



PRODUCTMEDIA

THE **MAGAZINE** FOR THE PROMOTIONAL INDUSTRY

MARCH/APRIL 2018



Merchandise **WORLD** DELIVERS

GREAT RECEPTION FOR
NEWEST PRODUCT SHOW P18



FIGHTING BACK
THE REVIVAL
OF BRITISH
MANUFACTURING
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WANT?**
EXCLUSIVE BPMA RESEARCH
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WELCOME



"The industry comes together" was a phrase that came out of conversations I had with a number of distributors and suppliers after the Merchandise World show. Organisers of

exhibitions have a huge responsibility to drive engaging events that people want to be involved in. January is the busiest month in the promo calendar so there was a lot of competition for distributors' time. A number of members came up to me and said that this was how it used to be - a great vibe, great companies exhibiting, and a real energy among the visitors looking to meet new suppliers and see new products. Education Day, which preceded the show, had set the scene, and the buzz was amplified at the Networking event. "It's a great

industry to work in," one told me.

The BPMA takes education very seriously and the reaction we had from the 6th Education Day was amazing, hitting an overall score of 5/5 for the event among delegates - the best ever! Along with keynote speaker, Tim Andrews from ASI, one of the most interesting speakers was Lee Gilbert talking about the changing face of buying among millennials - it was fascinating stuff. This generation has a totally different approach to the way us older folk interact, and companies need to embrace this to keep engaged with them.

It was also great to get top distributors together for the industry leaders debate - the first time we've done this. A stimulating theme was the likely impact of Amazon, Vistaprint and other disruptors, as well as the challenge we face promoting our industry to young

people as a career choice. I also managed to get over to the PPAI show in Las Vegas in mid-January - it's great to support our American friends. The US market is worth a staggering \$23 billion, and it has long valued the importance of education. You are as likely to be recognised by your qualification as your name.

In this issue we launch the findings of the supplier mystery shopper survey where we monitored the impact of the pre-sale process to see how suppliers interacted with distributors on enquiries and proofing. While there were some interesting observations and some unexpected responses, largely BPMA suppliers did perform well. Read about it on page 44 and find the full survey in the BPMA resource section at bpma.co.uk.

Gordon Glenister,
director general of the BPMA

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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Merchandise sector tops the £1bn mark

The promotional merchandise sector in the UK is now worth more than £1 billion, ten years after the financial crisis hammered the industry. Sourcing City's annual state of the nation Market Report 2017, shows a sector in rude health, albeit with structural differences to a decade ago, and facing new and emerging challenges.

For the eighth year in succession there has been steady and continual growth in the UK & Ireland promotional merchandise market. The industry was worth £1,025 million in 2017, £108m ahead of the year before the banking crisis of 2008, representing an overall recovery of £351m from the low point of 2010. The market grew by £58m last year – growth of 7.7% from 2016.

In terms of the make-up of the market, there is a significant trend for professional distributors with a turnover in excess of £500,000 to grow faster than smaller distributors. The market share of large distributors has once again increased even though the number of £1m+ distributors remained relatively static in 2017.

In 2017 the total market contained 2,077 professional distributor companies

- an increase of 102 new distributors on the 1,975 from 2016. Almost all the new distributor companies have a turnover of less than £500,000 at present.

Analysis shows that larger distributors control a disproportionate share of the market. There are 1,735 distributors who have a turnover of under £500,000, representing 83% of distributors by number, but only 25.4% of market spend. Just 342 distributor companies with an annual turnover more than £500,000 are responsible for 75% of spend.

This represents a turnaround in respective market share between large and small distributors in the past decade. In 2007 distributors with a turnover in excess of £500,000 accounted for just 24% of the total market spend – this has more than trebled in the past 10 years. Just 145 distributor companies, with a turnover more than £1m, represent £617m, or 60.2% of the entire market spend. In 2007 the more than £1m turnover group accounted for 40.7% of the entire end-user market.

One possible factor driving the growth of larger players may be inflation and changing cost prices, something the

market has not faced for several years.

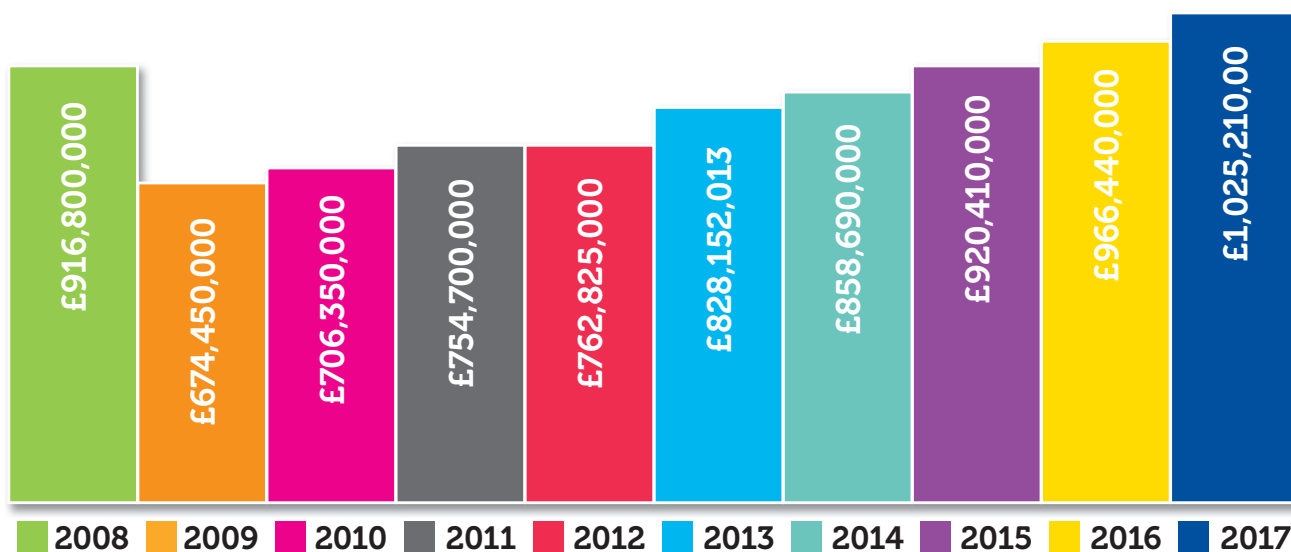
End-user customers are now experiencing prices increasing rather than constantly reducing.

Another challenge has been increasing competition from players such as printers looking to offer merchandise as a cross sell. For new companies looking to enter the market, the barriers to entry are very low, with mass product information and support systems available at low cost or even free from some quarters.

The report suggests that the less professional of these new entrants tend to sell with a lack of expertise or experience, creating hidden costs for suppliers in managing orders. When they sell promotional merchandise at low margins, the entire professional distributor sales chain is put at risk.

Vistaprint, which has made a strong move into the sector, is not seen as a direct threat yet as most distributors have little interest in the low quantity orders it serves. If Vistaprint maintains its original 'Power of one' strategy, then it poses little threat to most professional distributors who operate on a consultative basis, the report claims.

UK & IRELAND MARKET VALUE | 2008 TO END 2017



Despite high profile cases, such as Dukes of London's demise, the number of companies ceasing trading in 2017 dropped from the previous year and was the second lowest in the past seven years. In 2017, 44 distributor companies ceased to trade, and the majority had a turnover below £250,000. At 24, the number of supplier companies that ceased trading last year was the lowest recorded since 2014.

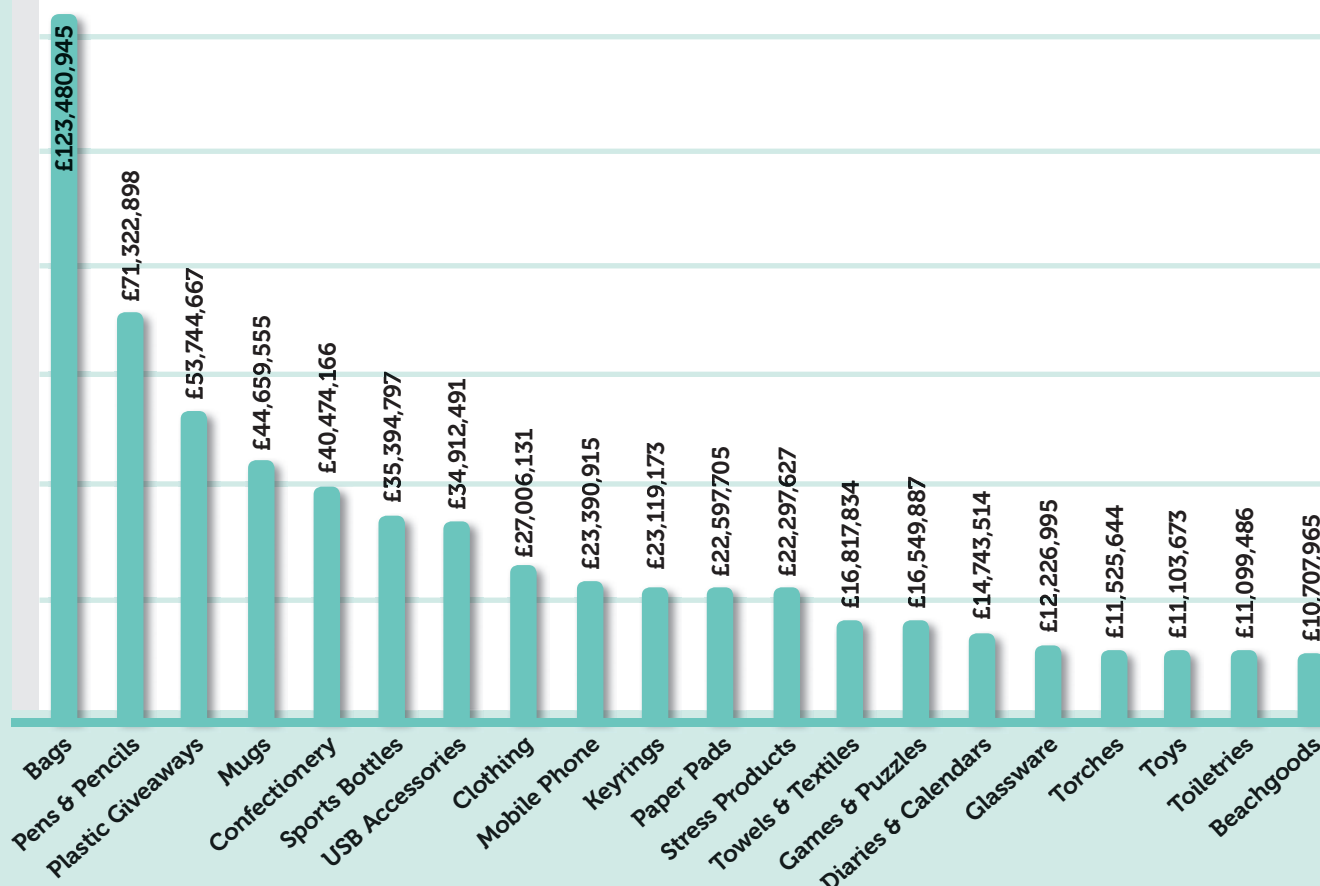
The report provides a useful breakdown of the most popular products by value. These have remained relatively constant for the past six years.

