

The Storopack Promise – “Perfect Protective Packaging”

Storopack is known as one of the biggest players in the protective packaging industry. A global, family owned group with operations based in Metzingen, Germany, Storopack can trace its roots back to 1874. It now does business in 61 locations throughout 16 countries, employing 2,450 people. As a group it recorded sales of €416 million, in 2015, representing 18 per cent year on year growth.

In the UK the past few years have also been particularly successful, with Storopack UK growing sales beyond £10 million at the end of 2016. With an established base in Sheffield, South Yorkshire, since 1987, Storopack opened its second UK production site in Brackley, Northamptonshire in January 2014, to keep up with business growth.

Richard Pulfrey, managing director of Storopack UK, says “The location was acquired from FP International enabling Storopack to increase manufacturing efficiencies and optimise delivery performance whilst making Storopack the market leader for Loose Fill in the UK. This was a bold step into the future – a win-win for employees, and customers.

“The acquisition enhanced our product and service offering and further improved our customer value proposition, giving us a competitive edge in a very dynamic market. It enabled the UK business to develop an infrastructure that supported a continued



drive to achieve our growth targets whilst strengthening our position in the UK packaging market.”

Together with the original UK site in Sheffield the firm now employs a total of 31 people including sales, customer service, field based engineers, production, marketing, administration and logistics functions.

The Storopack Packaging Division offers flexible protective packaging systems encompassing air cushions (AIRplus), paper pads (PAPERplus), PU-foam-in-place packaging systems (FOAMplus) and Loose Fill (PELASPAN and PELASPAN BIO) packaging materials. It supplies demand-driven equipment solutions covering everything from single workstations through to the design and implementation of packaging lines integrated into a company's intralogistics and equipped with manual, semi and fully automated infeed packaging systems. Storopack's specialised application engineers ensure that the entire workflow is guided by economic and ergonomic principles in order to constantly improve the customers' protective packaging process.

Sales director Mark Mardel attributes the firm's success in part to the firm's focus on in-the-box packaging protection, working closely with distribution partners to constantly improve the productivity of the customer's protective packaging processes.

CASE STUDY

Redesigning retail fulfilment

A major multi-channel retail fulfilment centre operating in the UK and France recently updated its business to create a tailored packaging solution.

They took on Storopack to review its existing packing systems and conduct an audit on the current processes including a video based cost analysis to unearth potential to increase productivity.

The existing set-up consisted of offline packaging, marshalling packaging materials to a central station for packers to collect the pre-produced void material.

The whole operation was

taken into consideration, from software to packaging consumption, and with discussions with shop floor personnel and management to build a clearer picture of what was needed.

The investigation found that there were a number of areas for potential improvement, from faster throughput from updated equipment to general housekeeping within the warehouse.

Time in motion analysis revealed congestion in the pack area. Boxes took up space blocking the movement of packing staff. Pack table

ergonomics were poor and staff spent significant time walking to fetch materials such as void-fill and cartons.

One of the main concerns outlined by the warehouse manager was the fact that productivity expectations for the department had not been reviewed for a number of years. It also emerged that the firm was soon going to outgrow its workspace.

Storopack's team produced 3D CAD drawings of a revised layout illustrating a customised solution to improve ergonomics in the warehouse and boost throughput.

The cornerstone of the new solution was Storopack's integration of an AIRplus hopper utilizing the dead space above the conveyor which can deliver packing materials to packers at the work station, on demand. An automated carton sealer was added and a preventative maintenance plan was also introduced.

The customer was happy with the solution which would ensure their operations continued to run effectively. The new system gave the customer an estimated £50,000 operating saving and improved overall productivity by some 37 per cent.



The exceptional growth of e-commerce has pushed in-the-box packaging to the fore. Retailers have to consider the integrity, flexibility, weight, environmental credentials, application methods and of course cost of the materials they use. And that's not just for a one way delivery journey.

"Ineffective protective packaging can cause returns if it is not up to the job. Minimising product replacements can be crucial to the profitability of a business," says Mardel.

But Mardel says that when making a recommendation to a client, Storopack looks at more than just its product specifications. He says they look at the total cost of ownership for the entire system, and at how it fits within the context of the client's wider operation. That means taking a holistic approach, and looking back up the supply chain as well as considering the extended life of the product right through to disposal. "Packaging needs to be smart in relation to its delivery to warehouses and pack bench intra-logistics," says Mardel.

