



PACKAGING...SIMPLIFIED.

1-800-562-2247

WHAT'S NEW AT PBi?

At PBi, we work to simplify packaging by paying attention to marketing aspects of the package (graphics, value added features etc) and practical production environments.

In our first 2009 pet food letter, we explore larger format laminate packaging, bags ranging from ~12lbs to 40lbs. We ask:

Do some of the new packaging features on barrier bags outstrip real-life production capabilities?

The production issues surrounding large format plastic laminate bags are considerable. The premium and super premium markets exploded with new brands, product lines and package formats as the segment grew and the economy boomed, but *we think that in the enthusiasm to get new products to market there has been an imbalance between market innovations and packaging fundamentals*, vis-à-vis things like bag hanging, sealing technologies, stable pallets, infestation, etc.

PBi At The Forefront:

We have been producing and promoting value added large format laminating packaging for more than 10+ years; and we appreciate that new features increase customer convenience and create distinction. We love innovation, in fact we thrive on it, but it appears excitement created frenzy. In some cases, hasty decisions by some marketers overlooked packaging disciplines which resulted in a negative impact on production. *In our view, innovation must take into consideration market conditions and production realities.*

Over the years, we have improved upon or solved numerous problems as they pertain to production output. We consider our hard-won knowledge of incoming bag requirements, filling and sealing on bag hangers, air removal, and pallet stability valuable experience.

PBi Strengths:

There has been tremendous growth in the specialty pet food market and we don't see changes anytime soon. We appreciate the opportunities and look forward to new packaging formats.

We have found that companies want new and innovative packaging, but sometimes they overlook critical production criteria.

- 1.) **Bag Quality:** Bags must be designed for the product weight and performance you need. They also need to be produced with sufficient bag integrity (i.e. printing, size, seal strength, etc).

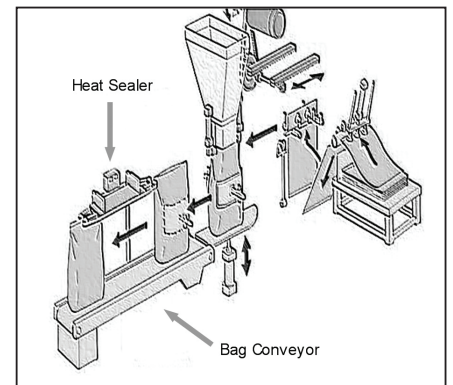
Questions to ask: Is the bag material strong enough to prevent breakage in the field? Has each lot of bags been tested for conformance to quality standards?

- 2.) **Incoming Bag Format:** Issues can present themselves when bags are not packaged properly or arrive bent or folded. They should arrive ready to hang or fill.

Questions to ask: How are the bags boxed? Are they flat? Are boxes clearly indicated with product type and other key info? Can labels be seen from several tiers up on racks? Are pallets sturdy and will they fit on my racks?

- 3.) **Bag hanging:** We have fought the battles - getting laminate bags to run on machinery that wasn't originally intended for this type of packaging (i.e. paper bag hangers) took time, effort and a lot of work to modify traditional paper bag lines.

Questions to ask: Do bags lay flat in the magazine? How do the bags get picked up? Does the package have enough rigidity to be picked up, opened and fitted on the "duckbill"? Do seals hold the "charge" when product is released into the package?



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- 4.) **Bag Sealing:** Laminate bags are closed via heat sealing and pressure. Heat sealing through the thickness variations in the four layer gussets, the two layer face, and the four layer fin seal is a challenge.

Questions to ask: What kind of sealer is being used? What mechanism is used to make the seal (hot air, hot bands, etc.)? What temperatures are being used? How is pressure applied? Is an operator needed to “address” the package to the sealer?

- 5.) **Air Removal:** Laminate bags do not have natural holes to release entrapped air like a paper bag. Excess air must be removed in order to prevent pillowing and unstable stacking on pallets. We can provide practical advice and share our experience with various solutions for issues at the sealer, on the flattener, and at the palletizer.

Questions to ask: How do you intend to get trapped air out of the package; Mechanical – is that enough? Will you use a degassing valve or vent? Are there other viable methods of getting air out?

- 6.) **Anti-skid:** Also known as anti-slip or frictionizing. This is a sticky and slippery problem (pardon the pun). We have solutions.

Questions to ask: What method is used to prevent slippery bags? If you have an air release method, do you need an anti-skid?



- 7.) **Pallet Stability:** Pallet stability is directly connected to Air Removal and Anti-skid. If bags are puffy and slippery, they simply cannot be stacked on pallets. If bags can't be stacked on pallets, product cannot ship period.

Questions to ask: How are the bags being palletized? Will the pallets be moved prior to shrink wrapping? See also – Anti-Skid and Air Removal

- 8.) **Line-speeds:** Consistent, predictable line speeds with consistently low shrinkage are essential to a robust process. Packaging choices have a direct effect on this.

Questions to ask: What are the targeted line speeds? Are you achieving optimal line speeds? If yes, why? If not, why not? Are added features or formats (i.e. zippers, sliders, incorrectly sized packages) slowing you down?

- 9.) **Bag Appearance & Features:** At the point of first-time purchase, your product may be judged as much by the bag as it is by your product. PBi has access to a wider variety of packages than a supplier who is confined to his capitalized equipment. We can supply the package that best complements your product.

Questions to ask: What bag format do you want (side-gusset, quad seal, stand-up pouch, etc.)? What features do you want (zipper, slider, handle, etc.)? How will the bags look after filling and distribution? How will the bag feel?

Conclusion:

As the market continues to diversify (premium, super premium, holistic etc.) large format laminate packaging will continue to diversify. The questions we ask:

- 1.) Are you getting as much value out of your package as you want?
- 2.) Did you overshoot on innovation?
- 3.) Are you achieving the marketing “distinction” needed for your package?
- 4.) Is through put/line-speeds adequate to meet competitive pressure in the market?
- 5.) Are your packages experiencing unforeseen problems through shipping and distribution?

To survive and even prosper, especially in this economy, you need to satisfy both the needs. *We can help you achieve a balance between value added packaging features and production realities. We welcome your input and comments.*

If you have any questions or you are wrestling with some of these very issues, please don't hesitate to contact Robert Hepburn or Mark Howley at 1-800-562-2247.