In revenue terms bags continue to be consistently number one, followed by pens and pencils, and then plastic giveaways. Mugs and confectionery have swapped positions to take fourth and fifth spots, while sports bottles and USB accessories have both grown their market share significantly.

NO. AND TURNOVER OF DISTRIBUTOR COMPANIES

Distributor Size Band	Distributors in Market	% of All Distributors	Turnover/ Market Value	% of Total Market By Distributor Size
	2,077	100.0%	£1,025,210,000	100.0%
£10m+	8	0.4%	£220,000,000	21.5%
£5m-£10m	12	0.6%	£102,000,000	9.9%
£3m-£5m	18	0.9%	£81,000,000	7.9%
£1m-£3m	107	5.2%	£214,000,000	20.9%
£500k-£1m	197	9.5%	£147,750,000	14.4%
£250k-£500k	553	26.6%	£165,900,000	16.2%
<£250k	1,182	56.9%	£94,560,000	9.2%

TOP 20 PRODUCT GROUPS BY £ VALUE



The full Promotional Merchandise Industry Market Report is exclusively available to Purple Club Members. The Purple Club is open for membership by any recognised professional distributor company or industry supplier. See sourcingcity.co.uk for more details.



Pen Warehouse and Snap Products win Exceed award

The Pen Warehouse and Snap Products have picked up Supplier of the Year awards at the inaugural Exceed Awards, hosted by Charles Alexander Distribution.

Head of sales and marketing, Rob Hayes, who accepted the award on behalf of both companies, said: "A huge thank you to CAD for putting on a fantastic evening and for recognising us with these honours. We're looking forward to continuing our close working relationship and taking part in the awards next year."

The Awards were held at a fun-filled evening in Leicester and included a performance from boy band 5IVE. As well as recognising Everything Branded's top suppliers, the event raised money for the Bodie Hodges Foundation.

Meantime the companies' products are being made available on a new platform BrandedSamples.com, which offers a way for distributors to order branded product samples online. The site has a wide selection of digitally printed and laser engraved promotional gifts.

With simplified discounted pricing, 24/7 access and an intuitive interface, BrandedSamples.com allows companies to send customers pre-production samples, assess new lines, or get hold of personalised product to help with tenders. Up to five printed or engraved samples can be received at one time. There are no setup charges and orders are dispatched within 48 hours.

The curated product range includes writing instruments, technology gifts, drinkware, confectionery, and travel accessories which are personalised with digital printing or precision laser engraving.



Booming industry looks to sustainability

The German promotional products industry has exceeded €3.5 billion for the first time, up from €3.47bn the previous year. The figures were revealed at January's PSI show, which attracted 925 exhibitors from 37 countries and 17,342 visitors, both slightly down on the previous year.

Frank Dangmann, president, GWW, the German promotional products association, which collects the research, said: "Today, virtually every large company and 75% of all medium-sized companies in Germany deploy promotional products in their customer communication."

One out of every five surveyed companies plan on investing more money in promotional products in future, he said. The industry – especially in Germany and Europe – is expecting an extra boost from the 2018 FIFA World Cup in Russia.

Growth of 5.3% is forecast for the wider European market in 2018, according to the current PSI Industry Barometer, the survey of nearly 1,000 promotional products distributors across Europe conducted by the PSI Institute ahead of the trade show.

The figures coincide with an estimated

sales increase of 3% in the US, according to Advertising Specialty Institute (ASI) for the past year, with sales of \$22.9bn.

Among megatrends noted by the PSI Industry Barometer was a move towards sustainability and high-quality products. It found that more than 90% of the surveyed promotional products suppliers and distributors now have certified or verifiably sustainable products in their assortments. For more than half of the suppliers and distributors, the share of sustainable products even exceeds 30% of their complete range.



muggi

Anybody who has ever experienced the joy of burnt fingers as they try and do an all office tea run in as few trips as possible, will get muggi straight away.

Invented by British entrepreneur David Trotter, the concept is simplicity itself. muggi is a new and safe way to carry hot and cold drinks. Originally conceived for use by yachtsmen, to stop their drinks making a quick exit into the briny, the muggi has become popular for a host of outdoor occasions, from camping and caravanning, to working on site, enjoying a music festival, or just relaxing in the garden.

muggi is made from a lightweight but tough polypropylene material, and designed to be light and easy to carry, but also strong and secure. It holds mugs, glasses or cups in four precision moulded slots.

Non-slip rubber feet make it perfect for sailing as it doesn't slip around. Finger and thumb grips

make it easy to hang on to. The British made product is dishwasher and microwave safe, and is available in seven colours: blue, dark grey, purple, red, lime green, pink and black. The product has recently been launched into the corporate market and can be branded on its side.

With a guarantee of 88 years (to highlight the double G in its logo) your muggi could be one of the longest lasting pieces of advertising you invest in. It's even recyclable at the end of a very long life.

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Merchandise World
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A TIME TO SELL

With consumers using multiple channels at any one time, how do you create campaigns that get everyone talking, asks **Carey Trevill**

Marketers have never been more challenged to create disruption and deliver results, fast. Anecdotal Brexit is supposed to have had a major impact on the UK, although some research suggests only a small percentage of work has been stopped because of the referendum (Credos, 2018). However, it's clear that brand owners are taking a different approach with many CMOs showing a more cautious attitude, which is affecting the promotional industry.

This quarter's Bellwether report from the IPA states that there is an overall slowdown in ad spend despite resilience in 2017. Even industry sage Martin



Sorrell has looked gloomy. Some marketers are taking a tough view as confidence dips; however, it is a mixed picture and we are still seeing a steady upturn in work through the IPM, pointing to brands committing to spend.

So, what does this mean for our part of the planet? The January Bellwether states that 'sales promotion' is down overall (-3%) but that many are reporting a 6.6% increase in spend. At the IPM, we tend to look at the overall

a trick – technology should be a better friend to the marketer, yet we see more and more 'wallpaper' campaigns.

Procurement normally comes up at this point as the culprit killing creativity. It has its job to do, yet in recent discussions with our Diploma team, made up of senior industry figures, it's clear that the capability of agencies to understand client needs is still lacking, leading to misplaced ideas vs the budget realities.

Measurement plays a critical part in this conversation – with the surge in experiential spend, the IPM has formed an important long-term benchmarking study to understand the outcomes of tough to measure activities. We



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"WE'RE SEEING THE INDUSTRY RETURN TO CLEAR, STRAIGHTFORWARD ACTIVITY THAT SELLS PRODUCT"

picture because it is clear that marketers continue to rely on promotional techniques to sell their products.

At the Cannes Lions in 2017 nearly every winner used a promotional technique to demonstrate to the consumer the clear benefits of engaging with that brand. In the words of a certain Mr Ogilvy; we sell, or we die, and what we're seeing in the industry now is a return to clear, straightforward activity that sells products.

At a recent dinner I attended, I was lucky enough to hear Keith Weed, CMO of Unilever and John Hegarty of BBH fame, discussing the long-revered 'Risk and Responsibility' talk featuring David Bernstein who sadly passed away recently. The overriding feeling from both is that we have lost confidence in our abilities and lost connection with the culture that has evolved around us. We have more ways to communicate than ever before but many of us who have been around for a while feel like we are missing

must prove that our channels work well. The results from the benchmarking study come out this summer (2018) and should be incredibly exciting.

It's clear that some aspects of marketing have made us monsters in the dark arts and no longer can we build relationships based on deceit. We must seize the opportunity to use the channels around to positively engage, create relationships that go beyond our normal sphere of vision. We need to consider Netflix and Instagram as much as our competitors on the Tesco shelf.

The best campaigns are clear, concise and get to the point – we have the methods and mechanics at our fingertips and we must approach this as a 'one team, one vision'. After all, we're all in this together. 

Carey Trevill heads up the Institute of Promotional Marketing (IPM), which represents brands, agencies and service agencies across the UK.

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POLE POSITION

Poland's promotional products market is developing fast. **Anna Roszczak** reveals how industry body PIAP is responding



What is the PIAP and what do you do?

