

Review of 2008

Packaging in a Low Carbon Economy Conference

Edge's inaugural packaging conference was judged a major success by the 51 delegates who attended the event at the National Motorcycle Museum, Birmingham on 30 September.

The conference chaired by David Shukman, Environment and Science Correspondent for the BBC, included presentations from Colgate Palmolive, Unilever, TetraPak, Asda, Menzies, Apeal, British Glass, British Plastics Federation, European Environment Agency, Stockholm Environment Institute, University of East Anglia, WRAP and Edge.

Key themes that emerged at the event included the importance of a focus on carbon and perhaps water footprinting not just packaging weight reductions; the importance of moving the debate from a packaging focus to a products focus; the need to learn from other's experiences and findings and act on carbon footprint reduction in your business; although no one has all the answers regarding methodology and process this is not an excuse for inactivity.

Consultancy Projects

This year has been dominated by projects focused on measuring carbon footprint of products, product ranges and packaging solutions in client businesses. Understanding the carbon footprint of your business, sector, products, packaging or processes allows informed and responsible decisions to be made about future business sustainability.

Highlights in the year included:

Projects measuring the impact of the UK magazine sector for the magazine publishing trade body, the PPA, and subsequently the building of a sophisticated but user friendly carbon calculator for distribution to their members.

A further carbon footprint project in the glass packaging sector was completed enabling the client to better understand potential carbon reduction strategies for specific glass containers.

A Strategic project undertaken for a major chemicals company to enable their understanding of the packaging sector and the potential of their current product portfolio as well as future product development projects to feed the sector.

A market intelligence study to investigate the potential for new flexible bio barrier materials conducted for a major packaging materials manufacturer.

China 2012 Market Report

In June Edge published the most authoritative and comprehensive report on the state of the Chinese packaging supply chain to date.

Authored by our Chinese packaging and print expert and supplemented and interpreted by Edge consultants the report contains 260 pages, 108 figures, and 130 data tables.

The report includes industry data, trends and forecasts, the main issues drivers and the likely future shape of China's packaging supply chain. The main focus was to draw out the opportunities that exist in the Chinese market and the business opportunities for Western companies and financial investors.

Looking forward to 2009

Of course, any review of 2008 cannot avoid mentioning the unprecedented changes experienced in the economy. It is clear that the New Year is going to be even tougher than the past three months. So what will be the priorities for the packaging supply chain in 2009? Clearly, generating and preserving cash is going to be of paramount importance. During such times, a lot of planned expenditure and initiatives will be reined in. For a sector where innovation and customer focus has become paramount, the challenge for packaging companies and packaging users will be how they maintain this focus against a backdrop of tightening budgets and uncertainty. The key will be to ensure that innovation and technology projects give greatest value for money and have highest probability for success. Edge therefore predicts that in 2009 we will see greater focus on the use of consumer insight tools, technology scouting and other techniques that streamline and optimize the packaging innovation process.

And how about the environment and sustainability? After two years of sharp focus on the environmental impacts of packaging, will this remain a key issue in 2009, given the pressing economic concerns in an already squeezed industry? We are certainly likely to hear a lot less from the Daily Mail and other consumer media during 2009, as the banking industry has now taken over from packaging as public enemy number one. This will provide some welcome relief from the spotlight, and may allow the packaging supply chain to make progress on real environmental improvements, rather than pandering to an ill-informed and sensationalist press. The environmental focus for 2009 will be on three key issues. Firstly, packaging optimization will be more important than ever, as businesses look even harder for opportunities to reduce costs as well as environmental impact. Secondly, the carbon debate is too important to be brushed aside by the economic crises. This is a fact that has been recognized by government and business alike, and carbon footprinting, and subsequently carbon reduction programmes, will remain a key priority for 2009. The publication of PAS2050, the BSI's carbon footprinting guidelines, will add further momentum. Finally, water footprinting is emerging as the next hot topic, and Edge expects that another complex methodology debate on how to calculate your water footprint will begin.

During 2009, through this newsletter and via the consultancy services we provide, Edge will continue to keep our clients and contacts up to date with developments in these areas. As well as continuing to develop our suite of environmental services, Edge will be announcing new services in the field of consumer-packaging interaction, to help our clients get the best return from their innovation activities. In the meantime, the Edge team wishes you all a Merry Christmas and prosperous 2009.