

## **Clamshells on Demand: Low-Volume, Low-Risk Tamper-Resistance**

*How to make a virtually painless transition  
away from RF-sealed clamshells to secure  
clamshells with no weld.*

*September 30, 2014*

---

**Q: When is tamper-deterrence just as effective as tamper-resistance?**

**A: When major retail chains embrace Virtuweld® clamshells.**

Retailers don't necessarily care *how* you deter pilfering—only that you succeed. Traditional clamshells are usually tamper-evident and virtually tamper-proof. But that comes with a long commitment. RF-sealed clamshells require substantial lead-time, investments in tooling, and expensive machines to weld the two "shells" together.

But what if a package could achieve the same experience—for both retailers and consumers—with no tooling and no machine weld?

### **A weld with no weld**

Gary Briscoe, founder of Mister Blister LLC, asked himself that very question a few years back. What he developed was a secure package that fit the bill so well that major retailers took notice.

The turning point in the development was designing a “stitched” edge that mimicked the RF seals of traditional packages. The finishing point was an undetectable closure design that made the package very secure and tamper-resistant on its own merit.

The technology, patented as Virtuweld® provides all the security retailers need with much faster turnaround times compared to RF-sealed clamshells. And, consequently, there's no machinery to invest in or maintain, as Virtuweld® clamshells are most often hand-assembled.

On the consumer side, the package actually pops open without use of scissors or a knife through a proprietary opening mechanism that is not immediately evident on the store shelf.

## Fulfilling a need for speed

Virtuweld® was developed as a response to an increasing need for more versatile tamper-resistant packaging in all retail categories. Many manufacturers had turned to Asian clamshell packaging companies because of price, but they lost the value of intangibles such as frequent brand updates, graphic customization, managing SKU proliferation, and responsive marketing.

Briscoe and Mister Blister tested their tamper-resistance theory out on U.K. retailers, and found that pilferage rates were in line with traditional **WELDED** clamshells. Seeing this success, First Choice Packaging, Fremont, Ohio, signed on as the exclusive North American manufacturer of Virtuweld®.

Virtuweld clamshells **CAN BE** thermoformed from PVC, PET, or recycled PET. They stand up to the rigors of shipping, and look like new even after extended time on the shelf. Some manufacturers even reuse Virtuweld packaging if the product line fails to sell out—something impossible to do with RF-sealed clamshells.

"I think the surprising thing for me is how it has been so widely accepted," Briscoe comments. One reason for Virtuweld acceptance is easy expandability and extendability, as the package accommodates another packaging fact of life in today's market. Manufacturers often have to tailor their packaging for a number of different retail channels or chains. With Virtuweld, swapping paperboard cards in and out makes meeting these requirements a snap.

## Hitting the market targets

NuFletch Archery LLC, Fort Walton Beach, FL, specializes in the production of Arrow Performance Enhancement arrow tails for today's high-speed carbon arrows. NuFletch wanted to improve the appearance and consumer convenience of the packaging while also

reducing the cost of the packaging and the time and complexity involved in the packaging process.

"We were introducing revolutionary designs in the archery market with our arrow tails and nocks," NuFletch CEO John Marshall explains. "We felt that the packaging we selected must clearly and quickly display the functional advantages of our products. We knew that our startup advertising budget would be very skinny at best, so

we wanted to promote the new products with outstanding packaging, using the packaging as a virtual salesman."



NuFletch discovered that the custom-made, hand-assembled Virtuwelt packages gave its packaging team more time and flexibility for quality control packaging checks. If inspection turns up an issue, the team can open the package and correct the issue through its proprietary mechanism without causing any packaging damage.

"Retailers have been enthusiastic about the new packaging," Marshall adds. "They love that the products' features and benefits are so prominently printed on the packaging. It's like having a virtual salesperson on the store floor. The packaging definitely has helped us boost our brand identity."

## Easing packaging anxieties

QueaseEASE is a drug-free, all-natural product consisting of a unique blend of pure essential oils formulated to calm the queasiness associated with surgery and anesthesia. It has also been found to prevent or relieve motion sickness, morning sickness, and chemotherapy related nausea.

Roy Nichols, President of Soothing Scents, the makers of QueaseEASE, wanted a proprietary package that could expand four SKUs in a "family" of products out to a variety of retail channels.

Nichols was ready to pull the trigger on tooling for traditional clamshells when he got a call from a First Choice representative, who mentioned the versatility of Virtuweld.

