

# Looking Forward to the New Year

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### **John Weedon, Managing Director of the Weedon Group, looks forward to 2021**

I think most of us will be glad to see the back of 2020. There are two key events that have impacted adversely on business over the last year. The first is COVID-19. The second is an imminent Brexit, and uncertainty still hangs over our global trading position even now. However, I am looking forward to the New Year with cautious optimism. With or without a Brexit deal, I am confident the Weedon Group will continue to meet all our customers' needs – for the same reasons we are weathering Coronavirus restrictions.

We have operated fully throughout the pandemic, producing essential packaging for food and drink manufacturers and eCommerce packaging. With the lock-down last March, orders for secondary packaging fell sharply while demand from the online retail market

soared. In the face of a potentially business-threatening situation, we changed tack – almost overnight!

A combination of flexibility and independence meant we could respond, often within tighter than usual deadlines and sometimes with innovative new products. We rapidly expanded our eCommerce packaging range and launched an online packaging shop, Weedon Direct – at the same time as dealing with changes to traditional ways of doing business, with customers in lock-down and social distancing in both our manufacturing plants.

We are preparing for Brexit using the same flexible approach. We source our raw materials from independent paper mills around the world, so we can adapt more easily to changing circumstances. For many years we have favoured the smaller UK ports, which anticipate less disruption post-Brexit, and our

own in-house corrugator gives us the ability to control our supply of corrugated sheet board. As a result of these and other measures, we expect to be able to continue manufacturing at full capacity, even if there are initial teething problems elsewhere in the industry after 1 January.

The New Year will undoubtedly usher in a new way of doing business for the UK but we are confident that the Weedon Group will continue to provide a first class, uninterrupted service to our customers. Our flexibility and independence has allowed us to adjust rapidly to new ways of doing business during the Coronavirus pandemic and will enable us to trade successfully in a post-Brexit world. It is only by adapting to change in this way that businesses will survive the events of 2020 and rebuild the UK's shattered economy.

# 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.



## Eggs in Transit

### Customer Profile

Mindful Chef operates as a health-focused food box company, distributing vegetables, chicken, fruit and other recipe ingredients – including eggs – to arrive on the nation's doorsteps every week.

### The Problem

Until recently, each egg was individually packaged in a plastic container and then inserted in the delivery box with the other ingredients. But customers were reporting significant breakages in transit.

The company needed packaging that would guarantee its eggs would arrive undamaged. It also wanted to switch to recyclable, sustainable packaging instead of plastic, which would be more in line with its health-conscious ethos.

Mindful Chef had advertised a launch date for new egg packaging but the company was faced with an unexpected technical hitch that stopped the project moving forward. After working on the project for a year, Mindful Chef then had less than a week to find an alternative.

### The Solution

Weedon PSC's talented structural designers!

The team developed innovative one-piece packaging, made from 100% recyclable corrugated cardboard, which holds each individual egg in its own cushioned box to protect it perfectly during transportation. And they did it in time to meet Mindful Chef's launch date.

- Manufactured from eco-friendly corrugated board from sustainable sources – lightweight, compact and robust
- Clever design for quick assembly
- Because eggs do not come in identical shapes and sizes, flexible cushioning for a snug, secure fit

### The Benefits

- Speed of delivery – Weedon PSC received the enquiry from Mindful Chef on a Thursday. By Tuesday the following week the new packaging had been designed and a trial production run of the first 5000 individual egg boxes had been manufactured and delivered. The client feedback has been extremely positive and so far the trial has proved 100% successful – not a single egg has been reported as having arrived broken.
- Great customer service – Weedon PSC also visited Mindful Chef's recipe box packers to demonstrate how to assemble the boxes and ensure the launch went smoothly.

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



## What's New



### Pallet Topper for Deal Depot

Our creative agency, i2i europe, has just designed and produced an innovative pallet topper for Deal Depot's first store in Bristol to dramatically improve the appearance of stock displayed on pallets.

Deal Depot, the new low cost, warehousing store format launched recently by Asda, has its senior team based in Leeds, within Asda's head office. For many years, i2i europe has had an in-house team based here too, working full-time on Asda's Retail Ready Packaging. Recognising our team's expertise in branding and packaging, Deal Depot sought our help to help promote their Christmas stock.

Using the latest computer-aided design and cutting technology, we designed and produced a generic pallet topper with digitally printed branding. The topper significantly enhances the presentation of the pallet top, and includes cross dividers to split the pallets into four sections for different products. Made from sturdy EB corrugated cardboard, it is capable of supporting anything from bottles and cans to chocolates and toys. It is quick to assemble, easy to merchandise and can be readily repositioned in-store.

These pallet toppers have gone down really well with ASDA and Deal Depot and we have already had enquiries from Deal Depot's second store in Cardiff, which is due to open in the New Year.



# An Audience with...

## Vicky Armitage

Business Development Executive, Weedon Corrugated Products

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

A) I joined the Group in early March – that's early March BC (Before COVID!) – to develop business for Weedon Corrugated Products in Manchester. Since the pandemic hit, my role as Business Development Executive has been put on hold and I am currently trying my hand at internal sales, based at the Manchester site.

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

A) I enjoy the fast pace of internal sales. No two days have been the same. I love getting to speak with a wide variety of customers as well as liaising with our production team.

I love working every day with people who seem to make small miracles happen to get orders to our customers. My internal sales colleagues are a great team and a real pleasure to work with. The biggest challenge so far has been the fact that I'm new to the packaging industry and I'm trying to learn the role in a homeworking COVID world! Getting to know the products, systems and the packaging

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

A) Having the directors working so closely with staff means the Weedon Group can be decisive on priority issues. The approachability of the directors is felt throughout the workforce and beyond to our customer base. In addition, I have been impressed by how much positivity and effort the Weedon team puts in, pulling out all the stops for our customers.

