



More Bang for your Bucks

John Weedon, Managing Director of the Weedon Group, considers developing technologies and new trends in eCommerce packaging.

The sudden recent growth in online retail, driven by changes in consumer behaviour, partly but not entirely due to the COVID pandemic, has not just increased the volume of packaging being produced. It has raised the bar for eCommerce packaging.

Innovative packaging design and new technology means you could now be getting a whole lot more than just protection for your product in transit! Your choice of packaging can impact everything from shipping costs to the customer experience, from brand development to the sustainability of the planet!

Sustainability

Corrugated cardboard offers a flexible, environmentally-friendly alternative to plastic packaging and, by optimising the design, we can reduce the amount of materials required, which can lower production and transportation costs as well as reduce environmental impact.

Putting it simply, packaging is getting smaller – because smaller means lighter, which is cheaper to post. Smaller also means less materials consumed in making the packaging, which is more sustainable. Good

packaging designers can reduce the layers of packaging through clever structural engineering and using the right materials. They can reduce the weight of the corrugated board used, without compromising performance. And they can make sure their packaging fits the product without space or void fill – a process called right-sizing, which we in the Weedon Group have been pioneering for several years. (As an added plus, packaging specifically designed to fit the contents snugly is more durable.)

One of the side effects of the substitution of alternative board weights with different properties is the growth in testing facilities. Customers need reassurance that new lighter or cheaper boards will still provide sufficient protection before bulk production gets underway, so we have invested to enhance our in-house testing facilities.

Ease of assembly

The labour involved in packing goods for shipment can represent a sizeable cost in an online retail operation. The packaging used must therefore be quick to put together. So we have introduced a box that we have nicknamed Dave, which is super-quick to assemble – considerably faster than crashlock boxes – and easy to close, with peel & seal tape top and bottom.

If, however, a retailer is shipping many different items, generic, flexible packaging

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Design Focus
Making the Most of Online Retail Packaging

Get creative to win a £100 Amazon voucher!

An Audience with...
Niamh Hickman

A New Safety Record

More New Equipment for eCommerce Packaging

What's New
A Pre-filled First for M&S

Easier European Distribution through European Packaging Team

may be a practical solution. For this situation, we have introduced Flexie-mailer, our eco-friendly, flexible alternative to one-trip plastic. Clever design means the same packaging can expand from envelope to pop-up mailer to accommodate items of different sizes – anything from documents to a host of awkwardly shaped products.

In both these cases, innovative structural design is the key factor. Packaging for eCommerce does not have to fulfil all the functions of traditional retail packaging. Instead it should meet the specific needs of online retail. Dave, for instance, includes multiple additional features to suit online retailing including a flat top and bottom, which provides a good surface for attaching labels, makes it easy to use on roller-veyors and increases stability when stacking on pallets.

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Easy opening

With a significant proportion of online orders being returned, the opportunity to reuse the original packaging for the return journey is also an important environmental consideration. The design of the packaging and the judicious use of self-seal and ripper-tape strips make for easy opening and means the product can be repackaged securely and conveniently, if necessary.

Experience when opening the package

But perhaps the biggest challenge affecting

potential growth in the eCommerce packaging industry is the need to compete with the High Street shopping experience. External brown packaging effectively disguises the value of the goods during transit, but the unboxing experience can leave a lot to be desired!

With top quality printing and an eye-catching design inside the box, retailers can go some way towards replicating the in-store experience at the front door. With developments in digital printing technology

there is scope too to personalise small runs of packaging for eCommerce retailers, for example, for marketing offers or competitions. Printing inside the box also offers valuable opportunities for marketing – it can advertise products or reinforce a brand message – something to which online retailers, without a physical shop window, will need to pay more attention.

Call 01543 423838 to find out how to get the most out of your eCommerce packaging.

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.