The Polish Chamber of Promotional Products (PIAP) is a business association which brings together producers, importers, advertising agencies, media and trade fair organisers of the promotional gifts industry. The main aim of our partnership is the integration of the industry, thanks to which we can speak with one voice and fight for our rights. Furthermore, within PIAP, we can help each other, exchanging our experience and knowledge. Another very important task of PIAP is to promote advertising gifts as important and cost-effective marketing tools.

PIAP activity covers a number of areas. Its most important tasks are fulfilling statutory duties, representation, and protection of the economic dealings of the affiliated companies. Comprehensive help in solving problems of running a business is also included. PIAP cooperates with experts in various fields, who reply to queries and provide basic advice on the website. Training activity on the issues connected with the marketing products' sector, is conducted by PIAP to raise the level of education of people working in the industry.

On the national scene, PIAP strives to raise awareness of marketing products as an important and effective marketing tool, to ensure that expenditure is considered a constant and crucial point in the budgets of companies. Moreover, it conducts brand and information campaigns in the pages of the opinion-forming media. It also takes part in the struggle for adapting Polish tax law to the needs related to running an efficient business.

Furthermore, since 2012, PIAP has been a Member of the National Chamber of Commerce.

How big is the Polish promotional products market?

The Polish market is large, but at the same time very competitive market for promotional items. Currently, we do not have reliable research showing the scale and rely on estimated data. However, PIAP is planning to carry out a qualitative study in the near future to better understand our growing market's needs. The research titled 'Perception of promotional gifts', will include participation from decision maker marketers and customers, which will give a better understanding of the market and highlight



potential areas of optimisation.

The research will start in the first quarter of 2018 and will be based primarily on qualitative research and, therefore, in-depth analysis and survey of individual groups of respondents.

What are the biggest challenges for distributors?

The main problem is operating in a dynamically changing market and in conditions of high economic uncertainty. Distributors have to react rapidly to changes in customer expectations, regarding not only products but also communication, marketing, customer service, and so on. The old ways of reaching a customer do not work any more. We have seen that customer contact needs refreshment.

A second issue is growing competition. In the era of the internet and global flow of information, the market has become even more competitive, which means that suppliers have to look for their own way of entering the market. Another important challenge is responsibility for manufactured products. We can already see that consumer awareness and expectations are growing. They want products of good quality, complying with legal standards, produced with respect for rights and the environment. The trend associated with manufacturing better quality gifts will be more visible and gifts will no longer be associated with a single-use item.

What have been some of biggest growth areas?

Popular areas are textiles, office supplies, mugs and practical gifts. However, recently we have noted the biggest growth in sales of gifts related to new technologies, such as power banks, loudspeakers, and products connected with an active and modern lifestyle.



In my opinion the future belongs to promotional gifts that combine high-quality, creativity, personalisation and practicality. **PIAP**

Anna Roszczak is a member of the board of the Polish Chamber of Promotional Products, PIAP



TOP COMPANIES IN POLAND

There are many great Polish producers and distributors. These companies have their own manufacturing facilities and their own products and collections.

- Maxim Ceramics
- Jaguar Tomasz Chwiłowicz
- Asgard
- Axpól Trading
- Citron Group
- Capira
- A.S.S.-3
- PAR Bakula
- AWIH Zbigniew Zieliński
- Drukarnia Chroma
- PromoNotes

ASK CLIVE

One of the most common questions from distributors is whether screen printing or heat transfer is best. **Clive Allcott** compares them



SCREEN PRINTING

Screens are still used in this process, and while no longer silk, the process remains similar to that used over the centuries.

With the use of a positive film the screen is exposed and washed out which creates a stencil for the design. Ink is then spread over the screen, passing through to the object underneath but only where the design or stencil is. Only one colour per screen can be used and the final number of screens is dependent on the number of colours in the design, so you might need multiple screens to produce the final item. It is this set up and the costs associated that will often decide which process will be the best for your project.

HEAT TRANSFER

The heat transfer printing method applies custom designs to items like T-shirts bags and caps through a process that uses a combination of heat and pressure.

Common kinds of heat transfer printing include vinyl heat transfer and digital print heat transfer. With the vinyl heat transfer process, a machine is used to cut out designs and letters in pieces of coloured vinyl. A heat press is then used to transfer each vinyl colour of the design on to the object being printed.

With digital print heat transfer, the desired graphic is first digitally printed on special heat transfer paper using a solvent ink. This type of ink allows the design to be transferred from the paper to the item being printed when pressed with heat. With both these types of heat transfer, a heat press machine will be needed to transfer the graphic, either vinyl or digitally printed, from one surface to another. It's the combination of heat and pressure that transfers the design.

MAKING THE CHOICE

The best printing type for you depends on what type of item you are branding, and quantity required. Because unique screens need to be created for each colour of a screen-printed design, it is much more cost effective to produce a larger number of items with this method. As a rule, 50 or more items makes screen print viable. However, the quantity should rise as the colours increase. Conversely, heat transfer, while more expensive per print is the same with every print made, so you can order just a couple items at a time without costs ballooning.

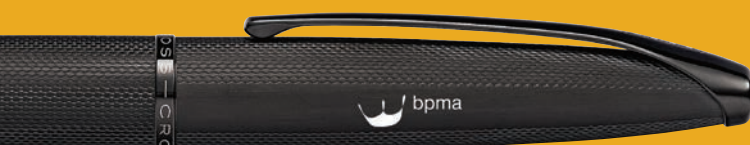
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WINNING PRODUCTS FIND FAVOUR AT MERCHANDISE WORLD

New products were the key focus for visitors to Silverstone for the latest Merchandise World



The promotional merchandise industry shook off the January blues with the second Merchandise World at Silverstone.

The two-day event saw 1,016 visitors meet with 172 exhibitors to find out about the best products available for campaigns in the year ahead.

Following on from the success of September's inaugural Merchandise World show at Stoneleigh, the January show put the emphasis on products, doing business and picking up some useful learning. The show also featured the first Merchandise World Promotional Product Awards with exhibitors proudly

displaying their trophies on their stands (find out who won on page 24).

The event was preceded by the BPMA Education Day (see review and pictures on page 40) with many delegates taking the opportunity to combine inspiration and motivation with first hand product knowledge.

A high number of business leaders, together with their frontline teams attended The Wing, the iconic building that also houses the pits for British Formula 1 Grand Prix below the exhibition halls. Visitors certainly got off to a racing start, bolstered by bacon rolls and breakfast courtesy of Merchandise World. The halls were

soon buzzing with activity as visitors and exhibitors got down to business – packed stands were the order of the day.

Richard Pettinger, director, Ignite Incentives Group said that on the evidence of the show, Merchandise World was now the premier industry show in the UK. "It was so good to see all the top suppliers coming together and fantastic to see the response from quality visitors turning out in large numbers and bringing so many of their sales teams. I don't think I have ever seen so many of the top distributor companies in the one place," he said. "Couple that with some really interesting seminars and we have a magnificent new addition to the calendar."

Show seminars were organised by the BPMA, which is a partner in Merchandise World with Sourcing City. They covered such hot topics as GDPR, charter status and the results of BPMA mystery shopper research into what buyers looked for from their suppliers.

Chris Zachar, head of partnerships, Silverstone also gave an intriguing insight into how the racetrack, celebrating its 70th birthday this year, is using its brand to diversify beyond the race meets it is so famous for. Its masterplan includes a new hotel and spa, auto brand centres, a Silverstone Experience, and a family entertainment zone.

Silverstone merchandise manager, Lee Mullin, revealed the big part that merchandise played across the circuit, from clothing for marshalls and staff, to branded items for the driving experience, and through retail outlets, both physical and increasingly online. Her advice for suppliers looking to work with Silverstone, could apply more widely. "When approaching the brand, you really need to understand their

needs and get under the skin of the brand. Make it a concise and clean collection, so that you become an extension of the brand."

For visitors and exhibitors, attention to detail was evident throughout the show from the 'Here to Help' team assisting exhibitors bringing in boxes and stand fittings, the free breakfast, lunch and drinks for everyone, tea trolleys providing exhibitors with free hot drinks and snacks throughout the day, a useful App, and even free pick 'n' mix sweets for the day and journey home.

BPMA director general Gordon Glenister summed up the show: "There was a real buzz about the event that was obvious to anyone there. It was busy and people were visibly enthused to be meeting up with exhibitors who had some great products to show them and were eager to get their business. The social aspect must also be emphasised, and the BPMA organised a completely sold out networking evening at Whittlebury Hotel, where attendees were able to continue the conversations from the show and forge some great relationships. It really bodes well for



"Our decision to join the BPMA in October last year was driven by the realisation that we had a unique, quality product in personalised tubs of ice cream but were not best placed to take the product all the way through the supply chain and sell directly to the end user. Merchandise World gave us the opportunity to engage with the merchandising professionals who had the contacts with the customers we were trying to reach. The show was well organised and the calibre of exhibitors and visitors did not stray outside the core of those interested in merchandised product which meant the quality of enquiries was high."

Charlie Bird, business development manager, Rossi Ice Cream



"Merchandise World was the best show I have personally done, and I have been in the trade many years. Each day was exceptional – lots of clients and potential clients to see and all of good quality. There was a real buzz about the whole event and the organisation was faultless."

Phil Roberts of Fanela



"It is a great show and we love it! We met with clients face to face, got lots of good leads, and our new Powerbank Payment Fob was well received by a lot of clients who visited the show. It is a good quality show that both suppliers and distributors should not miss."

