HOW TO GET PACKAGING RIGHT FOR PROFITABLE E-COMMERCE GROWTH

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The explosive growth in e-commerce over the past year has meant that many businesses have had to scale up their operation in double-quick time. The speed and responsiveness of a lot of companies has been awesome, and has helped them make the most of an unprecedented growth in online sales. All too often though, the hidden downside is that this rapid growth has left many businesses with packaging set-ups and processes that could be much slicker, quicker and cost effective. And with packaging that could be far smarter in protecting products and delighting customers when they arrive on their doorstep. So there's never been a better time to step back and get some expert insights into how you can make every element of your packaging work as hard as you do – and help your profits grow as fast as your sales.

We think we're well placed to help, as we understand the challenges of scaling up a business as well as anyone. Hazel 4D started back in 1979 when Garth Christie, our Chairman, sold packaging from his attic and cellar in Leeds – but we've come a long way since then, and are now leaders in transit packaging supply, packaging consultancy services, solutions and machinery, working for some of the world's most recognised brands. Today, our brilliant team includes many technical consultants and packaging technologists with over 20 years of specialist experience. We asked some of our team to share their top tips for any e-commerce operator wanting to make sure they're fully prepared for the next stage of growth:

RYAN CANE

One of our expert e-commerce consultants, suggests you benchmark your packing processes against the best in the business

'Do you really understand how your packing processes and speed compare with those of industry leaders? Just imagine how much more profitable your business would be if you could get an insight into their performance – and match it. Years of experience means that H4D consultants really know our way around e-commerce packing operations and we reckon we've come across pretty much every challenge out there! Nothing gives us more satisfaction than sharing our experiences to help make our customers more profitable, so we're on hand to carry out a free audit of your current packaging processes – chatting to you about the challenges you're experiencing and assessing the performance of the products, processes and equipment you're using, and the results you're getting. We'll quickly be able to identify all sorts of opportunities to improve – whether it's optimising the layout of packing stations to streamline throughput, training staff to improve accuracy, or specifying packaging that is quicker and easier to use. We pride ourselves on always being able to find a way to save you time, money and hassle'

ROY HARDING

Our Purchasing Director, asks whether you're using the smartest way of making sure you always have the right packaging to hand?

'As a Purchasing professional I know that nothing causes more headaches than an operation grinding to a standstill because you're out of stock of the packaging product you need to keep things moving. Over the past year, many of our customers have found that demand has been harder to predict than ever, which has given them all sorts of challenges. Luckily, we've been able to help using our tried and tested Total Packaging Management Service. TPM takes away the burden of worrying about stock levels, ordering, paperwork and storage space because whether customers buy from our main range, or buy bespoke products, we store everything here, make regular deliveries of the stock they need, run a monthly stock take and issue a single monthly invoice for the quantities they've used. And if there is a sudden peak, no problem – packaging top-ups can be arranged at just 24 hours' notice and there's no delivery costs to pay. It couldn't be simpler, and in the words of one happy customer "The reason why I chose, and stay with Hazel 4D is because of the service level and peace of mind it gives me."

LEE ARMSTRONG

Our Marketing Director, wonders whether your packaging is as eco-friendly as your products:

'The environmental impact of single-use plastics and waste pollution is a hot topic these days – so there are few bigger blunders than using packing materials that can't be recycled, or using more packaging than is needed. It's no longer just eco-minded customers who don't want their purchases to come wrapped like a Russian doll – 80% of consumers are bothered by oversized packaging. That's why we work tirelessly to source packaging that puts a lower ecological burden on the planet – with 93% of the packaging consumables we sell being fully recyclable. And there are so many other ways we've helped our customers improve the sustainability of their packaging – from making simple product switches, like all-paper protective mailers, or paper tape, to recommending clever solutions that dramatically reduce the amount of packaging they use – cutting plastic use by up to 80%'

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SIMON ROE

One of our most experienced packaging consultants has the final word (as ever) – he asks is your packaging 100% effective in protecting products in transit?

'As consumers, we've all had that sinking feeling when an eagerly anticipated purchase arrives in battered packaging and we know we're going to have to return it. So it's not surprising that over 30% of us won't repeat a purchase if packaging has been defective. This poses a real challenge for e-commerce brands – as the average parcel is dropped countless times in transit. Luckily, we specialise in developing e-commerce packaging solutions that ensure that consumers receive their parcels in perfect condition every time, no matter how far they've travelled. I'm proud to say that we've even managed to make huge reductions in damages for our clients selling the most fragile of items, like mirrors and lamps – so that consumers are delighted rather than disappointed when their parcel arrives. We're now more than ready for our next challenge…'