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Packaging World – 15 years young

There's always something going on at Packaging World, the latest event being the purchase of a new eight-colour flexo press, as the company reaches its 15th anniversary.

GILL LOUBSER tracks this 15-year success story.

THE best thing that ever happened to Dean Gianni was being fired from LR Plastics in 1994, an event that propelled him into establishing Packaging World in 1995. So explains the company's irrepressible MD, when asked what caused him to move out of the comfy corporate sector and plunge into the nerve-racking world of entrepreneurship.

Now celebrating the 15th anniversary of the company's inception, Dean remarks happily that it was the 'best move he ever made'.

It's not surprising that he's smiling. Since those early days – when he operated from an area behind his house – Packaging World has gained a sterling reputation as a reliable producer of high-quality flexible packaging, both reelstock and bags, with an

unswerving focus on meeting customers' precise needs – for instance, although concentrating on flexible packaging, Packaging World also helps customers to source corrugated boxes, folding cartons and labels from Shave & Gibson.

With Dean Gianni and Chris Burnand as joint shareholders – and spurred on by exponential growth and an ever-expanding customer base in the food, beverage, confectionery and general merchandise markets – this privately-owned company has a proud record of providing exceptional products and maintaining world-class service levels.

Until now, the company has operated a somewhat outdated printing press that suits some products. 'Our initial business model was to source printed material from other printers,' Dean explains. 'In fact, we have an exclusive agreement with CTP flexibles in Cape Town to supply the high-quality printed substrates that our press can't handle. We don't compete in the market but complement each other where possible,' he adds.

However, despite this symbiotic relationship, and the exemplary quality of printed material supplied by CTP flexibles, Dean and Chris decided to invest in their own eight-colour flexo press. 'The new in-line press will be used to produce material for niche market segments such as laminates, stable films, customised print runs and broker orders,' Dean explains.

This sophisticated press features a maximum web width of 660mm; and cylinder repeats from 190 to 600mm at speeds up to 150m/min. It also has automatic register control via a touchscreen.

'In addition, we operate our own high-speed slitters – enabling us to slit material for our own use as well as for other companies,' Dean adds.

But printing and slitting aside, the main focus at Packaging World has always been on bag-making, using a battery of Vega bagmakers (supplied by Indian company, Mamata) to produce bags, quad bags and pouches between 60mm and 350mm wide in a wide array of styles, at speeds up to 120 bags/min. A more recent focus is laser perforation for modified atmosphere packaging.

On the expansion trail

The first rudimentary premises were soon outgrown and by 2001 Packaging World had moved to its current home in Westmead, Durban.

A further expansion programme in 2007 resulted in an impressive 1 000m² positive airflow production area, and the installation of a third Vega bagmaker.

Today, with a staff of 32, and growing, Packaging World continues to expand. 'We're particularly pleased with our sales into the rest of Africa, and we're focusing on that as a growth area,' Dean explains.

Packaging World converts some 65 tons/month of BOPP (sourced almost entirely from Fima Films).



Back in 2006, Packaging World's two go-ahead partners, Chris Burnand and Dean Gianni, installed their first Vega bag-maker. Today the company operates three such machines.



Chris Burnand, with the company's third Vega bagmaker installed in 2007.



Dean Gianni and Chris Burnand with their pride and very costly joy – a sealed CO₂ LaserSharp perforator for flexible MAP bags – installed in 2009.



In 2007, Packaging World's production facility was expanded to 1 000m² and by then boasted three Vega bagmakers – all working hard to keep pace with demand.

'All the best to Dean, Chris and the team at Packaging World and congratulations on your new acquisition.'

Anesh Pillay, Hi-Tech Inks, Durban

Move to MAP

In late 2008, a major investment resulted in Packaging World's entering the modified atmosphere packaging (MAP) field.

As Dean Gianni quipped at the time, answering P&PM's questions about this expensive move, 'Why would anybody spend a couple of million rand to fill a perfectly good PP bag with holes?'

The answer is less flippant. Technical innovation, namely the micro-perforation of flexible packaging, has revolutionised the way processors and retailers prepare perishable foods in search of that holy grail called shelf life.

MAP's shelf-life extension brings important supply chain benefits – ie greater intervals between distribution drops, reduced wastage and improved product acceptance and choice. The upshot has been transformation in the supermarket and a consumer who can't imagine life without the convenience of fresh-cut, pre-prepared salads and vegetables.

'The sector has enjoyed buoyant growth over the past decade and is ripe with opportunity,' says Dean. 'Previously there was only one MAP bag producer in South Africa, leaving room for a competitor with a sharp pencil, offering excellent products and turnaround times,' he maintains. 'Our key focus, however, is on servicing the rest of Africa as that's where the market is.'

Dean points out that the local market is not big enough to accommodate two MAP bag makers, so his intended customers have always been the many fresh produce and flower exporters in southern and eastern Africa who manufacture on behalf of British retailers, but currently import packaging from Europe. 'This is where we have an attractive advantage with our pricing and delivery,' he comments.

'Thanks to Dean and his team at Packaging World for always making every effort to move mountains for us.'

Sean Klusener, GM, Lacey's Distribution

So Packaging World commissioned its new MAP packaging line, at whose heart is sealed CO₂ LaserSharp technology imported from the US. Mounted over a film rewinder, this cutting-edge, system offers unlimited choice of laser-perforated holes for MAP applications where a controlled vapour exchange is required, as well as laser-scored patterns for easy-open or easy-pour features. It has many benefits over mechanical scoring or perforation methods, says Dean.



