

Mainline pushes the envelope

Creativity and envelopes go hand in hand at Mainline Flatpacks, where eye-catching and innovative cardboard mailers are the speciality

There are many ways to make an impact with direct mail, and the envelope it's sent in is one of crucial importance. At Mainline Flatpacks, they're singing the praises of the cardboard envelope as a proven creative and colourful vehicle for hitting recipients of DM right between the eyes.

The company dedicates much time to the development of packaging design. Its 26 years of creative expertise in cardboard engineering have created a reputation for introducing new packaging concepts based on the loosest of client briefs. Mainline are commonly asked by the major automotive clients to develop packs from cardboard in excess of 200gsm to replace existing 100gsm paper envelopes, in order to maximise response rates from higher impact presentation.

Sales director Fred Lill quotes figures from a former agency client that suggests average response rates of 8% on campaigns using cardboard envelopes. When fixed capacity packaging is used, the success rate is even greater: 12% on average.

Mainline Flatpacks is one of the few manufacturers that can handle mass production of such packaging, which has seen it develop its own branded products for mail delivery. At the forefront of these is the Pecopak® brand of retention packaging, a concept that Mainline Flatpacks is keen to get in front of the nation's agency creative directors, and which it showcased at IDMF last year. Like all good ideas, it's incredibly simple: the cardboard packaging includes a thin polythene film stretched over an internal corrugated fitment, to minimise any movement of the item contained within – a mobile phone for example, as in the picture shown.

"Marketing agencies are always looking at unique methods of creatively mailing various size promotional items, such as keyrings, but often it's difficult to present them in a professional way," Fred Lill points out. "Pecopak holds the gift securely so it doesn't rattle or



get damaged. I've even performed a successful postage trial with a raw egg. There are lots of uses for this product that marketing agencies could take advantage of"

Never standing still, Mainline is always adding new products to its range, whether it's a completely innovative design or improvements on an existing one. Most recently, the company redeveloped its "Amazon-style mailer" for its automotive clients to mail their new car brochures, rather than as commonly being used to mail books, DVDs and CDs.

Managing director Barry Lill says: "Our major activity is in manufacturing, with an array of printing presses and specialist gluing machines that give us unrivalled versatility and productivity against the rest of the world."

The jewel in the crown is the company's Bobst Alpina Gyro gluing system – a £600,000 investment in a market where gluing systems usually cost

£120,000. It was a huge investment when purchased in 2005, but it has single-handedly revolutionised the capability of Mainline Flatpacks, and made the company able to compete with suppliers in the Far East.

"Prior to investing in the Bobst, three gluing processes were required to create a peel and seal cardboard envelope with red ripa strip. Now we can achieve all processes in one pass at twice the speed," explains Barry Lill.

"It is a huge improvement for efficiency and lead time. With our other specialist equipment, we are the only company that we know of in this market that can fully manufacture these products under one roof without relying on subcontractors for printing or finishing; thus enabling us to be the buyers' preferred supplier of cardboard envelopes and specialist packaging."

Such productivity, alongside the benefits of Mainline's environmental accreditations of ISO14001 and FSC chain of custody, has seen Mainline Flatpacks grow substantially in recent years, especially overseas where its export business is growing at 400% annually.

Mainline has inserted a sample of its product in this issue of PMM. The company's message is clear: "Follow our path to increased response rates and environmental improvement for direct mail."

• www.mainlineflatpacks.co.uk

Mainline Flatpacks can create and print a wide range of cardboard envelope types, including an "Amazon-style mailer" (above) and its patented Pecopak (below)

