

# small steps

A RECENT SURVEY SHOWS THAT OVER 90 PER CENT OF CONSUMERS CONSIDER EASILY-RECYCLABLE PACKAGING IMPORTANT

by Steve Mallet, director, Curtis Packaging and 3D Creative



Mallet: 'Modern technologies, materials, and the right supplier successfully marry sustainability with luxury'

Perhaps this is hardly surprising given the current focus and attention on environmental issues and greener practices.

The accusation of over-packaging is often levelled at luxury products such as cosmetics, toiletries, gifts, and confectionery, which are viewed the worst offenders by consumers.

The dilemma for brands and retailers is packaging that tempts and entices consumers but remains environmentally friendly.

These two criteria have been perceived as conflicting in the past but this is no longer the case. Modern technologies, materials, and the right supplier successfully marry sustainability with luxury.

The most eco-friendly of all packaging materials is board for either primary or secondary uses. It is easily recycled and, with the correct choices of substrates and supplier, will bring a strong consumer message of environmental responsibility.

It goes without saying that the first step is to select material from Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified sources (fsc-uk.org.uk). The FSC provides global standards for forest management, covering a balance of environmental, social, and economic features, giving a full chain of custody on the raw materials.

## SCRUTINISE THE STRUCTURE

Look closely too at the construction of the carton. Over-sized, over-weight, or over-engineered isn't only environmentally unfriendly but costly as well.

The challenge is to balance shelf appeal and product protection with sound 'green' policies.

It's worth speaking to the experts in carton design; specialists who really understand every facet of box creation and production. Even a few minor changes to the carton design could save significantly on costs and bring kudos on greater sustainability.

There's little point in taking a great environmental substrate and spoiling it with oil-based inks and spirit-based varnishes. These contain metallic substances that are harmful both to human health and the environment.

Conventional printing inks are petroleum-based, and used with alcohol-based solvents. VOCs (Volatile Organic Compounds) are emitted as alcohol and petroleum evaporate, which represent environmental pollution and a health hazard.

Shelf appeal and environmental responsibility go hand in hand with totally-recyclable packaging employing both vegetable printing inks and water-based finishes



NUDE  
NUDE  
ADVANCED  
PROBIOTIC  
SKINCARE



Nude Skincare uses biodegradable cartons made from FSC-certified stock to further cut its carbon footprint

Traditional inks emit 25 to 40 per cent VOCs when they dry, while rates for soya and vegetable-based inks are as low as two-to-four per cent. So, vegetable inks and water-based varnishes have to be the best choice for the environment, and provide top-quality results worthy of the most luxurious brand.

A little lateral thinking can bring extra life to the packaging by creating a container that can be reused. The Inside Out Box, for instance, has been developed as an on-shelf pack, printed both sides, and is designed to unfold and reverse for after-use as a gift or trinkets box.

This increases the pack's longevity, and keeps the brand name to the forefront for even longer.

## CHECK OUT SUPPLIERS

Recycling doesn't stop with the packaging itself. Check out the recycling practices of your chosen supplier. For example, does it hold ISO 14001?

This is the internationally-accepted standard that sets out the steps to put in place an effective Environmental Management System (EMS).

The standard is designed to address the delicate balance between maintaining profitability and reducing environmental impact.

The beauty of using sustainable products is that, even during production and post-production, most materials can be recycled.

Constantly reviewing current practices can also come up with remarkable solutions.

At Curtis Packaging, for instance, the latest technology has been put in place to collect and pulp off-cuts – reducing our carbon footprint by an amazing 80 per cent.

'Reduce, Recycle, and Reuse' has become the well-known mantra for sustainability. Lesser known, perhaps, is 'Eliminate' – which, for retail, usually relates

to wasteful packaging and production practices. Everyone's nightmare and one of the most wasteful and costly episodes is when a print run is aborted.

## PROTOTYPES PRODUCED

3D Creative has invested in the latest cutting-edge technology to create inexpensive, lifelike prototypes and test runs, minimising the risks of production problems and the resulting waste of resources.

This eliminates the need for expensive set-up costs for short runs or, indeed, the time-consuming and costly process of hand-made prototypes – saving on materials, time, and costs. It's the perfect solution to road-test the packaging with all stakeholders – prior to production economically, responsibly, and quickly.

Sustainability is no longer merely the focus of natural or organic brands.

It's an issue that affects every retail product, and – with 66 per cent of consumers saying products are over-packed and assuming that packaging is bad for the environment – it has never been more important to embrace eco-friendly materials.



Neals Yard Remedies has adopted the Inside Out Box