Derek Luo, Will International



"We thought the show was great, lots of genuine interest, which means a lot of follow ups for us to do, which is obviously really good. We met some lovely people at the show, so having a stand promoting PhoneHug gave us a great networking opportunity and the ability to introduce ourselves to the promo community. Looking forward to seeing what happens next!"

Sam Fairbrother, Director, White Rabbit Distribution Ltd



Briman Treasure Trail

The Briman Group was once again banging the drum for British manufacturing at Merchandise World. Visitors to the show were encouraged to meet Briman members and hear more about the benefits of British-made products with its Briman treasure trail. Map bearers had to visit all the Briman members and collect a sticker from each to fill in their map and win a goodie box full of Cadbury's chocolate. A total of 68 visitors completed the task, which is a lot of Dairy Milk.

Liz Madley and Kerry Brookes of LSI were treasure hunt winners and picked up a voucher prize from Briman's Martyn Wood for their efforts. Kerry said: "We really enjoyed doing the treasure hunt it was a great reminder that some of our existing suppliers' products are British made and also a chance to meet new suppliers that we hadn't spoken to before."



the year ahead in merchandise, and for September's show in Farnborough."

Exhibition organiser Ella Long said: "Our expectations were high and based on the fabulous feedback we got from visitors and exhibitors alike the event surpassed everyone's expectations. What could be better than quality visitors spending time with quality suppliers, that simply means great business opportunities for all."

Only seven months until Farnborough.

"We had a particularly good location for our stand and meant that we were busy from the moment the show opened. There was an excellent quality of visitors and very positive reactions to the new items on display. All the products we were displaying were new for 2018. As always, the Merchandise World team hosted a professional and thoroughly enjoyable event at a great location. Those customers who did not visit and suppliers who did not exhibit both missed out a great opportunity to see and show what is new for 2018."

Haydn Willetts, regional director UK & Ireland, Mid Ocean Brands, More than Gifts



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GDPR - the surprise hot ticket

Who would have expected a seminar on data changes would be one of the hottest events of the show? It was standing room only at the GDPR seminar on the first day of Merchandise World as Andy Chesterton and Vicky Owens of DAMM Solutions, explained the implications of the General Data Protection Regulation, which becomes enforceable on 25 May 2018.

The consultancy has worked with the BPMA to produce a handy guide to GDPR which was eagerly received by attendees at the session, who had plenty of questions for the pair after their informative presentation.

Chesterton explained that no company would be 100% ready by the deadline, but that companies had to show that they had taken practical steps to achieve a defensible level of compliance by then. "GDPR cuts across all departments in a company, including legal, IT, HR, marketing and security. You need to work together to tackle it," he said.

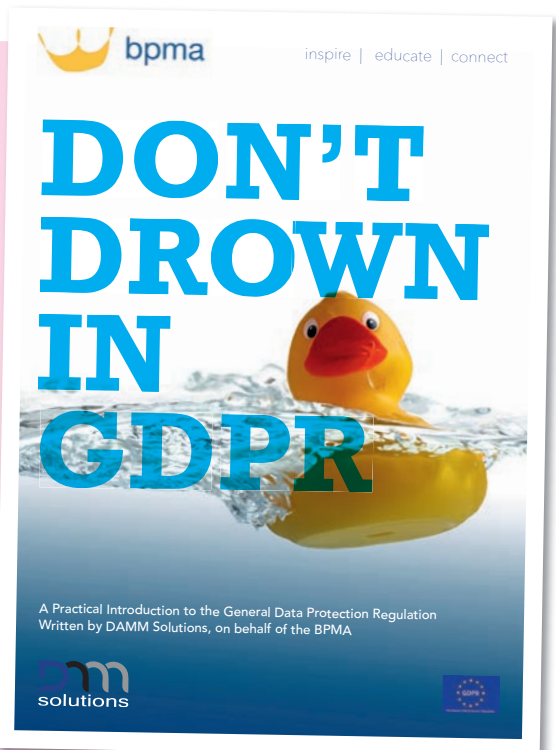
Going forward, companies would have to think hard about what data they processed and why they were doing it. All

companies require a privacy notice that spells out what will happen to an individual's data, and this must be in straightforward language that is easy to understand.

With consumers being given enhanced rights on accessing their data, companies could be looking at an administrative nightmare, especially as many businesses do not know what data they hold and now have only 30 days to do it. Consumers can come back with consecutive requests if they don't think a business has supplied everything.

While the demands of GDPR sound onerous and complex, Chesterton said that they were ultimately good for business. "It is about building trust with customers. Savvy people will look to companies that have a good policy in place. There are benefits to getting this right and you will have better quality data."

The BPMA/DAMM Solutions guide to



GDPR will be distributed to members, and the BPMA is looking to running more events covering the issues around it.



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Merchandise WORLD

Exhibition | Appointments | Networking

Merchandise World in September - the essentials

The next Merchandise World is the first to be held at Farnborough, in the new exhibition centre.

- WHEN** Wednesday, 12 September 2018.
The one-day event runs from 9am to 5pm, with free breakfast laid on from 8am to 10am. Pre-show day on 11 September features an evening networking event between 7pm and 11pm. There's a free buffet and entry is by free ticket only.
- WHERE** Show Centre, ETPS Road, Farnborough GU14 6FD. Free airport/station transfers and shuttle buses will be running to and from the exhibition.
- WHY** Merchandise World is an opportunity to establish and build top-level relationships. It is a unique concept which combines a traditional exhibition, a networking event and optional appointment booking. Front-line teams can discover new products for the peak season and learn about product branding techniques. The relaxed atmosphere allows time for business leaders to have quality conversations, negotiate trading partnerships, and build relationships with top suppliers.
- HOW** Exhibitors should call 0844 504 5006 or email info@merchandiseworld.co.uk
For more information visitors can register at merchandiseworld.co.uk.

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Bobby Bizz Anti-Theft Backpack & Briefcase

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Gold - Pen Warehouse

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Silver - Goldstar

The Bowie Ball Pen

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Platinum - Listawood

Colourfill Enamel Mug

Gold - SPS (EU) Ltd

Relief Moulded Baseline Plus Sports Bottle

Silver - PF Concept

Geo Insulated Tumbler

Silver - Easy Gifts

Infusion – Build a Book Range

The first ever Merchandise World Promotional Product Awards celebrated the best in the merchandise industry across a range of categories. Congratulations to all the winners



Best eco product, Vent Scent, CHX



Best promotional pen, Liberty, Senator



Best desk product, best design and most innovative product, Listawood



Best novelty product, fidget spinner, PF Concept



Best promotional clothing, custom T-shirt, Screenworks



Best executive product, personalised Moleskin notebooks, SPS EU



Best edible product, ice cream tubs Rossi Ice Cream



Best technology product, wireless earbuds PF Concept



Best promotional bag, Bobby anti-theft backpack, Xindao

Executive Product

Platinum - SPS (EU) Ltd

Digital Personalisation to Moleskine Notebooks

Gold - CEG

Gift Box Presentation 2.0

Silver - Kernow Plusfile

Plusfile O2O Digital Notebook

Desk Product

Platinum - Listawood

Halo Mug

Gold - Xindao UK Ltd

Mousepad with 5W Wireless Charging

Silver - Listawood

Inner ColourCoat Mugs

Pocket Product

Platinum - Senator Pens Ltd

LAMY Pico Neon Pink Special Edition Ball Pen

Edible Product

Platinum - Rossi Ice Cream

Personalised Tubs of Ice Cream

Gold - Kalfany Susse Werbung GmbH

Organic Chia Cereal Bar – Seed & Grain

Silver - Kalfany Susse Werbung GmbH

PAX Crispy Fruit & Vegetable Mix

Novelty Product

Platinum - PF Concept

Spin-It Widget Bluetooth Speaker

Gold - Xindao UK Ltd

Indoor Hover Ball

Eco Product

Platinum - CHX

Vent Scent

Gold - Kalfany Susse Werbung GmbH

Vegan Organic Fruit Gum Bears

Promotional Bag

Platinum - Xindao UK Ltd

Bobby Compact Anti-Theft Backpack

Gold - Screenworks Ltd

Custom Beach Bags

Gold - Disenos NT

Heat-Sealed Laminated Non-Woven Bag with Gusset

Silver - IF Solutions

Full Colour Drawstring Bag

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Platinum - Screenworks Ltd

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Gold - Unit Brands of Scandinavia

Islandblock Shell jacket

Silver - Unit Brands of Scandinavia

Deer Ridge Jacket

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WE'VE COME A LONG WAY

Ten years on from the financial crash the merchandise sector has evolved for the new world, says **Phil Morgan**



It's hard to believe that this year marks a decade since the banking crisis, and the recession tremors that followed. For many years, UK businesses, including those in promotional merchandise, had to re-strategise, re-structure and re-focus to navigate the new commercial landscape.

Now, a decade on, the promotional merchandise market is stronger than ever, with the latest Sourcing City Industry Report (see page 4) valuing the sector at more than £1bn in 2017.

So, how did we do it, and can the lessons learned help us to future-proof our businesses?

At SPS, we navigated the challenging times with a focus on innovation. We innovated what we sold and how we sold it. It's something that remains in our DNA.

We're not the only ones – many suppliers and distributors followed this route, and I believe it helped us to get the market

growing again. It will also help us to weather the uncertainties of Brexit, general elections and anything else that might crop up. As an industry, we've learned how to be flexible, how to exceed expectations, and how to shout about what we do.

It's well-known that if you keep on doing things the way you've always done them, then you'll keep on getting the same results. To grow, you must mix things up. The market has changed considerably over the past 10 years. Customers are more demanding, want faster answers, and don't wait to be 'courted' by businesses – they know what they want, and, in a few clicks, they can find it. Nobody can question the importance of a strong presence on Google and a good quality website.

