

Smart toys in smart packaging

Toy manufacturer Happy from Zoersel has proved for years that a small player can stand its ground in a sector dominated by large multinationals. The company's Happy Cube puzzles occupy the shelves of select toyshops in more than 40 countries. 'Being smart and creative is our trademark and we apply the same philosophy to our packaging,' says CEO Gerdy Loots. 'If you adopt an intelligent approach, packaging can offer important competitive advantages.' The company was rewarded in November 2012 for its approach with one nomination for the prestigious Greener Packaging Award.

prevent pack

The cube concept

The concept behind the Happy Cube puzzles was invented by a Belgian—Dirk Laureyssens from Zoersel. He came up with the idea in 1986. 'The concept is as simple as it is ingenious,' explains Natalie Tempelers, PR Manager at Happy. 'It consists of six puzzle pieces that you have to fit together to construct a perfect cube. The number of combinations is endless. Dirk Laureyssens designed over 300 cube puzzles in total, in different shapes

and degrees of difficulty with more than 7,500 different puzzle pieces. We distribute a wide range of puzzles on the toy and executive gift market, from the recently introduced Smart Cube for the youngest player to the Marble Cube for more advanced puzzle fans.'



From 2D to 3D

In addition to the fun aspect, the puzzles offer enormous educational added value. For example, they help to develop children's motor skills and spatial awareness. Children make the step from two dimensions to three when they work on this type of puzzle.

Moreover, the puzzles also stimulate creativity. Besides cubes, different puzzle pieces can be combined to create other figures and objects. Sometimes their creations can be quite astonishing.

Quality and sustainability first and foremost

Sustainability has always been part of the Happy philosophy. 'For example, all of our products are manufactured locally in Belgium, because this offers the best guarantee for sustainable production,' explains Tempelers. 'We can guarantee that no child labour is involved and that the puzzles are manufactured

in an environment that is safe for its workers. They are also produced from child-friendly materials based on natural rubber. They are odourless, contain no harmful substances and last a very long time. They can even be washed in a normal household washing machine at 30 °C.'

Packaging – part of the product

Happy extends this sustainable philosophy to the packaging it uses for its products. 'It starts with the production process for the puzzles. The remaining edges around the puzzle pieces, which would normally be considered as production surplus, are an integral part of the product and mean that the puzzle pieces can be conveniently stored. Think of it as packaging that you don't have to discard,' says Loots.

'We currently sell our B2B products without any packaging at all,' adds Tempelers. 'Corporate gifts are usually distributed straight from the cardboard box, or are conveniently stored somewhere—for example at the reception desk. Additional film around the product offers little added value. This means we are achieving savings that benefit our customer as well as the environment.'

good to remember

Happy **reduced the volume** of its packaging by two-thirds by eliminating empty space.

The packaging is produced entirely from **recycled and recyclable** materials.

Packaging optimization does not just reduce the **environmental impact**; it also reduces **manufacturing** and transport costs.

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How packaging offers a competitive advantage

Why pay for transporting **nothing**

Over the years, Happy has made exceptional efforts to align its packaging to the product. 'There's no point in transporting air,' CEO Loots remarks. 'Therefore, we have eliminated any unnecessary space in the packaging. Today one export box contains 40 puzzle packs. Ten years ago, it would have contained just 14. This makes a significant difference, particularly over long distances. For transport to Australia for instance, this achieves a saving of at least one euro per puzzle! It is a difference that you can pass on in full to the consumer. This is a major advantage in a highly competitive market such as the toy sector, a sector in which products are often manufactured in low-wage countries and from inferior or untested materials. In other words, packaging optimization is not only an environmental matter, but also involves an import-

ant economic component.'

Happy works closely with its packaging supplier—even though the latter was initially hesitant. Some customers were also somewhat sceptical. 'We have noticed that in some countries, customers still want the illusion of a large box,' Loots observes. 'Fortunately, these customers are becoming more enlightened and are now the exception rather than the rule. The price advantage certainly plays an important role in this respect.'



Recycled and recyclable

Happy's principles also apply to the packaging materials used. 'We have been using recycled paper for our packaging for many years. However, we recently succeeded in making our packaging fully recyclable with a few simple adjustments. This further increases the sustainability of our products.'

The company was recently rewarded for its efforts in packaging

optimization with one nomination at the Greener Packaging Awards. 'We are obviously pleased that the efforts our company makes are being recognized. And we are living proof that attention to packaging optimization pays big dividends for an SME,' concludes Gerdy Loots.

Standing out on the shelves

Packaging plays a major role in this sector according to Loots. Toys are often an impulse purchase so standing out on the retail shelves is vital. 'As a small player in a sector where multinationals often dominate toyshops, we view packaging as one of the truly important elements that distinguishes us from the competition. We thoroughly considered every aspect of our packaging. 'It is not an accident that the specific, immediately recognizable fluorescent green Happy packaging stands out—even in the

least visible corners of the largest toyshop.

'We devote special attention to the aesthetics of our packaging. We strive for an attractive packaging that consumers will want to keep rather than throw away. This is also perfectly in line with the sustainability philosophy of our puzzles and their long lifespan. We are not in the business of manufacturing disposable products.'

Happy and sustainability

- Happy puzzles are manufactured locally in a safe environment for workers.
- They are produced from child-friendly materials based on natural rubber.
- They are designed to last a very long time and can even be washed in a household washing machine.

www.happy.be