A revitalised Starpack 2006 has broken all records with entries at an all-time high of 309 with 867 individual category entries; a sure sign that Starpack remains the UK’s premier packaging competition. Add to this the 377 entries received for the Student & Schools Starpack Awards 2006 and it is safe to say that IOP: The Packaging Society’s industry awards programme is seeing meteoric progress.

The increased number of entries mirrors the record investment levels and the emphasis that IOP: The Packaging Society has put on ensuring that the categories reflect the issues facing the packaging supply chain of today and the impact consumer concerns are having on innovative pack developments.

And, of course, it is a great profile raising event for the packaging sector which so often operates under a cloud of criticism from consumers.

Now in its 47th year, the Starpack Awards programme, not content to rest on its laurels, continues to move with the times by creating an innovative series of awards relevant to today’s packaging market. A number of new categories designed to mirror the many changes in the packaging supply chain, such as Best Flexible Innovation, Best Inclusive Pack, Best Shelf Ready Pack, Best Packaging Component, and Best Use of Innovative Materials, certainly encouraged companies to enter this year’s awards.

And for the first time this year only a single Gold will be awarded in each category to ensure that the quest for packaging excellence remains undiluted. Of course, many companies have been rewarded with special Sponsor Awards and Silver, Bronze and Highly Commended certificates.

The 100 or so winners of any award, from a commended certificate up to the Supreme Gold, will have to wait until the evening of July 5 to find out just how successful they have been, but for all the winners the chances are that whatever award they walk away with, they will be well on their way to winning new business.

The Institute of Packaging under its new name of IOP: The Packaging Society now forms part of the Institute of Materials, Minerals and Mining (IOM³), which has allowed considerable expansion of the Starpack Awards and a range of packaging services. The merger, which took place in 2005, combines the specialised experience and expertise of the IOP with the strength and breadth of the IOM³ to form a powerful voice in the ever-changing world of packaging.
Ancient Greeks and kippers

Walking in on the Starpack judging process to be faced with 850 category entries can only be described as overwhelming. The fact that judges are willing to face this daunting task provides real evidence of just why IOP: The Packaging Society’s awards programme is the most prestigious competition in the UK’s packaging supply chain.

Congregating early on a Sunday morning and staying with the task for three full days, judges from some of the UK’s most important retailing, end user and packaging supply sectors seem more than happy to give up their valuable time.

To be confronted by everything from heavy duty transit packs to finely wrought cosmetic packs is an unnerving experience, but the importance of taking up the judging challenge is explained by Sally Bowden, print technologist, Marks & Spencer: “Marks & Spencer sees innovation as a key driver for its business and packaging is a high priority to deliver this. For example within the food sector, product innovation cannot always come without functional support from its packaging.”

Chair of the judging panel Terry Robins of Stanelco, formerly packaging innovation manager at Sainsbury, is a great supporter of the Starpack awards programme: “The importance of awarding innovation, good quality design and workmanship in packaging is critically important. Awarding the best and giving them public accreditation for their achievements has been passed down to us from the Ancient Greeks - long may it last!”

Steve Kelsey, managing director of design house PI3, puts a different twist on the importance of the judging process and the awards programme: “If you ask a consumer what they think of packaging you will get a litany of complaints. The truth, as we all know, is that packaging is as fundamental to modern life as transportation, sanitation and power; it is a hidden infrastructure and should be recognised as such.”

“First we are being recognised by industry experts and our peers. Second, they provide a known point out that packaging is not simple or easy; it is as challenging as any other discipline and can deliver products of great ingenuity.”

“But what about the standard of this year’s entries and their relevance to today’s packaging markets? Kelsey was staggered by the degree of technical sophistication, likening the experience to being “slapped round the face with a kipper”.

“Some of the packs showed simply amazing levels of development to achieve the complex tasks they perform. The other motivator was the flexibility and commitment many companies showed to delivering the design intent.”

The final word should go to the chair of the Starpack Working Group, Robert Simpson, who said: “This year’s entries were impressive. The quality was high and there were some great technical innovations. The lesson for the industry is that more companies would gain from entering the UK’s leading industry awards.”

Pro Carton’s Sponsor Award for Cartonboard was won by Richard Dembovskis from the Birmingham Institute of Art & Design for his innovative CD wallet. He also walked away with a Gold Star.