Optimising Online Retail Packaging

A Case Study for Hux Health

Customer Profile

HUX Health are a newly established on-line business supplying HUX, a powerful supplements drink that plugs the gaps in your diet with the things you need the most: fruits, vegetables and high-dosage vitamins and minerals, all in one easy-to-drink blend.

The Problem

As their products are currently only available on-line and by subscription, the company needed to develop specialist mail order packaging.

They had a number of specific goals:

- a box that reflected the company's brand identity
- packaging strong enough to withstand the rigours of transportation through the post or by courier
- an easy-to-open experience
- to give customers a premium 'at home' retail experience, which was especially

important during the lockdowns of COVID-19.

The Solution

- We designed a one-piece box that is easy to assemble with 'peel and seal' tape to fasten it. This minimises the labour and costs involved in packing.
- The box also includes a 'zipper opener' so that customers can get into the package quickly and easily, making the whole opening experience more fun.
- The box is made of clay-coated E flute corrugated board for a smoother finish and it is printed with environmentally friendly Earthinks® with a gloss varnish on both sides.
- The strong colours are very striking and reflect the overall brand image for immediate recognition.

Hux Health were delighted with the finished box which is proving equally popular with customers.



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

Get creative to win a £100 Amazon voucher!

We are launching a competition for all staff to help us to reduce our carbon footprint and save energy.

Can you design a poster that will be displayed throughout the business as a reminder to turn off any unnecessary electrical equipment? The competition is open for everyone to take part.

We would like you to design an A4 poster featuring our two new lightbulb mascots and an eye-catching message. You have until Friday 22 April to submit your design to Nikki in Manchester or Sarah in Hednesford for the chance to win a £100 Amazon voucher.



An Audience with...

Niamh Hickman,
Customer Service Project Manager for i2i europe



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

A) I have been with the Group for just under five years. I started out as an apprentice training in Pre-production, but moved up to Customer Services within i2i europe when the opportunity was given.

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

A) I enjoy pretty much everything my job involves. I get to be a team player, I get to plan and organise and, mainly, I get to communicate constantly with different people. As far as challenges go, the main thing is trying to divide my time between individual retailers. Sometimes one will need more than others, and I have to be ready to move promptly between retailers.

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

A) I think what is special is the creativity there is throughout the business. Across all areas, there is always innovation within the teams, whether it's in Point of Sale or packaging. I feel like everyone, no matter what their job, is always thinking outside the box.

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

A) For myself, I think having a good online presence will always make a difference. Everything is online now, everyone uses the Internet. Being online will attract potential

customers and show them something of the company. You grab their attention with your online presence and engage with them, and they gain confidence about the company. I think the Weedon Group has really taken advantage of that and its online presence is blooming!

Q) What do you see as the next 'big thing' or hot topic in the packaging and Point of Sale (POS) industry?

A) Sustainability will always be a 'big thing' with this industry. In fact it should always be one of the main talking points when it comes to packaging and POS. It should never be side-lined.

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

A) A good day for me is a day with lots of progression, where hard work pays off and you feel satisfied that you have done a good job for our customers. Being able to move forward throughout the working day will always be rewarding for me.

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

A) I usually just spend my time reading or drawing. I like to keep my creativity a focus in my life. (Hence the constant change of my hair colour!). But, if I'm not reading or drawing (and the weather is considerate), I will probably be out in nature, bothering some cute little creature, trying to take a semi-decent photo of it!

More New Equipment for eCommerce Packaging



We have recently installed a new Hong Jing gluer at the Weedon PSC factory, to help meet the rising demand for packaging for online retail. The machine increases our gluing capacity by 30%.

The Hong Jing will produce 4-corner glued trays and crashlock boxes and also offers straight line gluing. At 2.3 metres wide, the machine is larger than our existing two gluers, so it will extend the range of box sizes we can offer.

The Hong Jing gluer will also handle double wall corrugated board (EB and BC), enabling us to manufacture larger and stronger boxes which are suitable, for example, for transporting heavier goods such as television screens, electronics and clothing.