### Q) What innovations do you see making a real difference to our customers?

A) I think, as a ban on single-use plastic creeps closer, our design team can make a real difference in filling some of that gap in the packaging process with clever structural designs using corrugated cardboard.

On a daily basis, I see my colleagues applying their knowledge to channel efficiency, for example by decreasing customer costs where possible, creating more space on a pallet or providing a completely new innovation.

### Q) What do you see as the next 'big thing' in the packaging and Point of Sale industry?

A) Sustainability has been a hot topic for some time. As large corporations and retailers worldwide are driving towards tough targets for reusable packaging, I think we can expect demand in paper/corrugated packaging to soar.

The use of eCommerce packaging was already set to increase before COVID... Now that we have seen even more home buying, I think eCommerce will heavily influence, even transform simple packaging into smart, clever designs that wow. Packaging companies may need to become more online savvy in their approach to selling their concept.

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

A) For me a good day would mean smashing my to do list, helping my colleagues with theirs and seeing our customers' expectations managed and met. And a good brew with an OXO cube!

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

A) I enjoy spending time with my family. As a former personal trainer, fitness and well-being is a huge part of my life. I love to keep fit any which way I can – running, weight training, high-intensity interval training workouts and walking. I spend much of my home-life doing handstands and headstands in the front room...

## New Wardrobe Box for Sustainable Home-Moving

We have recently launched a new environmentally-friendly wardrobe box as the centrepiece of a range of recyclable boxes and packaging which we are developing to simplify home-moving.

Our clever design means clothes hang on a reinforced hanger fitting made from solid board instead of a metal or plastic rail, so the whole box can be recycled easily at the end of its life.

The wardrobe box is manufactured from EB corrugated board, rather than the heavier BC board from which other wardrobe boxes are usually made. Innovative cardboard engineering means the new lightweight wardrobe is structurally as strong as traditional boxes without the need to use metal or plastic. As a result, our box packs flatter and is smaller and lighter to carry but can still take up to 20kg of clothes. The box is also easy to assemble from flat-pack.

The wardrobe box has been developed in collaboration with our strategic partner in Europe, THIMM Display, and we have sole rights to market it in the UK. It is available as individual items or in packs of five and will soon be available to buy from [Weedon Direct](#).

Group Creative Manager, Eddie Perry, comments:

"Existing wardrobe boxes usually include a metal or plastic bar from which to hang your clothes, which makes the boxes a recycling nightmare. But all the elements of our new wardrobe box are manufactured from corrugated cardboard, so the whole thing can be recycled easily after use.

"Our box also packs flatter and is lighter and easier to carry, making it much easier to manage."



# Too Much of Good Thing



Here is just one example of what is happening on a mammoth scale across the country in the run-up to Christmas. Pre-COVID, Christmas decorations arrived at retailers in bulk packaging for display in store. This year, shoppers are buying many more products online. They do not always arrive in optimal packaging!

Kaz Worton-Casey ordered three sachets of £1 “reindeer food” from an online retailer to decorate her presents. But the mother of two was left stunned when the three-inch packets, which would have fit easily together in one envelope, turned up in three separate cardboard boxes, each cushioned with more wrapping inside.

Initially the hospice nurse, from Worthing, West Sussex, laughed at how ridiculous the packaging was, but has since hit out at the retailer for the unnecessary waste created.

Packaging reduction is something we in the Weedon Group feel very strongly about so we are launching a competition to find the worst example of over packaging. Watch our social media to see how you can win a Fortnum and Mason Christmas hamper!

## Industry Insight

### Concern grows over waste packaging from online shopping boom

According to a [report](#) by CGTN news channel, a surge in online buying during lock-down has also led to vast amounts of packaging. This in turn has raised questions about whether it is all really necessary and sparked concern that too much of it is still not being recycled.

With a second lock-down and non-essential shops closed, consumers are ordering products online more than ever. When a parcel arrives on our doorstep, it is not unusual to have to unwrap multiple layers of plastic and cardboard protecting just one, small item. Local councils are reporting collecting record amounts of waste for recycling this year.

But environmental campaigners say the current UK recycling infrastructure is not meeting everyday household needs. Daniel Webb, founder of Everyday Plastic, a

campaign group that conducted a survey on household waste during the first national lock-down, said a significant proportion is still sent to landfill, gets incinerated or is sent overseas.

“Sadly, only 5% would end up getting recycled here in this country. When we talk about recycling, we can see it as part of the solution, but it isn’t the main solution. What we need to do is reduce what we use, what we throw and encourage a reuse and refill culture.”

The ultimate solution would be a change in consumer habits. For an increasing number of companies, an environmentally friendly delivery method is a selling point to attract conscientious customers, as well as being an overall ethical goal. Corrugated cardboard is an effective alternative to plastic packaging for many products and the careful use of corrugated, with efficient structural design to reduce packaging, can minimise its use – and the amount which goes to waste – even further.

### Consumers want to be more sustainable

An article in [Internet Retailing](#) describes how over a third of UK shoppers are demanding greener products – and are prepared to pay more for them.

According to research from E.ON, the coronavirus pandemic seems to have caused a major shift in consumer behaviour, with 36% of British consumers now buying more from companies with strong environmental credentials, and 34% of them knowingly paying extra for greener products and services. A further four out of every five shoppers say they are planning to buy goods and services from businesses they know have made a concerted effort to be environmentally-friendly.

On average, consumers reported they are willing to pay 3% more for goods that are sustainable, with consumers most likely (33%) to demand sustainability in the food and drink area.

## Weedon

Group

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