But, it's not all about being strong online. Even in a digital age, people buy from people. Building strong customer relationships has never been more

important for trust, loyalty and continuing business. You can stand out in this marketplace and future-proof your business with personal contact. And once you've built a relationship, you'll find it easier to grow in partnership with your customers by working together and negotiating on price.

The personal relationship is hugely important between suppliers and distributors too. As an industry, these two sides are working together in a way that's stronger than ever.

So, where next for our industry? Well it's got to be up and up hasn't it? Whether you choose to focus on social media, online, DM, events, telesales, or anything in between, let's make it personal and let's continue to work together. There's huge potential, as we keep on innovating and evolving – so let's go!

Phil Morgan is CEO of SPS EU 



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IN THE HOT SEAT

RALF OSTER



Ralf Oster
CEO
PF Concept

- Ralf was named CEO of PF Concept in October 2012
- Previously served as vice president and general manager of EMEA Sanford Brands at Newell Rubbermaid from 2004 to 2007 and business manager of Scandinavia and Eastern Europe of Avery Dennison Zweckform Office Products
- Ralf received a Diplom Betriebswirt FH with focus on international marketing, controlling and management science from FH Worms

**NEED TO
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The BPMA job board is free for members to use

Q. How long have you been in the promotional products industry and where have you worked?

A. I have been working in the promotional products industry for around 15 years now. Previous to my 10 years at companies who specialise in this market, including PF Concept, I was at Newell where we had a B2B promotion division for our writing instrument brands (Parker, Waterman, PaperMate, Rotring).

Q. PF recently acquired top UK supplier SPS. Do you have further plans to grow your European network?

A. Acquisitions and mergers are, and always have been, part of our growth strategy. So we will certainly continue to pursue such opportunities, taking into account how appropriate they are to complementing our strategy in terms of geography, structure and categories. SPS was a perfect example of all these aspects being favourable.

Q. How important is product sustainability? Some companies see this as essential, while others seem to be less bothered.

A. Sustainability is in our company DNA, so its importance is not something we even question. For more than 10 years, we have been employing internal experts to ensure we are optimally set up for sustainable and compliant operations. We are continually developing our structures and strategies in this regard. In addition, we

work closely with the various relevant certification and audit agencies on the ground in the countries where our products are manufactured.

Even though the issue of sustainability is not yet a decisive factor for all our customers, we are optimally prepared and consider it our responsibility as market leader to set standards for the industry.

Q. What product and branding trends do you see emerging?

A. Because we work with such a wide variety of product categories, this is not an easy question to answer. We are now primarily looking towards retail trends to guide us, increasingly offering products which could sit perfectly comfortably in mainstream retail stores. Having said this, I do see a strong focus on the value segment for all categories. And gifting, design, health, sports and above all, drinkware and audio, are showing particularly strong growth figures.

Q. Amazon and Vistaprint are unnerving some distributors. How do you think these disrupters will impact our market?

A. Amazon and Vistaprint are actually just the tip of the iceberg. There are a lot more disrupters out there besides these two. However, I feel pretty calm about them entering our space. When Amazon decides to go into a market, they do so in a very consistent way. You have to be able to handle this. For me, it's a case of figuring out what new opportunities such disrupters can bring

to our business, rather than seeing them as a threat.

Q. PF Concept is one of the EPPO (European Product Media Organisation) members, which is behind the first substantial European research project. Why is this so important for our industry?

A. I much prefer to be able to make strategic or investment decisions based on facts about the different markets and categories. Without professional transparency or fact-based overviews we can only speculate and make assumptions, which is something we have definitely been doing for too long. The reliable facts and information this project provides means we can also help our customers to make better informed decisions about where to seek business.

Q. How do you see the distributor model changing over the next five years?

A. I don't actually see the distributor model changing in the next five years. But I do expect to see some additional new players or consolidated bigger ones in the market, as well as online players taking on a bigger role. Digitalisation will have a significant impact on sales, order processes, efficiency and customer expectations. But the business model as such will not dramatically change or disappear. Our thousands of distributor customers are our sales team in the market who reach and serve the eventual end-user customers, and we will continue to support them. PM

BACK TO BUYING BRITISH

A growing wave of support for British manufacturing of merchandise is based on sound business sense

The Prime Minister was in China recently banging the drum for British industry. For the merchandise sector, it's a well-known path as so much of the merchandise that is used in this country, comes from that part of the world. Traditionally, this was down to the cost imperative – British manufacturers simply couldn't produce products at such low prices, and that was what most end-user clients were interested in.

However, in recent years there has been something of a change as several factors have begun to interact. Firstly, emerging markets are, well, emerging, and their costs are rising too. Labour is not as cheap as it was, and that, as well as other costs, must be passed on.

There have also been concerns about compliance with issues such as modern slavery and basic product safety becoming more important to clients. In the age of calls for every company to be more agile, tighter lead times have meant that shipping product from the other side of the planet is not always viable – before environmental issues of such freightage are even considered.

All in all, these factors have led to a reappraisal of the benefits of buying British. While the phrase can summon up the campaigns of the Seventies, today's



approach is based on a more rational business sense, rather than a patriotic urge alone.

Jamie Marshall (pictured), managing director of Premier Print & Promotions, says his company is a big supporter of UK manufacturing. "Five or ten years ago we were buying a lot more in China than we do now. We are definitely buying a lot more in the UK than we did, and we are a growing company."

Customers don't always ask for British products, he admits, but feels it is the right thing to do in many respects. "It cuts down on the carbon footprint, and customers increasingly want to know where you have sourced items," says Marshall. "We are also finding that there are some products that can actually be bought cheaper in the UK, which has been surprising to us. We can deliver it cheaper and quicker to the client, so everyone wins."

Marshall adds that UK innovation is admired in other markets, as a recent trip to PSI revealed. The UK presence was strong with British companies demonstrating innovative products and techniques, he says.

He is looking to organise an initiative that will turn the light on British manufacturing. It is still at the early stages, but could include an event, or series

of regional events. More details will be revealed soon. "We have a lot to be proud of," he says.

Other factors are giving British products a helping hand. David Long, CEO, Sourcing City, says that since the referendum to leave the EU, sterling exchange rates against both the dollar and euro have been weakened, and this can make British made products more competitive if they don't have to import significant raw materials.

"British made products are also often of good quality, carriage costs are generally cheaper and local availability is convenient," he adds. "Since the Briman Group was formed the collective activities of the members have promoted our home-based manufacturers and the advantages of doing business with them."



Briman, which represents around 20 UK manufacturers of promotional items, continues to fly the flag for British products. It has a strong presence at industry exhibitions and recently launched a website, Britprods.co.uk, for distributors to highlight British made promotional products to their clients.

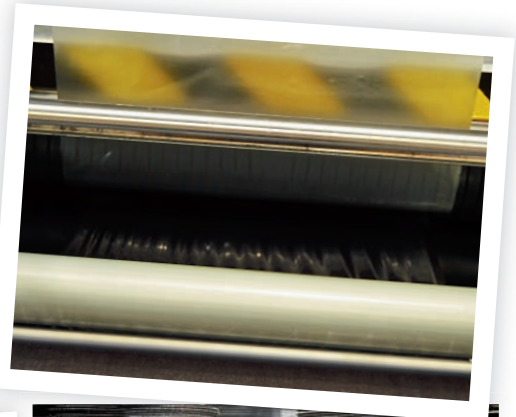
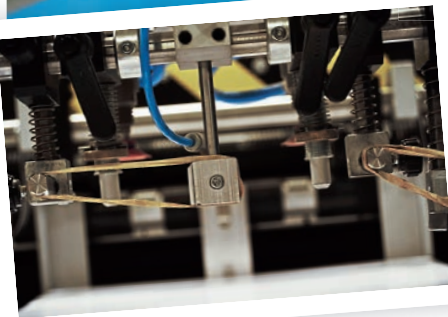
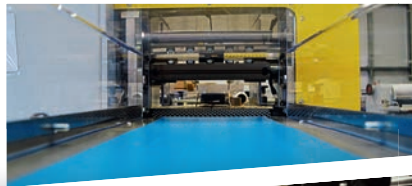
Growing demand

It comes at a time of increased optimism around, and appetite for, British made goods, says Annabel Apperley, director of badge company, B.Sanders. "We are finding a growing interest in British made products. This is mainly due to the quick lead times, and the safety certificate element that we are able to supply. There seems to be a growing trend in distributors asking if our products are made in the UK."

UK Lanyard Makers has only been in business for three years but is already getting lots more requests for British made products, says director Kevin Kingham. This is despite the fact that the company's USP is service and speed, making it more expensive than buying from overseas. Customers are developing a broader definition of value, says Kingham.

"Clients are starting to realise that buying an 'eco-friendly' product from China and then flying it in rather defeats the idea, whereas buying locally and saving air miles is actually a better option for the planet."

With Chinese New Year, in February, industry is closed for three weeks or so, making a British option almost the only choice, he adds. "New clients who we supply during this time usually stay on and become new accounts once they see that total cost and easy service make good sense for all but the largest



quantities."

Trilogy Lasercraft director, Caroline Dyson says that most purchasing decisions seem to be made on cost and lead times, rather than the country of manufacture. "I've found a slight upturn in the fact that we manufacture solely in the UK. Among my fellow manufacturers I get the feeling that most companies have a 'carry on regardless' viewpoint."

Prospects and investment

In terms of business prospects, the outlook is positive according to many British manufacturers. Martyn Wood, national sales executive, Foremost Magnets, says: "Business is definitely up. We had a clear downturn in the lead up to the Brexit vote, but now business is good. We are seeing increased turnover and profitability."

