



## So Many Positives from a Challenging Year!

**Peter Weedon, Group Operations Director, looks back on 2022**

2022 has certainly seen some huge changes in our industry as the country pulled out of periods of lock-down. We have seen a slow-down in the economy, big hikes in the cost of materials and ginormous increases in energy bills. I think we can be proud of the way we have embraced these challenges. For the Weedon Group 2022 was also a year when big changes were put in place, at both manufacturing sites, to set the bedrock for growth as we move into 2023. I would like to say a massive thank you to our teams who have embraced all this change and put the Group in such a good position.

I start with a positive that is no change! In 2022 both sites were reassessed and awarded a BRC AA rating! Great work by both teams!

One change that had a dramatic effect on the way that we operate was having a full year of 24-hour working on the corrugator in Manchester. Through some fantastic work by both planning teams, desperate calls of "we need more board – any board!" have given way to a strange but pleasant calm with the right board arriving at the right time – a brilliant platform to move forward. 24-hour working also played its part in seeing the positive downward trend in waste from the previous year.

Through Christmas 2021 Santa delivered a shiny new piece of kit to Weedon PSC. We had entered the world of digital print! From day one the positive impact on our display work was clear to see. Improvements in print

quality, improvements in supply in the Point of Sale (POS) market and, as a result, an improved offering to our POS customers.

Weedon Corrugated Products has continued to establish itself as a service-orientated supplier, building on the big strides made in supply change management. This has meant that we can offer an increasing stock and serve service with high levels of On Time in Full delivery. Again, huge credit must be given to the whole team who have embraced the changes needed to achieve this.

In addition to digital print, Weedon PSC's POS team has also seen growth in the demand for prefilled shippers. Although we say it ourselves, we really are the leaders in this market, and we are immensely proud of everything our team achieves. By the end of the year, we also saw another addition to our offering as we gained Bonded Warehouse status. The ability to co-pack alcoholic beverages under bond is something that our alcohol-based customers had been crying out for.

In Manchester it was clear that something else was changing. An ever-growing daily pile of packages waiting for the postman to collect was a very graphic demonstration of the success that is Weedon Direct. As a result of some outstanding work in the development of our online shop, we have continued to see massive growth in this area and we have established a small team, operating out of its own new area, to deal

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with the growing list of daily despatches to be made.

Back to Weedon PSC and the largest single investment the Group has ever made – a six-colour, double-sided printer in the shape of the Weipong! Again, its impact has been huge and immediate. Aimed at developing our offering to the eCommerce market, the Weipong has delivered improved print quality, without the need to double pass board! Some early work has been stunning and the ready supply of print to other parts of the manufacturing process has been very positive. The installation of the Weipong at Hednesford has also meant that we have been able to redeploy a three-colour pre-printer to Manchester to broaden our offering there.

It is clear that all areas of the Group have really moved forward in 2022 and now we look ahead to 2023. We face huge challenges in the shape of eye-watering energy costs and a subdued marketplace but, having seen the flexibility and determination of our team in 2022, I simply say "Bring It On!"

# 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.



## Peak Performance RRP

### A Case Study for Popty Bakery

#### Customer Profile

Popty Bakery is situated in Llanllechid on the outskirts of Bethesda in the Snowdonia National Park. A family-run business, Popty was founded in 1906 and has passed through the generations. Over the years, the company has grown from supplying residential customers direct into a wholesale supplier of shops and caterers across Wales.

Following market trends, the company has revised its product range to focus mainly on traditional Welsh Cakes and Bara Brith. These lines are now available throughout Wales and parts of England at various retail outlets including Aldi, Asda, Co-Op, Morrisons and Tesco.

#### The Problem

Popty was planning to launch a new product called Snowdonia Shortbread in Tesco supermarkets and needed appropriate Retail Ready Packaging.

The company wanted to capitalise on the increased popularity that Snowdonia was

enjoying as a result of the COVID travel restrictions and the growth in holidays at home. The Bakery therefore wanted the outer packaging to reflect the Welsh origins of its product and to stand out from competitors on shelves in-store.

#### The Solution

Our award-winning design team combined with top quality printing!

- Our graphic designers developed an eye-catching look for the packaging with a die-cut front edge evoking the peaks of Snowdonia, repeated in the graphics on the side of the box.
- High-quality flexo print and the use of Earthinks® environmentally-friendly inks to give strong colours so the graphics really pop on shelf.
- Our structural designers produced an outer that is easy for Popty to fill by hand and to close, minimising time and labour costs.
- We included a perforated lid which can be removed easily by stackers in store when



they put stock on the supermarket shelf, for speed of handling and to ensure the box looks good.