With an inline taping facility for double-sided tape, the Hong Jing will make the production of book wraps and twists wraps quicker and more efficient. It will also increase our taping capacity significantly, enabling us to meet the growing needs of the online retail market.

Peter Weedon, Group Operations Director of Weedon PSC, commented:

"The Hong Jing gluer is our latest acquisition to enable us to keep up with the growth in eCommerce. Over the last year or two we have introduced a range of specialised packaging for our online retail customers, which is proving very popular. We are now investing in new equipment to boost our output to meet the increased market demand.

"The purchase of the Hong Jing gluer follows the recent installation of a new high-speed digital printer and an additional die-cutter. Together this equipment forms part of our multi-million pound investment in the future of corrugated packaging."

A New Safety Record

On 4 March, Weedon Corrugated Products announced a record 500 days since their last Lost Time Accident.

This is a major achievement for all our employees and we would like to thank

everyone who helped make this happen. It is through everybody's safe working awareness that we have reached this milestone. Well done to everybody and always remember – Stay Safe.

What's New

A Pre-filled First for M&S

We helped make a real impact in M&S stores for Pancake Day, delivering three types of pre-filled shippers for a special promotion – at the same time helping M&S achieve a first! This was the first time that M&S has used pre-filled shippers on a large scale for a special event.

The retail giant was looking for a set of shippers to pull together everything for Pancake Day, to allow shoppers to pick up all their pancake ingredients and toppings from a single point of purchase. Previously M&S had used a promotional table at the front of store for seasonal events, but pre-filled shippers are more space-efficient, so more stock can be on display to customers in the same space.

Production time was limited but, because we can provide a complete in-house solution including design, manufacture, co-ordinating the co-packing and delivering direct to distribution centres, we were able to save M&S considerable time, as well as simplifying the planning between different processes. As a result, we delivered the packed shippers within two weeks from M&S placing their order.

John Weedon, Managing Director of Weedon PSC, commented:

“With this being the first time M&S had used pre-filled shippers on a large scale, they were looking for a team to guide them through the process and provide maximum support. We were able to design, print and manufacture in house, co-ordinate the co-packing and deliver direct to their distribution centres, which took the hassle out of what might otherwise have been a complicated process.

“The shippers had to carry heavy and fragile goods ranging from chocolate spread to bottles of sauce and lemon juice, so our in-house design team specified robust board and a strong structural design. We used our new Hanway digital printer to achieve high quality printing quickly and economically.

“M&S were very pleased with the result – they got maximum impact in-store, with minimum fuss! They were very keen to trial pre-filled shippers for a seasonal promotion and, after the success of the

Pancake Day shippers, I'm sure this won't be the last time they use them!”



Easier European Distribution through European Packaging Team

The Weedon Group has joined the European Packaging Team (EPT), a consortium of European corrugated packaging companies, with the aim of delivering a more sustainable, more efficient service to our customers who want to deliver in Europe.

Under the arrangement, customers of the EPT's member companies have access, through their regular supplier in their home country, to the distribution network of other members of the EPT. So packaging can be produced in the country where it is needed, avoiding the expense of transcontinental transportation.

Our acceptance brings the number of members of the EPT to seven, all of which are independent corrugated manufacturers. The other companies are based in Poland, Italy (two companies), Germany, France and Spain.

Through the EPT, our customers will be able to have their orders fulfilled in Europe, and we will manufacture packaging and displays for other EPT members whose customers require distribution in the UK.

John Weedon, Group Managing Director, commented:

“By joining the EPT, we are partnering with similar independent corrugated manufacturers across Europe. Through this collaboration we can offer our customers a faster, more efficient shipping service, which will save them significant shipping costs.

“But there is more. In the Weedon Group, we are committed to environmental protection and sustainability. As well as being good for our customers, minimising the distance their packaging needs to be transported means fewer lorries on the road, less fuel consumption and reduced carbon emissions – all of which is better for the planet too.”

Weedon

Group

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