Mark Alderson, operations director, First Editions, says the company hit targets for ten out of 12 months in 2017. Although exports into the EU were down due to instability, overall turnover was slightly up. "We have invested well over a £1 million over the last five years in new machinery. This has put us at the cutting edge of technology within our industry."

B.Sanders has also made investments in both people, in the form of apprentices, and machinery, in new moulding and printing machines. UK Lanyards' Kingham says the business grew by more than 40% in 2017

and he expects another growth spurt in 2018.

"We employ more than ten people now and are members of the Living Wage Foundation. We have also invested in new automation to increase capacity."

Trends and predictions

Apperley says that the message about British manufacturers, such as B.Sanders, seems to be getting through to distributors, who have started to request them in the past year. "I think many

Buying British – the benefits

- Quick turnaround times
- High quality products
- Low minimum order quantities
- Supporting UK companies and jobs
- No language barriers
- Great service
- Flexibility
- Credit accounts
- Security of an ongoing supply chain
- Lower carbon footprint
- No nasty surprises from exchange rate changes
- No customs issues or import duty

Source: Briman Group – brimangroup.co.uk



British manufacturing

distributors are now understanding that UK-made items cannot only be made to a good quality and within a quick lead time, but are also beginning to be competitive on price," she says. "I'm not sure if this is a prediction or more of a wish, but I think that things are changing in the promotional market and the need for British made products is growing. I also feel that there may be steady growth in this industry."

Foremost Magnets' Martyn Wood says that British products are regarded highly all over the world. "I think once the Brexit deal is done, British industry in general will see a boost," he predicts.

First Editions' Mark Alderson says a post-Brexit dividend will come but only if a plan is solidified. "Export business will recover once a firm plan is in place for Brexit. Until then exporting will remain difficult. I hope the UK trade business will continue to grow but am not overly confident."

Like many manufacturers, UK Lanyard Makers' Kingham admits that there is a price barrier but having made more than a million lanyards in 2017, the company is clearly appealing to a lot of British clients. Fast turnaround is not possible with an imported product and the company ships its orders within four days of approval, often as quickly as next-day



"We have an ambitious budget for 2018 with good growth expected. Clients are getting used to faster service levels generally - just look at Amazon Prime for example - which is a real bonus for us."

Whatever the validity of predictions, one thing seems clear. British manufacturing has got the wind behind its sales.

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The broader picture



There are signs of green shoots for SME manufacturers according to the latest CBI quarterly SME Trends Survey. Output growth among the UK's SME manufacturers picked up in the three months to January, with a further acceleration expected next quarter.

The survey of 339 respondents also found that optimism improved at the fastest pace since April 2014 and export optimism improved at the fastest pace on record. Driving strong growth in output was the quickest rise in total new orders since April 1995, underpinned by a pick-up in both domestic and export

orders growth.

Total orders growth is expected to pick up further over the next three months, with similar growth in domestic orders expected alongside a sharp acceleration in export orders. As a result, another firm rise in output is also predicted, with expectations for growth also the strongest on record.

Investment intentions also improved, with firms now expecting to increase spending on plant and machinery modestly – the first time that investment intentions have been positive in almost two years.

Numbers employed grew at a solid pace over the past quarter, and growth is expected to continue at a similar pace next quarter. However, concerns over skill shortages have ramped up, with the number of firms citing skilled labour as a factor likely to limit output rising to its highest since January 1989.

Alpesh Paleja, CBI principal economist, said: "Growth is going strong for SME manufacturers, who are reaping the benefits of a lower pound and buoyant global growth – as seen in record expectations for export orders growth. But margins are clearly still under pressure, with cost pressures high, and firms expect to raise prices further to regain some ground."

"Furthermore, concerns over skill shortages have rocketed, stoking capacity pressures further. This underlies the importance of establishing a future immigration system that provides companies with access to talent and labour. The building blocks of a new system that meets economic needs and public concerns must start with scrapping the net migration target, which has never been fit-for-purpose." PM



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COMPANIES MISSING OUT ON THOUSANDS IN R&D CREDITS

The UK is a leading hub for research and development. Helping encourage and reward innovation is a Government backed tax incentive scheme known as R&D Tax Credits

Specialist consultancy randd UK has recovered around £80 million under this scheme and has been supporting BPMA members secure money. randd has supported first R&D claims of £38,500-£58,000 each for CHX Products, First Editions, Great Central Plastics and WCM&A. It has also supported smaller claims of a few thousand pounds. This money has enabled firms to invest in new equipment and staff to further drive their innovation programmes. These are not one-off payments - R&D tax can be claimed annually, adding thousands to the bottom-line.

"You may think that your company doesn't do any real R&D, but the definition is surprisingly wide, covering product and software developments but also processing and production improvements leading to gains in capacity, productivity, pricing and quality," says Paul Wallace, R&D consultant with randd UK. "In addition, the trial and error required to integrate new equipment and optimise its use within your existing production processes can also be classified as R&D."

Often, the challenge for companies is recognising what activities qualify for R&D. For example, new working methods are often overlooked, even by accountants. It's about having a detailed understanding of the scheme and how to present the R&D claim in the right way. Most claims revolve around problem


solving on existing products, processes and systems, not inventing new ones.

Total qualifying costs (see box) are enhanced by up to 130%, meaning that circa £2,600-£3,300 can be claimed back for every £10,000 of qualifying spend, depending on the company's tax position. You can make a retrospective claim up to two years from your current financial year-end. Since these awards are tax relief against corporation tax, only limited companies or PLCs qualify.

If you can answer yes to any of the following, you may be eligible:

- Have you created, developed or introduced new or improved products, processes, systems or services to achieve efficiency improvements, increased outputs, reduce wastage or to comply with new legislation or regulations?
- Have you applied innovation creating bespoke new products, systems or processes for your clients?
- Have you undertaken the above activities on unsuccessful projects?

R&D tax credits have been around since 2000 but HMRC estimates that around 90% of eligible companies are either yet to claim or do not recover their full entitlement.

• For guidance or an exploratory discussion on R&D Tax Credits, contact Paul Wallace on 07834 747871 or paul@randduk.com. 

What expenditure qualifies?

A proportion of:

- Staff costs
- Materials or consumables directly connected with R&D processes or prototypes
- External sub-contractor/freelancer costs connected to R&D
- Specifically developed, commissioned or adapted software
- Utility costs

PLAY TO YOUR STRENGTHS



Business isn't a level playing field, but you can create competitive advantage by working smarter, says **Melissa Chevin**

News that two of the world's largest retailers have entered the promotional merchandise marketplace in America, and the activities of Vistaprint and Amazon Print on Demand in the UK, are causing concern to many distributors. While it's right to consider the potential impact on business, it is important to take a step back and define who you are, relative to your competitor set. Don't assume the biggest and best-known brands naturally have a competitive advantage. There are other qualities, strengths and capabilities that can help you beat the competition.

Speed and agility

The recognisable name and impressive cashflow, marketing budget, customer base and number of employees that some

of the global powers of retailing boast may turn heads, but their size can be a hindrance. With fewer layers and departments and less bureaucracy you are in a better position to be nimble and responsive to both changes in the market and the needs of your customers. Think on your feet and deliver what they want.

The personal touch

While economies of scale mean you may not be able to compete on price, don't underestimate the value of the personal touch. We've all experienced being put on hold or being passed from department to department. Ensure your customers have the knowledge that they can talk to a real person every time they call. A smaller team can see more clearly the direct effect of their actions and they

can forge long lasting relationships that create genuine loyalty.

Added value

Assess your customer base. Who are they, what does your product do for them, what motivates them to buy? The greater the clarity about your ideal customer, the more focused and effective your marketing efforts will be. Don't underestimate the value of your experience and expertise. If you are an authority in your field, people will trust you and welcome the sense of security that you offer. Ensure you are listening to your customers more than you are talking at them.

Innovative marketing

Effective content marketing and clever use of social media can put you in front of large numbers of people at low-cost.

You can respond quickly to any questions or comments on social media and share your expertise in a way that attracts interest and generates business. Bigger brands may struggle to do this due to red tape, size, and the fact that it is rarely senior staff who run social media channels.

Ultimately, remember that you are never going to be able to compete with price promotion unless you're prepared for your revenue to take a major hit. Compete in areas where you have the advantage – agility, personality and value – and your customers will reward you. **PSB**

Melissa Chevin is marketing director at Globefish Consulting and a BPMA board director. Contact her on melissa@bpma.co.uk

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NEXT IN LINE?

The collapse of Carillion may seem to have a limited impact on the promotional goods industry, but beware the ripple effect, says **Mike Collins**



They'll pay me, I'm sure, they're too big to go bust..." We recently reported on how the demise of Dukes of London would directly impact upon the merchandise sector. We concluded that the most important thing to learn is how we must in the future, identify risk differently, in order to hopefully avoid repeating large credit exposure.

Hot on the heels of Dukes comes the catastrophic collapse of construction giant Carillion. Maybe at first thought the collapse of a behemoth from an unrelated sector may not concern either suppliers or distributors but there are key pointers that all industry players need to recognise, especially distributors, to ensure that they do not become indirect victims of Carillion's demise.

Carillion's failure has been on the cards for a while. Numerous indicators were there, some were even declared openly and publicly - they just weren't taken notice of.

So how can the promotional goods industry learn from this and protect itself from secondary Carillion 'domino-effect' fallout?

Let us provide some answers:

1. Review credit limits

Are your customers above the agreed or recommended levels? You've agreed credit limits at the start of the business relationship. If you're supplying more but still not being paid

this may be an indicator the debtor is over-trading. They're doing business but not generating cash-flow to pay debts, which is a clear concern.

