

New Testing Lab will Offer Performance Guarantees



We have recently opened a new performance testing laboratory at our Weedon Corrugated Products factory in Audenshaw, Manchester. The development has involved investment in new box compression testing equipment, which will enable us to test packaging scientifically and provide performance guarantees.

The laboratory will be used for testing individual customers' packaging as well as raw materials. It will provide assurance as to the expected performance of proposed designs, check the capability of existing packaging and test the sheet board we use, including the output of our own corrugator, to ensure it meets required standards and specifications. Both Weedon Group sites, at Audenshaw and Weedon PSC at Hednesford, Staffordshire, will benefit from the new facilities.

Although we have undertaken edge testing of corrugated board for many years, we will now also be able to test finished packaging. The new equipment can check compression strength (how much load the board can withstand before it collapses), its weight and its burst strength (how much pressure it can tolerate before it fails). This will enable us to provide our customers with a definitive assessment of the durability of their packaging. In some cases, customers may then be advised to upgrade their board specifications to provide better protection; others may be given the confidence to downgrade and save money while still providing adequate strength.

Managing Director John Weedon comments: "The expansion of our testing facilities is an exciting development for us. Adding value to our customers is one of our top priorities. Now we will be able to tell them with

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scientific certainty and in advance of mass production whether their packaging is fit for purpose.

"We have championed the concept of packaging reduction and are always keen to avoid wasting materials. If customers are over-specing their packaging, they will now know that they can safely economise on board costs, while still providing good protection. This is obviously better for our customers' profit margins, but also better for our planet.

"The ability to test completed boxes will be a valuable tool to support our structural designers. Although our team has many years' experience, they will now be able to justify their recommendations with statistical data, and our customers will be able to rest assured that our packaging will do exactly what we say it will do!"

Corrugated Board as a Teaching Tool



We are supporting a new initiative which will see corrugated board used as a tool in the teaching of science and engineering in local schools.

Weedon PSC is sponsoring the cost of education kits for the six primary schools in Lichfield which will be taking part in the Build To The Line programme in their efforts

to promote Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) to their students. We have also offered the schools the services of our structural design team, as well as a supply of corrugated board manufactured by Weedon Corrugated Products.

Build To The Line is a new programme from the Learning Partnership, which got underway in January and aims to inspire and educate young people in the basics of problem-solving in design, construction and engineering. Working in teams, children will learn to apply these skills to the design and build of construction and engineering models, using cardboard as the primary building material.

Build To The Line offers a range of team-based engineering challenges and teams pit their skills against students all across the world.

Managing Director John Weedon comments: "With the world's natural resources rapidly diminishing, we know that we need to apply new approaches to construction, design and engineering that embody the key principles of sustainability and low environmental impact. Engineers need to rethink the materials they choose to use, their sources and how they use these materials.

"One of our top priorities at Weedon PSC is preserving the future of our planet by making good use of raw materials. For example, through innovative design, we actively seek to minimise the amount of unnecessary packaging that is produced. So we are delighted to have this opportunity to help introduce these important concepts to the children in our local schools – one day they will be the engineers and packaging designers of our future."

Design Focus

In this column, we introduce some of the innovative ideas which our in-house graphic and structural designers have developed to solve specific problems for our customers.

Increasing Packing Speed

A Case Study for Willy's ACV



Customer Profile

Tyrrells founder, Will Chase, set up Willy's ACV in 2017 to produce apple cider vinegar (ACV) on Laddin Farm in the village of Little Miracle in Herefordshire. The benefits of fermenting apples into cider and other products have been recognised since Roman times and Willy's ACV is marketed as a health product.

The Problem

We were invited to undertake a packaging review at Willy's to identify potential savings in materials, labour and costs. We noticed that the company was packing bottles by hand, into secondary packaging that consisted of a printed box with a separate six-cell divider inside. This was very labour-intensive and was slowing down the packing speed.