"What attracted me at first was the simplicity of the package and the cost," Nichols recalls. "It was perfect timing." The QueaseEASE canister is about the size of a thick magic marker, and the Virtuweld package turned out to be 4-3/4" wide by 6-3/4" tall by 1" deep. The size was ideal for drug-store pegboards and shelves, because sometimes QueaseEASE is merchandised in 10-piece shelf displays.

QueaseEASE sales have grown steadily, about 35% each year thanks to hospital contracts and medical institutions such as the three campuses of the Mayo Clinic. As QueaseEASE gets into more and more independent drug stores, and into major retail chains, the ability to swap out cards to meet retailer requirements was a big plus—and it can all be done by hand. The highly visible cards in Virtuweld packages also afford QueaseEASE ample space to explain the concept and proper use of this new product. "I like to when possible eliminate machines for small runs," Nichols says.

## **Armed to the teeth**

Remington Arms Company LLC made the switch to Virtuweld nearly eight years ago. Shanda Trogon, Product Manager at Remington Arms, recalls how the company tested the waters first, starting with three basic designs.

To Trogon, the advantages of Virtuweld were obvious: maximum visibility for the product inside, the impression of a tamper-proof seal, retailer compliance, and the option of store staff to open and inspect the



product. Though it's not a frequent occurrence, giving the retail staff the option of opening and reclosing the package can aid in closing sales.

"We got into chains that we could not get into before because they wanted a tamper-proof package," Trogdon explains. She especially liked how there was no lead-time delay that was the norm when ordering tooling for traditional clamshells. The company even gave back to the community by using disabled service providers to fill and close the Virtuweld packages.

### **Custom fit and ready to ship**

Most often, First Choice Packaging will use one of its standard blister sizes and create a custom cavity to hold the product. This creates packing that is quick to produce and cost effective. First Choice can also produce a set of top quality inserts to your final specification to fit perfectly inside the Virtuweld clamshells.

However, Virtuweld clamshells can be customized to your own specifications for completely proprietary or unique shapes and sizes. One showerhead application, for instance, was formed to the exact contours of the head and hose. Mister Blister's Briscoe says that the thickness of Virtuweld clamshells can be adjusted up for bigger and heavier products. Clamshells for retail display have gone as large as 6" x 14" (15 cm x 35 cm). And it's not just an illusion of security; Virtuweld is tamper resistant by design. "Even if you know you can get into it, it's not easy to get into at retail," Briscoe says.

First Choice creates prototypes to customer specification for mockups or presentations before going into production.

Check out the complete listing of Virtuweld stock molds and stock platforms at [FirstChoicePackaging.com](http://FirstChoicePackaging.com) and learn how to add your own custom cavity. Or contact First Choice to create a custom Virtuweld clamshell for your product.

### **Virtuweld Benefits:**

- ❖ Looks like a machine-welded clamshell
- ❖ Cavities can be custom designed for great product presentation
- ❖ Visually appealing with unique "stitched" appearance
- ❖ Closed by hand for lower production cost
- ❖ Allows for quick response during peak demand without capital expense
- ❖ Available in stock molds or customized to your own specifications
- ❖ Available in post-consumer recycled plastics

### **Comparing costs to costs**

Assessing the cost of Virtuweld vs. traditional clamshell packaging, NuFletch CEO John Marshall notes:

*"The cost of custom Virtuweld clamshells and cards is easy to quantify—about 48 cents per packaging unit. But for the entire packaging process, we need to take into account a number of variables. And we need to factor in the marketing impact that the packaging has given us. There were cheaper alternatives. We could easily have used a more traditional clam and cardboard backing for about 37 cents per total packaging unit. But we wanted something more distinctive—a classy 'tuxedo' look—because we feel we have a revolutionary product and don't want it to get lost in the marketing maze. So we were willing to pay an additional 9 cents per custom clam and 2 cents per custom card. The custom molding plate cost approximately \$1,800, which was a very competitive price. And no other options were equal to the finished look we were hunting for and found with First Choice."*

#### **CONTACT:**

First Choice Packaging  
Glenn Tapp  
glenn@firstchoicepackaging.com  
Toll Free: 1-866-700-PACK (7225)  
Main: 419-333-4100

#### **Headquarters:**

First Choice Packaging  
1501 West State Street  
Fremont, OH 43420