potent financial cocktail of unavoidable circumstances is nearly upon us, that if we're not careful will have everybody's room spinning.

Ingredients for 'The Perfect Storm' mocktail:

Firstly, pour a generous measure of, a challenged like never before, underachieving economy.

Add the necessity to cover similar pre-pandemic overheads, but from a reduced client base.

Liberalise add government grants, funding and handouts to falsely sweeten the mix.

Top up with CBILS and Bounce Back loans, that now start to be repaid. The sours.

Apply a little deferred HMRC payments that many are now choosing to repay. More sours.

To finish liberalise sprinkle a general sales malaise, restricting new cashflow. Optional sours.

Then serve in the cold light of day....

And there you have 'The Perfect Storm' mocktail. A heady mix of having to find the same revenue requirements but from a lesser customer base that is likely at least equally as cash flow strained.

MONEY'S TOO TIGHT

There are no two ways of putting it, money will be tight over the next six to 12 months, and possibly for quite a lot longer, while companies both understand and get used to their current cashflow commitments. Businesses will watch their pennies and be cautious with their

expenditure like never before. They will spend on essentials only until confidence returns, cash flows, and much reduced safety reserves are replenished.

Are you overdue monies already? Over the course of the pandemic we've seen a number of businesses, those that could afford to do so, being understanding and working with customers to help. Often, they have waited an unusual length of time to get paid. However, the harsh reality of a clear necessity to now get their cash in the bank has started to hit home.

The time for waiting and working with people has passed. The time to act is now, or else you may unfortunately be prioritised less than a goods or services provider that is less understanding than you.

ACT SWIFTLY

For clear evidence of this, consider the significant industry distributor failure of recent times. The facts are that those suppliers in the promotional goods industry who acted swiftly have now largely been paid, while those that did not had their trust and goodwill abused over many months with broken payment promises and arrangements.

For support and advice on any aspect of Credit Management, whether it be prevention or cure, then please contact your nominated Direct Route AccountAssyst consultant directly for a no obligation informal chat – Ian Jenkinson, 07860 197476 (ijenkinson@directroute.co.uk).

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

David Barker
dbarker@directroute.co.uk
07766 545871

Midlands and East Anglia

Ken Brown
kbrown@directroute.co.uk
07795 214426

Wales and North West

Ian Jenkinson
ijenkinson@directroute.co.uk
07860 197476

North East, Scotland and Northern Ireland

Mike Collins
mike@accountassyst.com
07866 427363



PSI LAUNCHES DIGITAL PLATFORM TO PAVE THE WAY TO 2022

The German show has come up with a new format to serve the industry

PSI's May show is to become a digital platform that will kick off series of monthly Digital Friday events that will run until the end of the year. The physical show is set to make a comeback on 11-13 January 2022 at the Düsseldorf exhibition centre.

The three trade fairs of PSI, PromoTex Expo and viscom, will take place under the name 'PSI Digital' with the launch event running on 18-20 May. It promises a top-class online programme for the promotional products, textiles and finishing industries.

Benedikt Binder-Kriegelstein, CEO of organiser Reed Exhibitions Deutschland, said that uncertainty over whether live events could be held by the May date had guided the decision to change the event format.

"We know how important it is to bring the promotional products industry together for an urgently needed personal exchange. The current course of the pandemic and the delays in the provision of vaccines do not give us and the exhibitors the necessary security for a face-to-face event on the originally planned May



date," he said.

PSI Digital will offer a 48-hour virtual trade fair feeling. All over the world, visitors will then have access to various PSI sourcing tools, product presentations and a top-class programme, including live interviews and panel discussions, which will be broadcast on 'PSI TV'. Online seminars, interviews and how-to videos will be tailored to the key topics of the industry on demand.

All trade fair visitors - including non-members - have 48 hours of access to the PSI Product, Supplier and Distributor Finder.

"This means that the best tools for acquisition and lead generation are available

to all visitors free of charge for two days. By providing the industry with a voice and a digital platform in these difficult times to exchange ideas, network at the European level and further education, we are contributing to important community building," said Petra Lassahn, director of PSI.

Digital Fridays will be held every second Friday of the month from 11 June until the next face-to-face event in January 2022. All participants will have one-day access to a broad programme and the same sourcing and networking offers as in May.

The tickets for the digital events are free of charge and can be obtained from the online ticket shop at psi-messe.com.