The Solution

- Our award-winning structural team designed a one-piece carton with an integral divider.
- The boxes have a crash-lock base for quick and easy assembly.
- The new design uses less material in the construction of the boxes.

The Benefits

This solution delivered significant benefits in a number of areas:

- Increased packing speeds
- Reduced labour costs
- Increased operational profit
- Reduction in tape used when packing
- Reduction in material used for the manufacture of cartons
- Reduction in waste within the supply chain
- Reduction in pallets used when delivering the packaging and savings on storage and transportation.

Overall, our new designs mean savings in materials used, which is good for the planet, as well as cost and labour savings for our customer.

Willy's ACV was delighted with our new designs and the company has rolled them out across all its main product lines.

Download other [case studies](#) to find out how we have used our expertise to solve specific packaging problems for our customers.

Our Shining Star



In February, Niamh Hickman, who is now working as a customer service project manager in i2i europe, was awarded 'Apprentice of the Month' by The Apprenticeship Works, who dubbed her a 'shining star'. She won £40 of Love 2 Shop vouchers to treat herself.

Niamh joined i2i in June 2018 as a pre-production administrator. She writes:

"I started when I was eighteen, knowing barely anything about the world of work and it was very frightening. Being an apprentice is almost like being thrown into the deep end – you must learn quickly. But having the right training, and all the inspiration of everyone around, helped me adapt almost immediately.

"As my apprenticeship is coming to an end, I realise how much I really have learnt. My job has switched quite a few times throughout my two years. But it helped me learn to adapt to new things quickly.

"It's pretty amazing being awarded something like 'Apprentice of the Month'. It really fills you with confidence and boosts your self-esteem to 100. It makes you realise that all the hard work you have put into it has been noticed."

An Audience with...

Lisa Edge,
Purchaser, Weedon PSC

Q) How long have you been with the Weedon Group and what is your role within the company?

A) I started working for what became the Weedon Group in 2001, back in the day when we were known as Hinton Corpak. I was taken on as a flexi worker, making corrugated pallets. Over the years I have had many roles, being a machine operator on the gluers/die cutters, working within i2i checking artwork and as an admin assistant in production. I was also an internal project manager for 10 years, looking after one of the largest packaging accounts we had. But my main role since 2007 has been purchasing corrugated sheet and any plastic parts required for Point of Sale (POS) work. It's a non-stop job.

Q) What do you enjoy most about your role and what do you find most challenging?

A) As every woman would say, we love spending money – especially when it's not yours! So this part is the most enjoyable. The most challenging part of my role is trying to keep up with the demand of jobs being raised, especially when you get four or five POS jobs at the same time, involving 30 or more parts, and with a tight lead time to work to.

Q3) What do you think makes the Weedon Group unique in the marketplace today?

A) I think the Weedon Group is special because it is a family-run business. Compared with some of the big suppliers, where you just feel like a number, we offer the personal touch, from start to finish, from enquiries to



orders being raised and jobs being delivered. There are also a lot of staff with years of experience here who work well together as a team to help solve any issues that our customers have.

Q) What makes a 'good day' for you?

A) A good day for me is hitting my own KPIs and hearing that we have managed to pull the impossible out of the bag for a customer and their order. There is nothing better than having happy customers and a happy team.

Q) What do you enjoy doing in your spare time?

A) I am a massive fan of BriSCA F1 stock car racing. Not everyone's choice but I think it's great. My favourite is Team Wainman. I also love spending time with my husband, Alan, and my children, Larissa, who is also part of the Weedon team, and my youngest daughter, Jessie, and my cute grandson, Zeon. So between them all, I don't have much time for anything else apart from the odd bit of reading. Gosh I sound old!

Winning the Battle for Sustainability

We have recently completed a thorough energy audit of our Weedon Corrugated Products factory in Audenshaw, Manchester, and have made a number of improvements to boost productivity and save energy.

Production director Paul McCormack met with environmental business advisor Laura Bramley from GC Business Growth Hub and together they came up with various ways to increase efficiency. This included upgrading machinery as well as measures such as insulating pipework and switching to LED lighting.

