

Article Published in Retail Packaging Magazine – Circa 2010

A Tale of Love Lost...Then Found

Many years ago, a close friend of mine was involved in a relationship with a lady from Cheshire. (No slur is intended on other ladies from Cheshire). After several months of courtship, my friend became totally besotted with her and she moved into his house. Once installed in his house she embarked on a crusade to single handedly remove all traces of his previous life from the home and he spent a small fortune replacing furniture, carpets, curtains and of course they had to have 'His and Hers' towels and toothbrushes and little wicker baskets filled with heavily fragranced pot pourri in every room.

Once the transformation was complete and his bank balance had been severely diminished, she ran off with a foreign gentleman, leaving him distraught and penniless. Several years later, he had slowly rebuilt his life, his finances were back in order, he had a new set of friends and although in quieter moments he still reminisced about the love he had lost he felt at ease with life.

Then one day, there was a knock at the door and stood before him was the former love of his life. He was still deeply attracted to her and the old feelings and emotions that he had kept suppressed for the last few years came flooding back. Her relationship with the foreign gentleman had ended, she had nowhere to live and wanted to give their relationship another try....

In a strange way, the experience of my friend bears close comparison to the opportunities that a lot UK packaging suppliers are now presented with. Several years ago, UK manufacturers were forced to accommodate significant changes to the way they operated in order to satisfy new legislative requirements and retail standards. The implementation of the minimum wage, iso2001, BS5750, BRC Accreditation, recycling taxes (PRN's), improved health and safety etc were all embraced by manufacturers at considerable cost in an effort to appease our customers and maintain the relationship between us.

Having made the investments and worked hard at the relationship we then found that many of our larger customers were tempted away by the lure of cheaper prices from Far Eastern suitors and that just like my friend, we were left to pick up the pieces and rebuild our lives and our businesses.

It appears that the initial attraction between many large UK customers and their Far Eastern suppliers have predictably hit a rocky patch and that increased labour and transportation costs have considerably 'dampened the ardour' that once existed. If you add to this the difficulty of trying to predict demand without overstocking for shipments that can take in excess of twelve weeks to arrive from the Far East, coupled with the ongoing concerns about controlling the quality of long distance imports it would appear that reconciliation is unlikely.

At Mister Blister we have embraced the opportunity to work once again with many companies who were searching for a manufacturer they could trust and turn to for a cost effective and comprehensive blister packaging service and believe we are well placed to fill the void left by the demise of the long distance relationship.

Working in conjunction with The Carbon Trust we have continued to invest into high speed, energy efficient thermoforming equipment and our in house extrusion and recycling division helps us to maintain our competitive pricing structure whilst reducing our reliance on 'virgin' materials.

Our biggest innovation by far is the patented Virtuweld® blister which is a simple manual closure system that gives blisters the look and feel of a welded pack without the cost of ancillary sealing. With many retailers demanding additional packaging security the extensive Virtuweld® range can be quickly and easily packed by our customers or by

one of our recommended contract packing partners. Our recently opened 'in house' tool manufacturing facility means we can now also offer a low cost bespoke tooling service or segment production for customers wishing to customise any of our standard Virtuweld® blister packs.

As the effects of the well documented global financial crisis begin to level out it is clear that Companies need to keep a tighter control on their costs and be able to react quickly to fulfil orders as too much stock and long lead times have an adverse affect on profitability. At Mister Blister we understand these requirements and are equipped to fulfil them..all it takes is a call or better still a knock on our door!