#### The Benefits

- We work closely with our customers to understand, identify and implement the right solutions to meet their needs.
- With a wealth of experience as the UK's leading independent manufacturer of Retail Ready Packaging, we have a range of clever ideas to make packaging quick and easy to pack, seal and open.

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

## What's New

### Making Christmas Extra Special



ASDA has recently launched its new Extra Special Christmas Hampers in boxes designed and produced by i2i europe and Weedon PSC.

The supermarket ran a small trial last year to test customer reaction, offering Extra Special

Hampers containing popular Christmas favourites online from selected stores under a click and collect service. The hampers were very well received and the retailer has therefore brought them back for 2022.

To make the hampers extra special, this year Asda took their designs to i2i to solve a complex printing issue. The retailer's design features foil blocking for the Extra Special logo, to achieve a premium finish. But the original blank size was too large to fit any foil block printer in the UK. Enter our in-house i2i structural design team to re-engineer the lid and solve the problem!

Manufactured by Weedon PSC in Hednesford, the hamper box includes a large, hinged lid and internal separators for the bottles. The lid is locked in place with a return lock. The products, which range from Extra Special chocolate and cookies to coffee and drinks, are packed into three sections with metallic

silver shredding for transit protection and a luxury look. The outer hamper case is litho-printed with an all over patterned design with the Extra Special logo blocked in silver foil on the top. Printing inside the lid delivers Asda's brand message to customers as they open the pack.

Once the packaging was produced, we packed the hampers in our own co-packing facilities, inserting a booklet inside which lists the product details and ingredients. Finally, the hampers were shipped in an outer case to protect them while passing through the supply chain.

Asda was delighted with the result, especially the ease with which the production schedule ran, with all stages of the process, from structural design through printing and manufacture to co-packing, all under one roof.



# An Audience with...

**Simone Hignett, Internal Sales Executive**

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

A) I have been with Weedon Corrugated Products in Manchester for four and a half years now. I work as an internal sales executive, supporting various accounts but predominantly Pork Farms at three sites, Veritiv, Barony and Evolution Foods. I also provide customer service for Weedon Direct.

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

A) I enjoy building my relationships with customers and, over time, I feel like they have gone from strength to strength. I also enjoy being part of team CP. We have come so far over the last few years and I'm proud to be part of that.

The thing I find most challenging is when competing demands and the fast pace of our work make the day seem chaotic, but I think these challenges have made me grow in my role and I'm stronger today for it.

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

A) We are very proud that we can adapt quickly. The team in Manchester is very responsive to demand and having our own corrugator gives us flexibility. I have seen some incredible turnarounds to meet customer expectations over the years.

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

A) I think some of the recent investment in new technology and equipment is proving

really significant. There has been such rapid development in the capabilities of the machines and what we can now produce and print and in turn achieve for our customers.

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

A) A good day for me is being able to meet customers' expectations, knowing that they are happy and continue to place further orders. It is also important to me to be working with a great team – at the end of the day we are all there for each other. Having a happy, close team is a what it's all about!

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

A) My favourite thing in the world is spending quality time with my family and friends. I am very family-orientated so, if I am not doing things with my sons, I am usually with my daughter and being bossed around by my three gorgeous grandchildren. I also enjoy walking and going out for food and catching up with my friends. I think that is very important with our busy lifestyles.

## Thinking Inside the Box

**John Weedon, Group Managing Director, looks at one of the new developments in packaging production that is likely to be a major trend in 2023.**

It's time to start thinking inside the box! For nearly 150 years since the introduction of corrugated cardboard, the packaging industry has focused almost exclusively on the outside of the box.

Packaging manufacturing has come on in leaps and bounds since the early days when everything came in plain brown boxes. Over the years, retailers have embraced opportunities to promote their brands with ever more adventurous designs, and packaging manufacturers can now deliver graphics in glorious technicolour. But, until recently, the focus was still one-sided.

In the last year or so, however, there has been a major change. Packaging designers are now looking at what they can do with the inside of the box.

Driven by the surge in online shopping and the need to try to replicate some of the in-store shopping experience on the doorstep, eRetailers are looking to create the 'Wow factor' for their customers when they open

their online purchases. eCommerce packaging is no longer simply a means of protecting a product in transit. It is widely recognised now that packaging can do a whole lot more.

