

What the judges' thought

The big success of this year's Starpack Industry Awards must be the marriage of materials, sustainability, design, and marketing performance areas in which the packaging supply chain has done itself proud.

Not only did entrants address all these issues by thinking outside the box, they also did so in increasing numbers, with entries rising to 321 compared with 297 in 2007.

It was exciting to see an upsurge in both entries to the Environmental award and the concentration of effort put into sustainability issues across all the categories.

So impressed were the judges with the threefold increase in entries to the Environment category that they decided to create two awards, as well as introducing a special award for some real lateral thinking that addresses recycling in the home. The two environment awards reflect Packaging Optimisation – providing real packaging reduction; and New Developments which demonstrate longer term technical solutions involving more lateral approaches.

Head Judge Steve Kelsey, strategic innovation director, PI3 Design, said: "The great response to the environmental category and the increasing innovation we are seeing in bringing sustainability issues into the heart of the majority of packaging solutions reflects positively on the packaging supply chain."

However, despite the deserved round of applause for all the hard work companies put into their environmental entries, the judges felt that some had not fully thought

through their developments. "There is still something of a dichotomy with some entries going a step too far and forgetting packaging's prime objective – 'fitness for purpose'. Perhaps they are trying too hard," was one judge's comment.

Additionally a number of entrants to some categories seemed to have forgotten that over packaging is a 21st century sin.

This year's awards programme also represents a sea-change in emphasis with a move away from the reliance on material sectors to a more inclusive approach by introducing a series of awards under the headline Design & Marketing Performance. The aim was to create a more open approach to the categories by basing them on market-led demands to

make them more relevant to what industry delivers. And it seems to have worked.

Kelsey commented: "We live in exciting and vibrant times and it was great not only to see that packaging suppliers and designers are ready to step up to the mark to be judged against their peers, it was also heartening to see how much work is being done in conjunction with brand owners and retailers."

He added: "Hopefully the winners will supply enough proof, even for the most cynical of packaging's detractors, that retailers, brand owners, designers, environmental organisations and most importantly the consumer can and do work together to create solutions that work on all levels whether sustainability, consumer convenience, branding or product safety."

Winners of this year's 15 gold awards, 21 silver awards, 31 bronze awards, 3 commended certificates and 3 special awards, should be proud of their achievements. Judged by a knowledgeable panel drawn from retailers, brand owners, designers and industry professionals, packs had to be good to get anywhere close to a Starpack Award.

Critical to the success of brands is "innovation and yet more innovation" explained Kelsey. And judges were impressed by the willingness of a number of entries to dismantle a brand and put it back together again. Something which Kelsey believes will be critical to a successful future for many brands.

That said there is still room for more lateral thinking and in some categories there appeared to be a lack of vision. Or as Kelsey puts it, "The last 10 per cent – the finesse – is sometimes missing."

Kelsey added: "We want to ensure the standards needed to achieve an award are as high as possible – to ensure all participants recognise that to win an award you must have truly achieved excellence. **The judging process is integral to attaining these aims.**"



Steve Kelsey, head judge:

"We live in exciting and vibrant times"

The Ups and Downs

Thumbs up

- Good quality, balanced range of entries encompassing the full range of packaging materials.
- Beautifully produced packs
- The number of entries to the environmental category – a great problem for the judges!
- Industry response to modern retail packaging – excellent convenience, functional performance and strong shelf impact.

Thumbs down

- Uncertainty among entrants about which categories were most relevant
- Disappointing lack of explanation and supporting documentation as to why an individual entry deserved reward. (Particularly true in the technical categories where the innovation was not always immediately obvious.)
- One or two excellent entries were let down by final attention to detail. Companies really should test their pack with product to ensure it does “the job”.

You are my favourite!

No names but here are some of the packs that were particular favourites of the judges:

The Nude range; Easylift™; lightweight PET wine bottles; Tommee Tippee; Carrierpac; Tetley Fruit Teas; Coca-Cola lightweight bottle; FormShrink™ ... let's face it they are all great...

Judges

Consumer panel

Head of Judges - Steve Kelsey, Strategic Innovations Director, PI3 Design; Roy Dixon, Consultant, RDA Consultants, formerly of Marks & Spencer; Lina Mistry, Area Manager Buying and Packaging, Samworth Bros (Suppliers of meal solutions to all the major multiple retailers); Clare Bates, Packaging Manager, Wm Morrison Supermarkets; Tony Woods, former Director, MPMA; Ed Mitchell, technical design manager, Design Bridge.

Specialist judge - Cosmetics & Toiletries
Patrick Poitevin, consultant, Estee Lauder, Clinique, Aramis and many others.

Specialist judge - Environment category:
Wayne Cartwright, Senior Packaging Development and Innovation Manager, Coors Brewers.

Transit/retail ready packaging panel

Ray Pipe, Chair of Transit Panel. Principal Engineer, Royal Mail; Phil Garvey, Consultant, formerly with Perseco, Nestlé, Dalgety, Mayr-Melnhof and Cow & Gate/Nutricia; Charles Curtis, consultant, until recently Head of Packaging Development, Thorntons.



Judging line up (left to right back - front rows):
Charles Curtis, consultant transit panel; Ed Mitchell, technical design manager, Design Bridge; Ray Pipe Royal Mail & chair transit panel; Steve Kelsey, PI3 Design, and head judge consumer panel; Phil Garvey, consultant transit panel; Tony Woods, formerly director MPMA; Clare Bates, packaging manager, Wm Morrison Supermarkets; Roy Dixon, consultant; Patrick Poitevin, cosmetics & toiletries consultant; and Lina Mistry, packaging manager, Samworth Bros.