Simple, unusual and innovative was how judges described the clever plastic pack in the shape of a dustpan and brush that won the Child Innovative Gift Pack Award sponsored by Tigerprint. The idea also received an IOP: The Packaging Society Gold Star for Julia Paxton of Kingston University, Richmond upon Thames.

Chaired by Terry Robins, Stanelco (formerly Packaging Innovation Manager at Sainsbury), the Consumer panel comprised: Sally Bowden, print technologist, Marks & Spencer; Lina Mistry, packaging technologist, H J Heinz Frozen and Chilled Foods; Robert Simpson, chair of the Packaging Society’s Starpack Committee and purchasing co-ordinator, Polimoon Packaging; Steve Kelsey, managing director, design house PI3; Roy Dixon, consultant, Transit: chair; Mark Pratt, packaging manager, Dixons; Loraine Hall, packaging technical manager, Stanelco; Phil Garvey, consultant; Ray Pipe, the Royal Mail. Visiting judge: Jeremy Lindley, head of design, Tesco Stores.
JUDGES GET TO GRIPS WITH RECORD ENTRIES

Terry Robins

The entry levels underlined the importance of design professionals of the future and the role of packaging in creating awareness within schools and colleges.

The judging panel examined each of the 245 Student Starpack entries and awarded 12 Gold Stars, 27 Silver Stars and 24 Bronze Stars across nine categories. Excellence was also acknowledged through 14 Sponsored Student Awards given by British Polythene Industries; Britvic Soft Drinks; DS Smith Packaging; Field Packaging & Clarifoil; Logoplaste UK; Marks & Spencer and the MPMA; Marks & Spencer, AssiDomän Frövi and Presentation Products; Pro Carton; Smurfit UK; Tigerprint; IOP: The Packaging Society; IOM; and Loughborough University.

Tango was given ‘street cred’ by students who were challenged to re-invent the iconic soft drink from Britvic Soft Drinks. Challenged to invent a 500ml PET bottle for Tango a series of wacky and innovative designs from students, the Britvic Soft Drinks Award for the outstanding solution eventually went to Emily Ward, Central St Martins College for her Crushed Bottle with Skateboard Cap. Nick Pope, graphics manager, Britvic Soft Drinks, described the entry as, “Appealing to urban youth and delivering cult status - the pack looks like ‘it has been Tango’d’.”

IOP: The Packaging Society Gold Stars for the best Soft Drinks Bottle Icon, again sponsored by Britvic Soft Drinks, provided two winners: a segmented orange-shaped multipack of bottles won for Jeremy Amos, Reigate School of Art, while Ross Evans, Hull College, won for his ‘Tangrenade’ – a hand-grenade shaped bottle. Jeremy also received the IOM Design Solutions Award for the best innovative use of materials. The winner from Marks & Spencer, in association with the Metal Packaging Manufacturers’ Association (MPMA), was Fabian Nyblom, Central St Martins College for his creative use of metal to produce five different martinis in shaped single-serve drinks cans in a carry out container.

Forward thinking companies are lining up to create special sponsor awards and to support the packaging supply chain spend time, money and effort to add impetus to the industry’s quest for excellence.

Design students out Tango’d Tango, wowed Marks & Spencer and came up with a series of innovative pack designs in every conceivable packaging material in this year’s Student and Schools Starpack Awards. The entry levels underlined the importance education plays in creating packaging and the role of the Packaging Society has taken in creating awareness within schools and colleges.

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Mark Heath, Swindon College, received the Gold Star, while Fabian so impressed the judges that he was the outright winner of Best Overall Pack in the Student Starpack 2006. Commenting on Fabian’s entry, Gordon Stewart of IOP: The Packaging Society said, “Clear brand identification with a real ‘Wow factor’.”

The Schools Starpack Awards received 132 entries to this year’s three briefs for a Sun Protection Combination Pack, New Polythene Pack and Use of a Current Packaging Material in a New Market. The judging panel awarded 7 Gold, 7 Silver and 7 Bronze Stars to individual students. Sponsor awards were presented by Pro Carton, to the school providing the best carton entries; and British Polythene Industries, to the school that had the greatest success with its students’ entries to the New Polythene Pack category. IOP: The Packaging Society gave two awards to the individual students with the best carton and polythene entries.

