

Meeting the Green challenge

How packaging can help to reduce environmental impact

Many retailers are under increasing pressure to visibly reduce their environmental impact and packaging is often perceived as any 'easy win'. Here Duo's commercial director Anthony Brimelow examines both where the pressure is coming from and how brands can adapt their packaging policy to meet it.

Many of our customers have been keen to operate in an environmentally responsible manner for many years, but over the past 18 months there's been a real intensification of this. Our retail customers tell us that they are reacting to consumer demand and these on-the-ground observations are backed up by the figures from the statisticians.

A report by Perception Research Services tell us that broadly speaking UK consumers welcome environmentally friendly packaging, with 65% noticing the associated messaging and 71% willing to pay more for it. This puts the UK consumers ahead of Germany, India and USA, in terms of environmental sensitivity.

These figures add to the genuine desire 'to do the right thing' that many of our customers have and make investing in environmentally friendly packaging a business imperative; and that's before we even look at the impact of EU legislation.

The EU has signalled its clear intention to impose a 40% legally binding reduction in greenhouse gasses by 2016 which, coupled with predictions that electricity prices will increase by half over the same time span, will have a major impact on many businesses. Many astute business leaders are acting now, and at Duo we are acting in tandem to help them prepare for this change.

Selecting the Right Sustainable Solution for your Brand

We have always taken a responsible approach to minimising the environmental impact of the products we produce, but in April we took this a step further and launched our new offering Duo Green. DuoGreen helps brands wanting or needing to improve the environmental credentials of their packaging learn about the sustainable, environmentally low impact, packaging products and solutions available. As well as putting the spotlight on 'green' products and services, developed using Duo's expertise, we also hope DuoGreen will become a hub for sharing expertise and promoting new sustainable technologies.

Key for a business looking to reduce the environmental impact of its business is to review the packaging they use. Not just the packaging itself but consider its entire life cycle, which begins with the packaging's design and ends with how used packaging is processed. However, we often find clients just aren't sure what alternative packaging options are available or which innovations are credible. The lack of certification of the products or services which claim to be 'green' has resulted in a nervousness to make a change, but that's where we can help.



Packaging Product Lifecycle: From design to disposal

Optimising product range and deliveries

At Duo, we minimise a packaging products lifecycle impact by offering clients regular onsite packaging audits where we analyse the packaging used and product range shipped and advise on the best range of packaging to minimise waste, environmental impact and cost. We also implement pro-active stock management which, combined with the short lead times of our UK-based manufacturing operation, means we can forward plan transportation to deliver products in bulk, thereby reducing road mileage.

Recycling and re-using waste

When it comes to helping customers dispose of used packaging we've built on our existing investment in closed loop recycling and introduced another closed-loop recycling machine. We pick, up, weigh, and pay for used packaging when we drop off new supplies and return it to our plant for processing. The recycled polythene can be used in several ways – it could be included in the middle layers of co-extruded (or layered) polythene, thus reducing the amount of virgin polythene used, or it can be used to make 100% recycled content packaging products.

Previously the uses for 100% recycled polythene were restricted because of the smell (think bin bags) associated with it. This smell is caused by contaminants but research and development conducted in our quality control lab has allowed us to eliminate this and we can now offer 'odour-free' 100% recycled content packaging products. This makes the product suitable for distributing porous goods such as clothing, which means brands that previously wouldn't have been able to use polythene with such a high recycled content, can now do so and reduce consumption of natural resources.

Carbon Reducing Packaging Material

A ground breaking new innovation which delivers substantial reduction to a brand's carbon footprint is Green PE, a thermoplastic resin made entirely from sugarcane ethanol. We have recently become the first UK-based manufacturer to produce mailing bags using Green PE meaning we can now offer customers a product which is created from 100% renewable material, which is also 100% recyclable and reduces greenhouses gases in the atmosphere

What is particularly exciting about Green PE is its environmental credentials extend all the way down the production chain, with each kilogram of green plastic produced using this method saving over 2kgs of CO₂, when compared to the production of conventional oil-based polythene.

These new technological developments, coupled with a thoughtful approach to product lifecycle offer a real opportunity for retailers to work with their packaging suppliers to reduce the environmental impact of their packaging. The business benefits of this are significant, allowing companies to prepare for the legislative changes which are coming over the next few months, communicate a positive message to their customers and help towards achieving their environmental targets.

Visit Duogreen.co.uk for more sustainable solutions to reduce the environmental impact of your packaging

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