As an example Mardel explains, "In terms of volume, one pallet of Storopack 16 Pocket air cushion film inflated would produce three times the volume of 170 rolls of bubble-wrap – the amount usually fitted into an articulated vehicle. Putting this into perspective, a standard trailer holds approximately 100 cubic metres meaning a customer would need to order in excess of three vehicle loads of bubble-wrap compared to only one pallet of 16 Pocket air cushion, saving customers critical warehouse storage space and reducing carbon footprint implications against multiple vehicle deliveries."

And it's this kind of joined-up thinking that Mardel reckons is responsible for Storopack's success. Over a number of years the firm has developed its "Working Comfort" principle, to be an all-encompassing method of analysis, looking at how packing processes fit within the overall business from goods-in and storage capabilities right through its journey to the end-user, rather than simply looking at packing in isolation.

Mardel describes this holistic principle as being about solving the conundrum of which products are best suited for the protection of their customers' products combined with how to achieve fluidity of their operations.

Through Working Comfort Storopack provides a tailored service, working with its distribution partners. Starting with its free technical evaluation process, the firm works with clients in a consultancy capacity to

develop the perfect systems to fit their individual requirements and meet the challenges of industries as diverse as retail, e-commerce, pharmaceutical, engineering and manufacturing.

Looking at an overview of operations helps to see where the true costs sit. This consultation service analyses customer's packaging processes, gathers physical evidence together with broader data and factors from the wider business, and then presents a true cost finding.

Mardel quotes another example, "An existing customer was considering changing to an alternative packaging system but when our consultation analysis discovered this would create an 800 per cent uplift in pallet delivery quantities over the peak season, it became very clear they didn't have the capacity in the goods-in yard or the space needed for an additional 900 pallets storage in their busy 12 week peak period."

When the client's requirements are decided Storopack can supply a huge range of state of

the art products which are up and running for inspection in its new demonstration room. This is part of a variety of developments Storopack has introduced to enhance customer experience, and specifically to add value to relationships with external stake holders. This investment in service also includes an extended sales and engineering team and a new focus on marketing.

One client was particularly pleased with the continuity of service, saying "All visitors to

the site remark on the innovative design and build quality. The after sales service and regular maintenance schedules are all delivered to an impeccable standard and on time."

Whilst this kind of development could go unnoticed behind the scenes, Storopack is always bringing out new products to take centre stage. And they don't get much more eye-catching

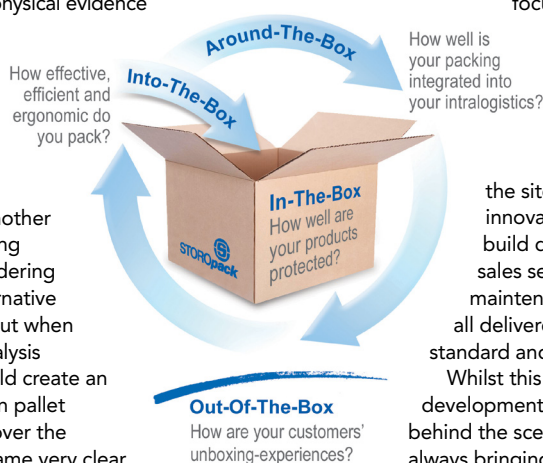
than the latest development – bright white papers throughout its range. It also introduced the PAPERplus Papillon, a new versatile system for top void fill and block and brace packaging.

"This gives the customer a bright white visual experience of a constructed paper when opening their parcel rather than the traditional brown paper," says Mardel.

It's a differentiating touch that will appeal to many e-retailers wanting to stand out from the crowd. It can significantly increase the amount of parcels moving through the packing area due to improving pack speed, and it's already proving its star status. "Successfully launched at the end of 2015, PAPERplus Papillon is being used by major nationwide health and beauty retailers, and luxury chocolate companies," says Mardel.

As a massive global enterprise it's no surprise that Storopack will always be producing cutting edge equipment and materials. But perhaps it's the quieter behind the scenes processes such as the Working Comfort approach that has been the driving force behind Storopack's recent success.

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Working Comfort

- Working Comfort is the holistic approach that Storopack takes to finding the best solution for each individual client
- The start of the process is an in-depth evaluation taking in the incumbent equipment and methods of working
- The findings are combined into a cost analysis, considering strategic priorities and seeking out potential for improvements
- Clients have access to a demonstration room, showcasing the latest state of the art packaging technology to help decide on the preferred solution for each application
- Storopack's experts will then design a bespoke system, considering the wider business supply chain and maximising efficiencies to optimise the total operation