Full details of all Student and Schools Starpack winners at www.starpack.uk.com
Welcome to the House of Colour

Just a quick glance at the array of packs for such prestigious clients as Marks & Spencer, Tesco and Morrison’s in Ken Wilkins Print’s board room shows just why the group’s award winning offices in Nottingham are a fitting home to the Starpack judging.

The Starpack judging has been held in the Head Office of The Wilkins Group for two consecutive years and the Group is proud of the association: “Starpack is a competition about pushing innovation and best of class, which is a cornerstone in the Wilkins business strategy”, explains Aron Wilkins, director.

The Wilkins Group specialises in retail packaging for the Food and Textile industries with packaging manufacturing sites in Sri Lanka, Romania and the UK, and the group believes its key points of difference are innovation and investment; all backed up by the independence offered by a family run business structure.

For the packaging sector it operates 6, 7 and 8 colour litho printing with inline coatings and special effects ensuring that it regularly gains business from the elite of the brand and retail sectors.

The Wilkins Group is no stranger to winning awards, not only for packaging but also for the architecture of its prestigious offices in Colwick, Nottingham. Said to be one of finest office buildings in the area, the visionary approach to architecture runs hand in glove with the company’s view of serving the packaging sector.

DHL Exel’lence in transit packaging

Through its sponsorship of the Best Transit Pack category, DHL Exel Supply Chain wants to remind the packaging industry just how important innovation is to its business. At the same time the company hopes to increase awareness of the breadth of solutions it provides for both existing and potential customers. “High quality transit packaging is a key element in the delivery of our service to customers in terms of on time in full and with nil damage or discrepancy,” explains James Hurrell, business development manager, DHL.

“There are increasing pressures from end users, in particular from retailers, to take cost out of the supply chain and innovation in packaging can play an important role in reducing the costs within the total materials supply chain.”

DHL has a vast portfolio of services designed to meet the needs of the packaging supply chain from transportation and warehousing, to inventory optimisation; from inbound to manufacturing solutions, to environmental and waste management solutions.

This means that it is critically important that the advantages of good packaging are understood; for DHL this means that it can lower total costs and achieve higher service levels to customers.

“If products are damaged in transit, and not delivered at the right time, in the right place, in the right condition, then the supply chain has failed and our services have become compromised,” states Hurrell.

By sponsoring the Starpack Transit Award, DHL is underlining its continuing commitment to serve packaging companies across the world. “We want to be recognised by the packaging industry as market leaders in supply chain services, not only in our track record but through the innovative solutions which we offer,” concludes Hurrell.

Getting the right person for the job

“Starpack is about growth, creativity and setting the bar for excellence – and so are we”, says recruitment and HR services company Listgrove. To do this successfully the right people need to be in the right jobs. And Listgrove has introduced a number of new recruitment services to ensure this happens.”

CVs can be misleading: This statement will come as no surprise, but what can companies do to ensure that they select the right person for the job?

Let’s face it, employing the wrong person for the job can be catastrophic. Listgrove believes it has the answer and is introducing Competency Based Interviewing (CBI) for both candidates and clients to help prevent errors and ensure the best possible job fit.

Competency Based Interviewing involves a structured probing of the candidate to elicit their real personal values, achievements and behaviour rather than simply how they think they perform and behave.

“It may sound like a demanding process,” says Ryan Kirby, Listgrove Operations Director, “but the truth is that competency based techniques allow candidates considerable room to set their agenda and to talk in detail about their strengths, about challenges they have met; the obstacles they have overcome; and many other aspects of their life and work that demonstrate qualities over and above other aspects of their life and work that demonstrate qualities over and above the technical aspects of the CV.”

For the company, the interview technique and the associated scoring process means they can identify individuals who show the personality traits that are likely to succeed in the job. And research has shown that the key differentiator between average and superior performance is not skills, knowledge or experience, but character.

Managing director Jason Markham believes that today’s packaging industry expects much more: “At Listgrove we are meeting this demand and are launching a set of fully outsourced HR services - from Recruitment, to Staff Management and Coaching, Competency Based Frameworks, Training, HR administration and many other functions.”

Markham concludes, “We believe this will allow HR departments to focus and deepen their core strengths while delegating a range of other tasks, skills and competences to us. Many of our clients are achieving very effective HR results by working in this way.”