PSI dates

PSI Digital: 19-21 May, 2021

Digital Fridays: June 11th, July 9th, August 13th, September 10th, October 8th, November 12th, December 10th

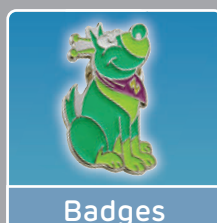
PSI 2022: 11-13 January, 2022



Lanyards



Keyrings



Badges



Ties & Scarves



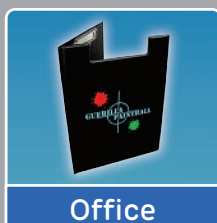
Wristbands



Leisure



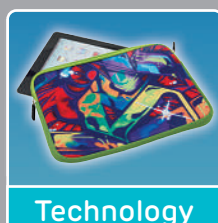
Umbrellas



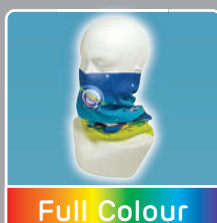
Office



Pencil Cases



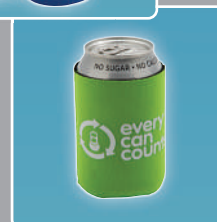
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BRITISH INNOVATION SUPPORTED IN BUDGET

The first post-Brexit budget was eagerly anticipated as an opportunity to help business build back from the economic impact of COVID, says **Mark Alderson**

As predicted, the recent budget contained a number of measures aimed at supporting the growth of small and medium enterprises with the potential to increase employment. The biggest winners in the budget are innovative British manufacturers who push the boundaries of technology.

Sunak confirmed that the UK government would provide £375 million to establish the Future Fund: Breakthrough, which is described as "a new direct co-investment product to support the scale-up of the most innovative, research and development intensive businesses".

The scheme will be overseen by the British Business Bank. The Treasury said (the bank) "will take equity in funding rounds of over £20 million led by private investors, to ensure these companies can access the capital they need to grow and bring

prosperity to communities across the UK".

Skills investment

Sunak also announced two new initiatives to subsidise the cost of upskilling for businesses. The 'Help to Grow: Management' and 'Help to Grow: Digital' schemes will be operational by Autumn 2021, though the chancellor has encouraged interested businesses to register now.

The Management scheme aims to help tens of thousands of small and medium sized businesses get world-class training from business schools across the UK, with 90% of the cost of the executive development programme to be paid by the government. The Digital scheme will give SMEs access to free expert training to improve their digital skills as well as obtain a 50% discount on new productivity-enhancing software, worth up to £5,000 each.

Hiring help

The budget also included an extension of the apprenticeship hiring incentive across England. This will continue to September 2021 with payments doubled to £3,000. A new £7m flexi-job apprenticeship programme in England was also announced, enabling apprentices to work with a number of employers in one sector, while an additional £126m will go towards 40,000 more traineeships for 16-24 year olds.

The level of spending set out by the government shows just how highly they value a fast economic recovery. Much of this investment is aimed at small business especially in the manufacturing sector, where it is hugely important to support businesses and help them grow. The government has committed and now it is the turn of consumers to back British made innovation.

Mark Alderson is the chairman of the Briman Group 



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UPCOMING FEATURES

Product Media Magazine is featuring a range of special features to spotlight product sectors, celebrate innovation and sustainability for the next issue.

Issue 37

July/August
Innovation &
Sustainability Review

Issue 38

September/October
Drinkware & Ceramics

Issue 39

November/December
Food & Confectionery

We want your contributions!

If you'd like to be included in Product Media special features, contact editor@productmediamagazine.co.uk

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Contact the BPMA today on 01372 371184 for more information.

FIND YOUR PLACE IN THE MARKET

Positioning is one of the most fundamental concepts of marketing – yet it's easy to overthink it and get over-indulgent or precious, says **Melissa Chevin**



Rather than drowning in a sea of marketing 'buzzword bingo', when it comes to positioning, it pays to keep things simple.

Your marketing plan should first identify your target audience – who they are and what they think.

Your positioning strategy should then build upon this by considering three key elements – what you will be pitching to this target, what you wish them to think, and significant competitors.

Patience pays

Take your time when considering each of these three elements, because they are all more complex than you might initially imagine.

As far as the 'what' question is concerned, there are choices to be made here. In some cases, you will be positioning the brand. At other times, you will be focusing on a specific product – or maybe even transmitting a broader message, such as doing business in a different way.

Customer focus

As to how other people view your

offering, always bear in mind the three Cs of positioning – channel, customer and competitor. Check what your customer wants, check what you can deliver and check that it's a more attractive proposition than the opposition's.

That 'versus' question is another tricky one. Just as customers in a particular segment are different from the mass market, so too are the alternatives when this segment is considering its next purchase.

