

## GOPACK

# Firm thinks outside of the cardboard box

Gopak's investment in sleeve wrapping equipment from YPS has seen packaging costs and damage in transit shrink dramatically. *Lynda Searby* has the story behind the project on how the machine made all the difference

### Who Gopak

**What** Inline sleeve sealer and shrink tunnel from Yorkshire Packaging Systems (YPS)

**Why** To reduce damage to products during transit and increase the efficiency of its despatch operation

**When** Summer 2016

### Challenge

A Kent-based manufacturer of lightweight folding furniture, Gopak's business model centres on making products that are flat-packed for delivery to schools, leisure centres, village halls and other multi-functional spaces via a carrier network.

Historically, the furniture was manually packed into cardboard cartons to protect it during transit. The problem was that this wasn't really providing adequate protection. Too often, furniture was getting damaged en route to customers and having to be returned and replaced.

For some time, Gopak managing director Andrew Fieldwick had toyed with the idea of moving over to shrink wrap in a bid to reduce damage, but could never be sure it was worth the investment.

"We had a theory that if the furniture was shrink wrapped, it would be handled more gently, but we couldn't prove that without spending lots of money," he says.

### Strategy

When shrink wrap machinery specialist Yorkshire Packaging Systems (YPS) offered to supply a hire machine, this presented an opportunity for Gopak to test the viability of shrink wrap without committing to a hefty financial outlay.

Trials showed that shrink wrapped parcels could pass through a carrier hub and greatly reduced levels of damage, providing the justification Gopak needed to purchase a shrink wrap solution.

"We performed a lot of trials, including putting the shrink wrapped furniture through Gopak's distribution network, to prove the concept so that they had the confidence to invest," recalls Glyn Johnson, managing director at YPS.

### Implementation

On the back of this trial, in summer 2016, Gopak ordered a 1,300mm wide inline sleeve sealer and shrink tunnel from YPS, with the rental cost offset against the purchase. The machine was a bespoke, extra-wide design to accommodate the film width needed to wrap large furniture items.



"It might look like a standard piece of kit, but with a sleeve wrapper, when you go over one metre in width, it necessitates some adjustments to the design. For example, the products being handled tend to be heavier, so bearings and drives etc have to be more heavy duty," explains Johnson.

The use of wider film rolls also has manual handling implications, with a 1,300mm roll of film weighing approximately 50kg. This renders a standard film holder configuration less than ideal for operator health and safety.

"Usually on a 600mm wide machine you would have two rolls of film: one at the top and one at the bottom. With a 1,300mm wide machine you don't want to

be handling 50kg rolls of film at head height," says Johnson.

To circumvent this potential issue, YPS incorporated into the design a low level film holder with which Gopak has been delighted.

"Loading of film is extremely easy. YPS supplied a system whereby the film doesn't have to be lifted – both rolls are at floor level. This eliminated a potential health and safety risk, as with a standard machine design, we would have had to use a forklift to lift the roll for the top film web," says Damien Hickie, operations director at Gopak.

### Results

Gopak reports that the sleeve wrapper has transformed the efficiency of its despatch area and reduced the number of items damaged in transit in 2017 by 46%, leading to greater customer satisfaction and increased profitability.

"We used to get complaints. Now we get complimented on the quality of our packaging," says Fieldwick.

This enhanced customer satisfaction has been reflected through customer feedback, measured by the online review engine Feefo. In February 2017, Gopak was awarded Feefo Gold Trusted Service status, endorsing the improvements made

to customer experience.

Switching to shrink wrapping has reduced the amount of packaging used. This not only reduces Gopak's carbon footprint – an important factor for this ISO14001 accredited company – but also saves on storage space.

"One pallet of film is equivalent to 15 pallets of cardboard – so the storage space savings are considerable," says Hickie.

He says the packaging operation is more efficient too; whereas it was taking approximately five minutes to pack each item in cardboard, the shrink wrapper packs on average two items per minute, and is a far less labour-intensive process than the old system.

"The despatch area used to be a bottleneck. We had two people packing and it was a struggle to get products out of the door. Now one person can operate the machine and manage that whole area."

Hickie adds: "YPS have been brilliant and have bent over backwards to understand our requirements. The machine itself has been extremely reliable from day one; all our staff are happy operating it and it requires very little maintenance."

By driving efficiencies and reducing packaging, labour and returns, the investment is expected to pay back by this autumn. ■

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**Andrew Fieldwick**  
**Gopak**