2. Due diligence

When did you last credit check all customers? Carillion informed the City of several profit warnings but continued to be supplied on credit. Any adverse profit/credit information illustrates a trading downturn or changes in financial stability. Both are a worry.

3. Have a plan

Review your methods of chasing overdue monies. Carillion's creditors may have been of the mindset that they couldn't go bust. No company is exempt from being asked to pay for late invoices, irrespective of size, or what value they owe you. Don't be scared to ask for overdue sums - the debtor knows it's overdue and is expecting contact. Act before it's too late.

With Dukes' collapse fresh in the mind, many are beginning to appreciate that the consequences of insolvency are far-reaching. Initially it is the direct suppliers of Carillion that suffer pain. However, some of those very same Carillion suppliers with an inevitable cashflow hole (crucially yet to be shown up until their next accounts are filed) will inevitably be forced to pass their pain down the supply chain. Time will tell

whether this will manifest itself in slower payment practices, or worse still their own future demise. The question is how many such exposed businesses already take supplies from promotional goods distributors?


Distributors need to ask themselves if they know whether their own construction-based customers either dealt with, supplied and/or suffered direct losses from Carillion. If they don't know then they most certainly should find out now, before they automatically process that next sizeable order on credit.

In conclusion, there are some key questions you must ask yourself:
1. Do we supply products to

the construction industry either directly or indirectly?

2. If so, where in the supply chain do we come?
3. Is Carillion relevant to us?

Wherever you are in the chain, you should always look after yourself. Frankly, companies with the best systems in place will be the ones that ultimately fare best. Ask yourself, do we have the skills and processes to avoid being passed this problem?

If you're not sure, don't worry, help is at hand - you just need to take action. Implement the BPMA support package on offer and start benefitting from good old-fashioned advice and expertise sooner rather than later. 



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COMPLIANCE NOT PRICE

When buying wireless charging, always look for Qi certification, says **Matt Pluckrose**



Since Apple introduced wireless compatibility (Qi) to its latest phones the market has been awash with transmitters, stands, chargers, power banks, lamps and converters.

All wireless mobile phone chargers for the consumer market are based on the Qi (pronounced 'Chee') standard. Many suppliers and factories adhere strictly to the Qi standard but sadly not all. There are many low quality, counterfeit products that are potentially dangerous.

The Wireless Power Consortium (WPC) is addressing this challenge with a certification programme for wireless charging products built to the Qi standard. The WPC tests specific properties, each of which can involve multiple test procedures.

Only products that have passed these tests can use the Qi logo and are considered 'Qi certified' and safe. Be cautious of claims of 'Qi compliant', 'Qi compatible', 'Qi enabled' or 'works with Qi', as these may indicate a product has not undergone Qi certification testing.



Misleading claims


Testing in independent labs on uncertified products found temperatures reaching up to 205°F if there was a metal foreign object, such as a coin, placed between a charger (transmitter) and smartphone (receiver). The resulting temperature could cause third degree burns.

The temperature of smartphone batteries will normally increase while charging, but wireless charging accessories should not cause additional heating. An uncertified smartphone cover may not prevent heat

building in the metal back of the phone. Over time, elevated temperature will degrade and shorten the battery life.

Qi logo

Manufacturers who comply normally legally print the Qi logo on all products and packaging. A lack of a Qi logo on the product or its packaging could indicate that the wireless charging product is uncertified. Only Qi certified products can legally use the Qi logo.

Choosing the right gadget is always tricky and should not be based on price alone. When looking at wireless charging there is great opportunity to impress your clients and ensure compliance when you look for a Qi certified device. Don't get focused on the cheaper cost or it may come back to haunt your client. 

Matt Pluckrose is managing director of Desktop Ideas

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EDUCATION DAY

DELIVERS A FAST START FOR LEARNERS

This year's Education Day saw more than 100 delegates receive inspiring learning to kick start their learning journeys



The BPMA hosted its popular Education Day on 30 January as part of its ongoing commitment to education and development within the industry. The annual event has been a must attend for members ever since the first Education Day in 2013).


This year saw more than 110 delegates attending Whittlebury Hall, the day before trade show Merchandise World at Silverstone. Delegates were inspired by a series of seminars delivered by a range of outstanding motivational guest speakers. Seminars were held covering

a range of topics such as 'Getting Inside Your Client's Head', 'What Your Brand Says About You', 'How to Drive Social Engagement on the Move', and 'Millennials – Changing the Face of Buying and Networking in the 21st Century'. Anthony Stears (aka The Telephone Assassin) had the audience

gripped with his topic 'No I Am Not Interested – How to Handle Sales Objections'. The day was followed up with guest speaker Tim Andrews (president of ASI) looking at future trends in the promotional merchandise industry. Delegates included Allwag Promotions, Brand Addition,

Hambleside, Event Merchandising, Lesmar, The Extra Step, Goldstar Europe, SB Print, Club Row Creations, Wildthang, PA Promotions, Brandz, and Willsmer Wagg.

The BPMA Education Day agenda was devised to appeal to everyone within the industry whatever their level of expertise. Whether delegates were an account manager, marketing manager or business owner, a supplier or distributor, there was a seminar just right for them.

Attending the Education Day offers a 20-credit weighting for all delegates working towards their qualification on the BPMA education programme. So, if you attended the Education Day and sign up to the education programme by end of April 2018 these credits will be awarded to you. 

For details visit education.bpma.co.uk.



What the delegates said

"I have found the day extremely informative and have a lot to think about and start implementing. The diversity was great, different speakers each with invaluable advice. Thank you BPMA."

Lauren Haman, Premier Impressions

"Extremely useful and insightful. I learnt some valuable tips and certain aspects of the talks."

Nicole Armstrong, Lesmar

"This was an excellent day with great speakers delivering relevant and pertinent information that I can act on immediately."

Mike Smith, Orb Group

"The BPMA provides essential industry information, statistics and support. You should not be in this industry without being a member."

Chani Martin, M&M Promotions

"The Education Day exceeded my expectation. Lots of new ideas and different ways of approaching challenges learned."

Gemma Richards, Fluid Branding

"An excellent and educational source of inspiration."

John Priest, Peratone

"An excellent day with high quality and knowledgeable speakers. Good fun!"

Sarah Kemp, Allwag Promotions



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INSPIRE

I attended the new members seminar and was honestly blown away – I created a marketing plan on my train journey back from the notes I made. I've connected with many great people too.
Chani Martin, MM Printing and Promotions

CONNECT

We were new to the industry, and taking on board advice from the BPMA, we've attended events and exhibitions that's helped us redefine our strategy.
Colin Gray, Rossi Ice Cream

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PERFECT PITCH

Customer service, a keen eye on trends, and great design are behind TKG Europe's rise to become a leading branded golf products supplier

From a humble spare bedroom launch to becoming a market leader, TKG Europe is a success story driven by a passion for customer service.

In 2004, Glen Witheford struck out alone as the self-confessed 'Golf Tee King' and has gone on to conquer Europe - and thankfully simplify the company name.

In the early days, TKG Europe operated with neither premises nor decoration facilities, selling printed golf tees directly to golf professionals at clubs across the UK.

Fast forward nearly 14 years and Witheford is now managing director of a business with a design, sales and specialist operatives team, purpose-built factory, warehouse, offices, studio, games room and, at its core, an ever-expanding range of state-of-the-art design and print technology.

"We started as a one-product company and relied on other suppliers to print and decorate for us," says Witheford. "Now, our new 2018 brochure has more than 600 corporate golf items, 90% of which we decorate in-house at our east Yorkshire headquarters."

Ongoing investment has been the key to the success of TKG Europe; investment in the latest printing machinery, investment in product design and innovation and investment in a team with a passion to deliver great customer service.

"We are only able to offer such uncompromised service because we have total control from the point of order, through proofing and manufacture to dispatch," he says. "From very early on, my ethos was always to bring processes in-house wherever possible, so we can control the quality at each stage of every order."

Although 'customer service' is at the forefront of Witheford's business mantra, he also maintains that regularly refreshing the product range is vital for survival in the competitive world of branded merchandise.

This has obviously proved a winning formula for TKG Europe which has now become a preferred trade-only supplier and manufacturer of custom golf products working with hundreds of promotional companies throughout the UK and Europe.

In recent years, professional golfer Gary Watkinson joined the TKG team as UK sales development manager to add his sales and golfing expertise to the brand and build relationships with both long-standing and new clients.

The brand's core products are the essential, practical items which golfers use on a daily basis such as golf towels, balls, divot tools and of course, TKG's founding product, the humble golf tee.

TKG keeps a keen eye on market trends

and responds accordingly. "There has been an increasing demand for well-finished, high quality, multi-item gift boxes," says Watkinson. "More than half the products we currently sell are presented in some form of packaging and our 2017 best-seller was our range of luxury presentation boxes."

TKG Europe is dedicated to meeting, and surpassing, the ever-increasing expectations of the corporate golf gift buyer. According to Witheford, clients now look for packaging quality that equals the quality of the golf products themselves.

"I relish the challenge of making a finished product that creates the impression that the branding is integral to the design and manufacture and not merely an add-on," he says. "Promotional merchandise is in its heyday and plays a pivotal role in any marketing budget, so we have to ensure our products are valuable keepsakes for the end user to successfully generate a positive and lasting message for the brand."

For TKG Europe, 2017 was a record-breaking year, thanks to both new accounts and repeat business in equal measure. With significant ongoing investment in printing machinery, Glen is confident that it's 'onwards and upwards' for TKG Europe in 2018 and beyond. **PM**

www.tkg europe.com



Supplier survey gives the thumbs up

Research findings from the BPMA's latest mystery shopping survey into what distributors think of the service they get from suppliers, was unveiled at Merchandise World. Largely, it made for good reading, although there are some areas where suppliers could be more proactive.