High performance from the LaserSharp system means a first-class product and fast delivery times.

As the machining process is software controlled, process flexibility is significantly higher. Processing cycles can be rearranged or changed 'on the fly' as required. In addition, the process is non-contact, super-fast and clean, with low damage to film material.

Selective scoring enables easy-open packaging features while maintaining barrier properties; and selective perforating enables breathable packaging with precision gas and vapour transmission. The LaserSharp technology allows high-speed perforating (300m/min) without the use of consumables.

According to Dean, Packaging World's goal is to become the largest independent MAP operation – specifically bags for fresh produce – in Africa.

'From humble beginnings, Packaging World has grown into a world class film converter with specialised bag making capabilities and we're happy to be a partner.'

Marlin Moonsamy, Fima Labels product specialist

Packaging World has trademarked two names for its high-clarity, anti-mist MAP packs, namely SteamPack for produce that can be microwaved in the pack, and FreshPack for fresh items.

The imported polypropylene film is impregnated with anti-mist and anti-bacterial agents, and Dean believes this is yet another advantage for his product: 'Most MAP film's anti-mist coating has an alcohol base, whereas ours is actually incorporated into the film. This should please Halaal customers,' he explains.

FreshPack and SteamPack can be supplied as film or in bags, printed in up to eight colours and with a wide range of personalised perforation patterns. The

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flexibility and speed of Packaging World's technology means it's geared to be a reactive supplier with short lead times. 'We can meet just-in-time production requirements that often characterise the sector, where there might be a bumper crop today and none tomorrow,' remarks Dean.

Scientific back up

The packaging of fresh produce is far from simple. There is no one-size-fits-all MAP solution as many inherent and external factors affect shelf life.

'It's a very scientific field and you can't expect to be a successful vendor without offering the required R&D input to customers. Every product is different and every customer's needs are different,' says Dean. 'We've linked up with the Department of Agriculture at KZN University in Pietermaritzburg, which acts as our technical arm. They trial and test every product and recommend optimal perforation patterning. Essentially, we envisage ourselves acting as a technical food services company that works in partnership with producers and retailers to find solutions to all issues affecting fresh produce shelf life,' he says.

'We're also in the process of installing a dedicated costing and sales production program to streamline our entire operation – because with growth comes the necessity for constant quality and production improvements.'



MAP demands customised scientific input and for this reason Packaging World has partnered with KZN University as its R&D arm.

Acquiring the BRC ticket

If they wanted to get into the export market, the partners soon recognised the need to up their game by taking the long and challenging road to British Retail Consortium (BRC) certification. The company's transformation to BRC compliance was undertaken with the guidance of Grant Wareham & Associates, as well as a full-time, in-house technical expert. This rigorous international standard requires the adoption and implementation of HACCP, a food hygiene management system; a documented and effective Quality Management System; and control of the factory environment, product, process and personnel.

'With export opportunities comes a demand for food safety certification. BRC is both demanding and expensive to implement and required extensive renovations to our premises, as well as a complete re-engineering of how we think and operate. But, eventually, after the hard work, we passed our audit in early 2009,' relates an understandably proud Dean.

Social conscience

But it's not only about hard-headed business at Packaging World – the softer side shows in its corporate social investment programme.

As reported earlier this year, Packaging World recently joined forces with Future Life to make a difference to the lives of the children at Langelihle Crèche in Hammersdale, by donating thousands of Future Life meals.

Congratulations from Mamata

Since 2005, Packaging World has been an esteemed customer of Mamata Machinery, the flagship company of US\$5-million Mamata group and India's largest manufacturer and exporter of bag makers, pouch makers and wicketers.

'Dean Gianni's vision and his ability to think ahead are the attributes that keep Packaging World a step ahead of its competitors, and make it one of the most innovative flexible packaging companies in South Africa. We congratulate Packaging World on its 15th anniversary,' says Mamata's Dipen Patel.





Working with a committed team has been critical to the success of Lacey's range of Disney-licensed lucky packets. Dean Gianni (left) of Packaging World and Greg Petzer (right) of ACF Labels: DLC Pack examine some examples with Lacey's MD Yusuf Mansoor.



According to Dean, the donation to Langelihle Crèche is just one example of his company's social investment programme. 'We believe it's important to do more than just manufacture and supply world-class flexible packaging. We're committed to being good corporate citizens and hope to contribute to a better society by actively engaging in social investment,' Dean comments.

Following the decision to support the crèche, Packaging World looked to its customer base to source a product that would benefit the children. 'The obvious choice was Future Life,' he continues. 'It's an energy-boosting nutritional meal fortified with vitamins and minerals.'

The message is clear: 'We hope that by giving the children one nutritious meal every day we'll provide a development initiative that will have long-lasting effects in the broader social environment.'

Passionate and motivated

By way of a conclusion, Chris Burnand remarks that Packaging World's customers attribute much of their success to a winning partnership with their packaging supplier. This, in turn, he ascribes to the team's solid understanding of the packaging industry, and being able to add real value to customers' businesses through joint market insights.

'We're passionate and motivated,' are Dean Gianni's last words. 'We're inspired by opportunities to surpass customers' expectations and our aim is to foster lasting relationships. As a team, we have defined our company's vision and our future growth path is clear. We're investing heavily to deliver world-class products and services.'

'Dean has quickly realised the advantage that our new F&K press has over our competitors, and we have forged a strong relationship moving forward. Good luck to the Packaging World team for the next landmark anniversary.'

Gary Seale, GM, CTP flexibles.

Agent required: Cape Town

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