Feedback

Here, it's important to be market-oriented – don't just list the generic competitors in your category, poll your target segment about their options. Don't even use the word 'competition'. You may be surprised by some of their suggestions, too – many may turn out to be from outside what you thought of as 'the category'.

The companies which have really experienced stellar growth over the last decade have done so not by offering the lowest prices, but by clearly differentiating their offerings from those of their competitors.

Tesla is a good example of this. Sure, there are many other electric vehicles

to choose from these days, but Tesla still puts clear blue water between itself and the competition by concentrating only on such vehicles, making them more luxurious and letting their owners drive further before refuelling.

Personality counts

Personalities are also in play here. Tesla boss Elon Musk might be something of a 'Marmite' character but he is rarely out of the headlines, and his leadership of the company makes a statement about its overall ethos.

Apple is a more obvious but nevertheless perfect example of positioning being everything. Steve Jobs may no longer be with us but his original motto of 'Think Different' continues to infuse every product his company makes. Apple is never the cheapest option, but its commitment to design, style and ergonomics still elevates it above most competitors.

So, keep your positioning simple – find your place in the market, and exploit it to the full.

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

TikTok content from Snap and Pen Warehouse

The Pen Warehouse and Snap Products have teamed up to create engaging and educational content via TikTok. The short-form, video-sharing platform will be used to showcase products, processes, manufacturing and employees. All content will be available in a white-label format to easily be reshared and published on distributor websites and social media platforms.

Follow them @snapandpen and learn about the companies' culture and values, with several videos already posted and ready to view and share. A dedicated @mood_collection account is also being launched, which will offer fun and inspirational content, reflecting the brand's core values of individuality and self-expression.

New Maskari travel set launched

Although lockdown rules are beginning to ease, protection and peace of mind provided by masks will continue to be important into the future.

JuteBag has launched a new travel set of its Maskari antimicrobial face covering, consisting of either version of the mask, plus a pouch. Each item in the range is treated with HeiQ Viroblock, a Swiss textile treatment that is proven 99% effective against SARS-CoV-2 the strain that causes coronavirus diseases COVID-19.

The Maskari advanced mask is a reusable, breathable and functional three-layer mask

available in six colours. The Maskari Pro mask adds adjustable elastic earloops. Maskari products are 30-times washable while still retaining their antimicrobial properties and manufactured in an SA8000 audited factory.

The Maskari range has sold more



New partner for The Outdoors Company

The Outdoors Company has announced a partnership with Canadian outdoor equipment company, Arc'teryx.

After almost three years of working alongside the brand, to provide corporate wear and promotional apparel solutions to a wide range of clients, The Outdoors

Company have been chosen to act as the preferred partner for all UK corporate sales in the promotional reseller market.

The company has been working with Arc'teryx, alongside other UK businesses, since 2018, to help drive its UK corporate sales division.

A WORD IN YOUR EAR

Wireless earbuds are set to be the hottest tech product for 2021, predicts **Matt Pluckrose**



The current global COVID situation has stimulated an increased and growing demand for personal audio products.

Sales in the last 12 months or so have grown to global sales now of \$35 billion (455 million units). That's a growth of 17% growth in units and more than 55% in retail sales value. It shows consumers and business are paying more for their products and switching up in terms of quality.

One of the products which is experiencing the highest growth is so called TWS Bluetooth earbuds, with top brands such as Apple Air Pods, Samsung Buds, and BEATS. However, there are now many brands and generic models available to the marketing industry and these are fast becoming the must-have gift for staff rewards, client

loyalty, competition prizes, staff wellbeing gift boxes, and so on.

TWS, or 'true wireless stereo' Bluetooth earbuds offer the user many unique features making them the product of the moment.

They are generally comfortable to wear, small, discreet, and lightweight. They can be water resistant, and increasingly feature ANC (active noise cancelling), as well as smart features like voice assistant software. They generally have a built in mic for phone or video calls.

These features are making them irresistible for many people and especially those on the go or who just want to listen to music, chill, exercise and of course watch movies or TV. The easy-to-charge earbuds are generally supplied with a charging/travel case which importantly gives our sector great four-colour

branding opportunities. Next generation and higher end models also feature wireless charging for total convenience.

Global sales are expected to rise in 2021 by 56% or around 292 million units and then equate to 51% of the total headphone/personal audio market. This trend is set to continue with sales likely to hit 600 million units by 2024, making up 76% of this market.

The Active Noise Cancelling feature has been prized by those of us stuck at home during the pandemic. Noise distracts us from work and relaxing, but ANC actively cancels out background noise via different speakers inside the earbuds. So, watching movies, listening to music or engaging in a business call are much clearer and quieter. This feature has grown 184% over the period despite its premium price.