In response to Laura's recommendations, we have invested over £500,000 in upgrading part of our corrugator. We have also installed a new steam boiler and a LED lighting system which will lead to cost savings of nearly £29,000 per year and carbon savings of more than 100 tonnes of CO₂.

Paul commented:

"As a company, we are striving to be at the forefront of industry best practice with regard to environmental issues, and improving our energy efficiency is a key part of that process. The investments we have made have built resilience into the

company and increased productivity, so it's a win-win for us."

As a Group, we already ensure that our products are designed with the environment in mind by prioritising the use of post-consumer recycled material and materials from renewable sources, using natural printing inks and water-based coatings, and preventing over-packaging. Everything we manufacture is 100% recyclable and Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) approved if required.

Still Rolling Strong



It is hard to believe that the wet end of our corrugator was installed at Weedon Corrugated Products over five years ago. But time marches on and the machine has recently been given a new set of B flute rollers, after producing over 100 million linear metres of corrugated board in this flute profile.

The corrugator is now producing millions of square metres of board a year to feed the manufacture of Retail Ready Packaging, Point of Sale display units and corrugated packaging at our two factories. Despite how it looks to the naked eye, paper is not completely smooth and, over time, its invisible imperfections wear down the rollers – hence the need for a refit.

The corrugator was made to our specification by JS Corrugated Machinery of China, the largest corrugator manufacturer in the world. The machine produces B, C and BC double wall corrugated sheet and packaging, our environmentally-friendly range of board grades, Less-flute, E flute, EL double wall (E flute combined with Less-flute) and EB double wall in-house.

By manufacturing our own board, we have greater control over costs, quality and production schedules, which in turn enables us to provide better customer service. Since its installation, the machine has increased our production capacity by over 30%.

Meeting his Idol

It is not often that someone meets the one person in the world they would most like to meet, but for Group Operations Director Peter Weedon this did happen! Peter coaches at local Rugby Club, Barton Under Needwood, and recently the club had a very important visitor – no less than the England rugby team head coach, Eddie Jones.

Peter writes:

“It was a very cold and wet night in Staffordshire, but it was an amazing evening. Eddie devoted time to each of the mini junior age groups before spending time with me and the senior team. Eddie was such a fantastic person, who showed genuine interest in everything we are trying to achieve. I certainly picked up some really useful tips from the session.”

Following the coaching there was a question and answer session during which Peter



Peter (left) with Eddie Jones

presented a commemorative gift to the main man. What do you give the man who has everything? It had to be a Barton Under Needwood RUFC bow tie and cummerbund set, presented superbly in a Weedon Group display pack designed by our creative team in i2i europe! Eddie seemed delighted to receive his gift and Peter challenged him to wear the items during his next TV interview!

Industry Insight

Five key trends in the corrugated packaging market

A new report from Smithers – [The Future of Corrugated Packaging to 2023](#) – offers comprehensive market data for current and future demand for corrugated packaging. The report shows how the corrugated packaging market is increasing, growing around 3.7% annually and expected to reach \$300 billion in 2023.

The global corrugated packaging market is confounding some predictions that forecast a slowdown in corrugated consumption. The unexpected growth has been helped by the explosion of eCommerce, developments in digital printing technologies, and by the fact that the predicted downturn in demand in China and the banning of contaminated recycled paper stocks have not fully materialised.

The report also compares growth across various sectors, revealing, among other things, that the electrical goods end-use sector will see the highest levels of growth.

The Rise of eCommerce in the UK

Retail trade in Europe is increasingly driven by eCommerce. In the five-year period between 2014 and 2018, the average share of online sales as a proportion of retail trade in Europe went from 7.2 to 8.8%. The UK topped the European league table at 17.8% and this figure is forecast to continue rising. Within the overall UK total, clothing and household goods were the most popular items purchased through the Internet in 2019.

Weedon

Group

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