Overall, the research found that distributors are satisfied with the service they receive from suppliers. Particular areas of strength include quote turnaround times and lead times, where quoted lead times are often bettered.

The BPMA surveyed distributors to compare actual service of suppliers against the 'ideal' service levels established in BPMA research conducted by FACTS International research. This previous research revealed that less than a quarter of suppliers felt they had an excellent relationship with their distributor.

Where the 2016 research established the levels of service that are ideal to distributors, the latest research put these standards to the test by comparing them to supplier service in practice in both the order and enquiry stage.

When it comes to reasons for choosing a supplier, distributors chose suppliers based on their industry reputation, product range and previous relationship. Suppliers often name price as the main reason

for distributors choosing suppliers, but it was actually fairly low with only 9% of respondents choosing it.

Service levels were impressive, particularly for turnaround times with 75% of suppliers replying within the hour and 93.4% within four hours. This was in line with expectations for the ideal turnaround time revealed in 2016 research for the BPMA. This was followed up with a detailed written quote by 73%.

BPMA research in 2016 said distributors were looking at 5-10 days as their preferred lead times, and here 50% of suppliers achieved this.

There was room for improvement in offering visualisation of product, with only 7% currently doing this. More than 50% of products were decorated in the UK.

At the order stage 35% of orders were not acknowledged for 24 hours. Based upon the FACTS International research, distributors expect to receive an order proof within eight hours of submitting orders, but only 49% managed this.

There was better news on meeting quotes lead times, where it seems suppliers under promise and over deliver. On average, suppliers exceeded their quoted lead times with 23.79% of lead times being shorter than quoted. This was particularly impressive

considering 475% of orders were decorated outside the UK.

Overall, there was a measure of faith in the figure of 93% of distributors who said they thought that the supplier was on top of their order, and 91.8% were happy with the order. However, aspects of the supplier-distributor relationship that could be improved are order acknowledgement and PDF proof times as well as offering pre-order visuals.

Suppliers could be more proactive in offering visuals, whilst distributors can aid these processes by gathering relevant and adequate artwork and information for the supplier.

What the research covered

The enquiry stage survey research looked at:

- Factors in selecting a supplier partner
- Turnaround times for quotes
- Quality of quotes
- Lead times
- Use of UK decorators

The order stage survey looked at:

- Order acknowledgement speed
- Turn around times for visuals
- Lead times (dispatch from proof approval)
- Service satisfaction levels
- Across a range of product categories

Quoted lead times

24 hours – 0.8%

48 hours – 0.8%

3-5 days – 8.3%

5-10 days - 39.7%

10-15 days – 38.8%

More than 15 days – 11.6%

SELECTING A SUPPLIER

The Top 6 most influential factors in choosing a supplier were:

1. Go-to supplier for this product

41%

2. Stock

15%

3. Repeat Order

12.5%

4. Cost

9%

5. Lead Time

9%

6. Client chose supplier

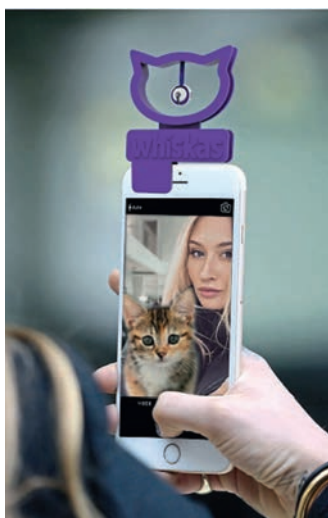
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2. Quality
3. Customer Service
4. Trade Only
5. Cost
6. Relationship with them



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NTU and BPMA search for product design talent

The BPMA is once again supporting young design students to come up with the next great promotional product through a product design competition. The Association has teamed up with Nottingham Trent University (NTU) in an exclusive partnership.

In January, Gordon Glenister, director general of the BPMA, addressed first year students at NTU who are taking part in the competition. Previous winners have included Asher Erskine who won it with the Flatpack branded binocular. Last year's winner was George Hill from Loughborough University who won the competition with the Cat Selfie Stick.

The BPMA has also enlisted the support of Marketing Week Live and Inner Workings. Simon

Dipple, managing director of Inner Workings, said: "I have very much enjoyed being involved as a judge and seeing the great ideas these students have presented to us. Our clients are always looking for creative ideas and when you give young designers an open brief it's amazing what they can come up with."

The BPMA is looking at a future education programme to inspire graduates and help them consider the promotional products industry as a future career.

If you are interested in taking on a graduate this Summer as an intern, please contact the BPMA or Nottingham Trent employer engagement team on talent@ntu.ac.uk using BPMA as the subject line.

PSI grants for 2019

Following the success of BPMA members exhibiting at January's PSI in Germany, the BPMA has successfully received 11 grants for PSI 2019 from the Department of International Trade.

The grants are to help businesses in their export efforts and are by no means a given - the BPMA has to apply for them each year. The grants can be used to offset the cost of appearing at the show.

Companies can apply to the BPMA for more details and have to be able to show how their export strategy will benefit from attending the show. The BPMA can assist companies in making their application a success



Three new Patrons join the BPMA

The BPMA has announced three new Patrons, who are ambassadors for the BPMA but also the industry. The new Patrons are WCMA, Mojo Promotions, and Preseli.

BPMA Patrons are limited to a small number of suppliers and distributors who are invited to take up the position in recognition of their commitment to the merchandise sector and to the best practice promoted by the BPMA. Patrons attend a number of exclusive events, such as Patrons dinners, and have



access to training and education tools to help grow their business.

Sally Edwards (pictured), business manager, Mojo Promotions, said: "It is a proud moment for all of us here at Mojo. We strive to deliver a top-quality service to our customers and becoming a Patron of the BPMA shows we are committed to this journey and we are working to the highest standards. We look forward to showing our support and growing with an organisation that has helped so many within this industry."

BPMA CALENDAR 2018

7-8 March

Marketing Week Live, Olympia, London

21-22 March

B2B Marketing Expo, Excel, London (Also includes B2C Marketing Expo)

25 May

GDPR deadline. Are you ready? The BPMA has produced a guide to the General Data Protection Regulation. To get hold of a copy, contact the BPMA on enquiries@bpma.co.uk

12-13 September

Merchandise World, Farnborough



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

Ten from two



Matt Franks

Chief executive officer
Fluid Branding

What are you reading at the minute?

The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F*ck by Mark Manson

What's the latest music you have downloaded to your smartphone?

Liam Gallagher - As You Were

What are the most important lessons you've learned in life?

I had a big pay rise early in my IT career and my dad told me "To whom much is given, much is expected". It was a trigger for me to start my own business and not leave my future in the hands of an employer

Cappuccino or latte?

Cappuccino out of the two. But an Espresso Martini trumps them both hands down

What makes you feel warm and fluffy?

Friends and family, good music, and the sun on my face

Best place in the world?

That's tough. Hawaii for its beauty, New York for the buzz, and Rome for its history

If you could change one thing?

Raising the basic standard of living. I volunteered in Kenya last year and the vast number of people struggling for the basics we take for granted is just heart wrenching

How would you like to be remembered?

Someone with passion and integrity who made a slight difference

What are you proudest of?

Raising three amazing children, it's way tougher than building a business.

What's been the hardest moment of your life, and how did you get through it?

Reading the eulogy at my dad's funeral. It made me realise that life is too short, but how blessed I still am



Sarah Cooper

Business development consultant
Impression Europe

What are you reading at the minute?

I am about to re-read one of my favourite books, Wild Swans by Jung Chang

What's the latest music you have downloaded to your smartphone?

Beautiful Trauma by Pink

What are the most important lessons you've learned in life?

To be patient with others; to treat everyone in the way you would like to be treated; to be open minded, and to be kinder to myself

Cappuccino or Latte?

Cappuccino, especially after Christmas when trying to get back on a healthier eating regime

What makes you feel warm and fluffy?

Cuddled up with my little pug, Indie, watching a rom com

Best place in the world?

Anywhere hot and sunny by the ocean with the people I love

If you could change one thing?

I would like people to be kinder and more tolerant of each other. And I would like to grow three inches taller

How would you like to be remembered?

Just as a person who in a small way made a difference to other people's lives through kindness, love and laughter

What are you proudest of?

As a single parent my children have always given me my drive to succeed in my career. I am very proud of Oliver and Saffron and the fantastic people they have grown into

What's been the hardest moment of your life, and how did you get through it?

The death of a parent is very hard to come to terms with. The only way through is with the support of family and friends

MOVES

Two new faces for BPMA team



The BPMA has made two new appointments to bolster its marketing and member activities.

Emma Claridge joined at the start of the new year to focus on marketing events and other marketing activities that the Association is involved with. She is responsible for the marketing communication plan, ensuring digital marketing and traditional marketing meet their objectives. She is also involved in collating research to monitor market trends that the BPMA should respond to.

Emma's experience includes responsibility for marketing communications at manufacturing company Clark-Drain as well as ten years working within the British Equine Veterinary Association where she was responsible for the journal and subscriptions for equine vets. She set up business arrangements with other international associations to increase readership, ensured the marketing communications were efficient and exhibited at many national and international events.

George Turnbull joins the BPMA from Precision Marketing Group where he was responsible for managing client relationships and cross-selling. He is responsible for maintaining existing BPMA member relationships, ensuring that members are happy with what the Association offers, as well as reacting to their views. This will include involvement with internal and external training, including online webinars.

George will be getting in touch with BPMA members in the near future.

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