The other growing feature of higher spec TWS earbuds is voice assistant software such as Alexa, Siri, or Google Assistant. It allows the user to control their earbuds via voice commands. Some 37% of shipments during 2020 saw this feature included and it is set to grow in 2021-22.

Matt Pluckrose is managing director of Desktop Ideas 

CYBER INSURANCE IN THE CORONAVIRUS CRISIS

Many businesses have slowed down during the pandemic but for cybercriminals it has been a boom time. Specialist insurance can help

Most businesses have had to quickly adapt their working processes in response to the pandemic. For some, business paused for a brief period of time but for others, employees' homes have replaced the office, personal computers are used to access work systems and data is being managed outside of normal working practices.

This increased working-from-home mandate is providing opportunities for cybercriminals who are exploiting remote working methods and the general confusion around the new processes and procedures.

To accommodate this working from home mandate within your business, you may have facilitated Remote Desktop Protocol (RDP), but without multifactor authentication (MFA) enabled or on an insecure network, it could open the gateway to hackers. In



2019, 80% of the ransomware attacks that our specialist cyber insurer partner CFC handled, were initiated through RDP.

As new cases of the coronavirus continue to be reported daily, cybercriminals have also been leveraging the situation to take advantage of those looking for information on the outbreak from the NHS and WHO. In addition, a Twitter user has identified another malware campaign purporting to be a 'Coronavirus Update: China

Operations'. The emails have attachments linking to malicious software. The malicious attempts of cybercriminals are endless.

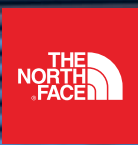
The cyber claims come from a number of areas that are common to so many businesses including use of personal devices, unapproved personal applications, and the reintroduction of unattended systems. Regardless of protections, human error still plays a leading role in the cyber vulnerability of an organisation.

Each of these challenges can increase the cyber risk and exposure of the business community. If your business was hacked, you lost some data or faced a ransomware attack, could you operate and would you know how to remedy the problem?

No matter how many precautions you take or how vigilant you and your colleagues are, some cyber-attacks cannot be prevented. This is why we advise you to speak to us about the range of cyber and data insurance policies that are available so cover can be tailored to your risk and exposures.

For further information please visit [towergate.com](https://www.towergate.com) or contact Richard Davies at Towergate Insurance Brokers on 01604 657348.





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If you have any stories for **Product Media Magazine**, send by email to: editor@productmediamagazine.co.uk

Latest BPMA TPM graduates

The BPMA would like to congratulate the following students who have passed their BPMA Trained in Promotional Merchandise (TPM) examinations.

- Alistair Cheetham, B-Loony Ltd, 1 March 2021
- Bronwyn Yorke, Bounce Creative Designs Ltd, 1 March 2021
- Sophie Bloomfield, Allwag Promotions Ltd, 9 March 2021
- Ross Benjamin, B-Loony Ltd, 6 April 2021
- Phil Heard, Magic Touch, 6 April 2021

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



New BPMA members

The Association would like to welcome the following companies as new members:

- AB Branding Ltd
- Piranha Print (JESMOND) Ltd
- Product Zone Limited
- Baxter Murray
- The Branding Lab
- Full Square Ltd
- Direct Marketing Incentives & Premiums Limited
- Seahawk Apparel

To find out more about BPMA membership and how to join please contact Tom Robey at Tom@bpma.co.uk.

BPMA CALENDAR

2021

19-21 May – 48 hours PSI Digital. Virtual event

Tickets for the digital events are free of charge and available via the online ticket shop at psi-messe.com.

27 May – BPMA: Industry Updates Webinar Series – 12:30-13:30

As part of its commitment to keeping BPMA members up to date with important industry news, the popular webinar series continues fortnightly. The webinars cover a range of topics including employment updates relating to furlough, member interviews, financial and Brexit information.

11 June – PSI Digital Friday

Every second Friday of the month, PSI participants have access for one day to a broad programme as well as the same sourcing and networking offers as May's PSI Digital event.

17 June – BPMA: Industry Updates Webinar Series – 12:30-13:30

22 July – BPMA: Industry Updates Webinar Series – 12:30-13:30

9 July – PSI Digital Friday

13 August – PSI Digital Friday

8 September – Merchandise World: Peak Season Event. Marshall Arena, Milton Keynes

10 September – PSI Digital Friday

8 October – PSI Digital Friday

12 November – PSI Digital Friday

10 December – PSI Digital Friday

2022

11-13 January – PSI 2022. Exhibition Centre Düsseldorf, Germany

26-27 January – Merchandise World. Ricoh Arena, Coventry

