

Wisdom from 50 years in business

By Barry Tucker, Managing Director, Aetna



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You've been an inspiration - best wishes from the PPMA!

Reflecting on 50 years in the business and my thoughts turn to the things that matter, enjoyment of work and what I've learnt.

Where it all began, when business was uncomplicated

In 1958 when I joined Thames Board Mills (who were part of Unilever and a major player in the board and corrugated industry) it was a time of big names, lots of competition, big exhibitions with enormous stands and displays. There were few alternatives to solid board or corrugated cases so the big mills were kept really busy. Major customers included Quaker Oats, Charles Kinlock, Frank Cooper and Oxford and Mars, but it wasn't so long before you had to fight for new accounts due to the invention of polyethelene films and the development of shrink wrapping techniques in the early 1960s. Investment in shrink wrapping was abundant and in 1967 I decided to join Dobby in the machinery industry, inventors of rotary heat sealing systems.

The threat from overseas has always challenged us

In the 1950s there were many well known British packaging machinery manufacturers, who had reformed after the war to carry many famous names forward. With little investment or development it was not long before UK manufacturers found they could not compete. Many countries, particularly Germany, had reinvested and were bursting with modern designs and lots of energy. Today we are in a similar situation, manufacturing in the UK is becoming more difficult and there is the potential 'tsunami' threat looming in China. Soon, the Chinese will be building equipment well up to European standards and there will be even more price squeezes which will affect European manufacture. It will take only the brave who can stay on their toes and be sufficiently flexible to stay in the game - standing still is not an option.



Dobby in Barcelona, 1987

Markets and customers - knowing each other well

With polyethelene came poly sacks to replace paper, by the end of the 1960s Dobby dominated world markets - in South Africa they sold some 80 large heat sealers into fertiliser plants within an eight year period. By 1970 the shrink wrapping market had become very competitive and Dobby took a serious share of the high speed, quality end of the market, taking second place to Kisters who were dominating the top end of the market. But by the '80s the market was changing quickly, Italian design and production methods were rapidly gaining acceptance and several new high speed wrapping systems were entering the markets.

The world was becoming environmentally conscious at this time and in Germany the influence that Aldi had on the market began to convince them that shrink was bad for everyone and there was a positive move against the method. In fact it turned out that their preference for corrugated cases was an economic decision. Dobby

Top Tips

on how to achieve successful time management



Alan Reeves, Managing Director, SICK UK

1. Never put anything off. Deal with both urgent and non-urgent matters immediately, even if it's to state a time by which you will respond. Because life is always stressful and everybody wants a piece of you, make sure **you** manage your life, rather than letting your life be controlled by other people.

2. Choose the best person to do a job, and don't try to do something if someone else can do it better. The key is to play to people's strengths.

3. Today's working life is about long hours and everybody having multiple responsibilities. That means it's all the more important to make your private life a priority, too. I firmly believe that it takes a good family life to be successful at work.



Mike Whiteoak EMEA PR Manager Markem-Imaje

1. Remember, the objectives are to: meet your business obligations, enjoy a life outside work, keep healthy in mind and body. Keep focussed - be clear about your goals and keep them in mind.

2. Be realistic - don't be over-ambitious with your time. You'll need some flexibility to deal with the unexpected.

3. Make a plan - write a priority list on a whiteboard. Make sure that you haven't shirked the hard stuff, but include some quick wins to get you in the mood. Ticking them off is great motivation.

Enjoy your retirement Mikel!

Cont'd...

had been bought by SIG, who believed the trend and decided to break-up the company, but not before they dismissed me in 1990. By the mid 90s they had sold the business to Meypack. As we have seen, they were quite wrong and today shrink wrapping is bigger than ever and seen as environmentally friendly.

I took stock of my situation and the state of the industry in 1990 and decided to set up our own business with my son. The opportunity came to handle a new range of quality Italian stretch wrappers, shrink wrappers and case packers. The ROBOPAC name quickly became the 'standard' and by 2000 we were the clear market leader in the UK with perhaps a 40% share - today it is closer to 50%. The rapid growth of the company was possible because of our knowledge of the market and indeed what the market knew about us. We have just completed our 17th and most successful year by doing what we do best - engineering innovative, quality equipment backed by the most experienced advice and the highest standard of sales and technical after sales service. And all provided by the most experienced team in the business.

We are proud that we changed the market perception of a pallet stretch wrapper from 'film dispenser' to a very important necessity which enables products to arrive safely at minimum cost. The market becomes ever more competitive because it is very mature - 35 years for stretch wrapping and 40 at least for shrink. Today there are only incremental developments and film has probably gone as far as it can. Hopefully, continued research and development allied to stability, consistency, backup and experienced advice will ensure that we retain our market leadership in the years ahead.

People make life/work fun

The industry was full of larger-than-life characters, many of whom founded dynasties which have continued until this time. And in addition to the manufacturers there were the dashing distributors, many of whom made a lot of money in the early days.

It's true to say we had a lot of fun: work hard, play hard was very much the axiom of the day. Over the years, it is sad to say that these characters have gradually disappeared as competition increased, monopolies began to dominate the markets and communication technology decreased the value of personal contacts.



With Colin Barker, mid 90's

Foundation of the PPMA and its importance

It was clear that our industry needed something, and when the PPMA was formed in 1987 we all joined in enthusiastically. It was an exciting time: shows at Telford and the rapid development of our own exhibition. The Association grew quickly, lead by larger-than-life characters running their own businesses. Characters who had developed a spirit which carried us all through the next 15 years, always growing and planning for an exciting future.



Barry (left) receiving the PPMA's lifetime achievement award 2003, from the then President John Clayton

Clearly, the Packaging Industry has been very good to me and I have lived a very full life. At the age of 70 I look back on the adventure with great pleasure and feel most fortunate for the career it gave me. And I am not done yet! Who knows what further adventures and opportunities lie out there, providing the energy and spirit remain strong.



**Charles Lee,
Managing
Director,
Matcon**

1. Recruit, train and motivate good people - then delegate to them at every turn.
2. Rapid retrieval of information is critical: establish a good electronic filing system for important information. There's no

excuse with all the e-tools.

3. Produce notes of meetings and associated actions immediately following the event in a manner which can be shared with all attendees openly. Only after you have done this should you make internal or private comments separately. This is much more efficient than the other way around (which many people do).



**Nick Scott,
Accessories
Product
Manager, Linx**

1. Don't multi-task beyond your limits. Try and complete one job before tackling the next.
2. Learn to say no: if you accept every piece of work you're asked to help with, you

end up with a glut of jobs that won't get done!
3. Balance the time-management needs of you as an individual against the demands of the company as a whole. Apply 'production line thinking' to ensure that everything you do is working towards achievable, customer-focused goals.



**Dudley
Bradley,
Managing
Director,
Ytron-Quadro**

1. Concentrate on results, not on being busy.

2. Identify your top time wasting activities and work out how to tackle them.
3. Handle incoming emails more efficiently.