Printing inside the box 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 if they are to retain customers. 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.

Cost has always been a big factor in decisions about printing the reverse of the packaging. Retailers have had to toss up whether the potential benefits are worth the cost of doubling the print requirement.

But the latest developments in print technology are now opening up a world of opportunity. For example the new six-colour HQPP (High Quality Post Print) Weipong



flexo-printer, which we have recently installed at our Hednesford site, will print both sides of a box in one pass (four colours on one side, two on the reverse). Crucially this reduces significantly the cost of printing inside the box, and our customers are being quick to see the implications.

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Online retailers can use the inside of the packaging to create an exciting unboxing experience. Alternatively they could print convenient assembly instructions for their packers inside the box, or include installation instructions for the customer as part of the packaging, thereby saving the expense of printing and inserting a separate quick-start leaflet.

In-store retailers gain an additional chance to promote their brand identity on Retail Ready Packaging – as the carton is gradually emptied on-shelf, attractive branding is revealed. Printing inside the box on primary packaging can be an effective means of ensuring that retailers' packaging – and thus their advertising – remains in the home long after the contents of the box have gone. How many 6-year-old football fans are going to let mum throw away the box their birthday cake arrived in if the inside of the box is printed with a pitch for table top football?

## Weedon Corrugated Products Awarded Top Food Hygiene Certificate



Packaging Materials

**CERTIFICATED**

For the third consecutive year, Weedon Corrugated Products of Audenshaw, Manchester, has achieved the BRC (British Retail Consortium) Global Standard (BRCGS) for Packaging Materials, passing its external audit at level AA.

This means that our corrugated manufacturing processes are certified as safe and hygienic for retail and non-direct food applications and our customers can therefore be 100% confident that our corrugated packaging for the food and drink markets is safe, legal and of high quality.

BRCGS is globally recognised across both food and non-food categories and operates the most rigorous third party certification scheme of its type, helping to build confidence in the

Another exciting development is the ability to apply a coating in place of one of the inks. As the packaging industry seeks to move away from plastic, the message is getting through that corrugated cardboard offers a flexible, environmentally-friendly substitute. A coating applied to the cardboard to preserve fresh produce or protect automotive components offers a greener and more cost-effective alternative to additional plastic packaging. The ability to add this coating on the inside of the box, in one pass, at the same time as the outside is being printed, increases speed to market and minimises cost.

As retailers look to maximise the impact they make on their customers, reduce the cost of their packaging and help safeguard the planet, we can expect printing inside the box to become a major trend this coming year.

supply chain. For nearly 25 years this Global Standard has set the benchmark for good manufacturing practice. Adopted by over 22,000 sites in more than 130 countries, its standard is accepted by 70% of the top 10 global retailers and 50% of the top 25 manufacturers.

Paul McCormack, Production Director at Weedon Corrugated Products, commented:

"We are committed to providing a top quality service to our customers. BRC provides the industry-wide benchmark for food safety and quality and the standard is fast becoming a minimum requirement for major retailers.

"This accreditation relies on the efficiency of our systems and processes and our attention to detail. Level 'AA' is the pinnacle for us to aim at to support our customers in food manufacture and processing and we are therefore delighted that our high standards and the hard work of all our staff have been recognised in this way."

## Enhancing Flexo Output at Manchester

Following the installation of our new six-colour Weipong flexo-printer at Weedon PSC, we have relocated one of our smaller flexo-printers from our Hednesford site to Weedon Corrugated Products in Manchester. This will allow us to provide a wider range of high quality print there and to serve our customers more effectively.

The TCY will support our existing flexo-printers at Weedon Corrugated Products in meeting increasing demand. But its extra capabilities mean we will also now be able to run three-colour print for die-cut packaging on both our sites, whereas previously we had only been able to run two-colour die-cut work in Manchester. In addition, we can now print E-flute in Manchester for the first time.

The TCY uses doctor blade technology which enables the machine to control the amount of ink that goes onto the board so its print output is very high definition. It is also very fast and includes a state-of-the-art feeder and stacker. So, as a result of installing the TCY at Manchester, we will be able to offer higher quality print and faster run-time, making us more efficient and giving us greater flexibility to meet rising customer demand.

We wish all our customers and staff a **Happy Christmas** and a prosperous **New Year.**



# Weedon

Group

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