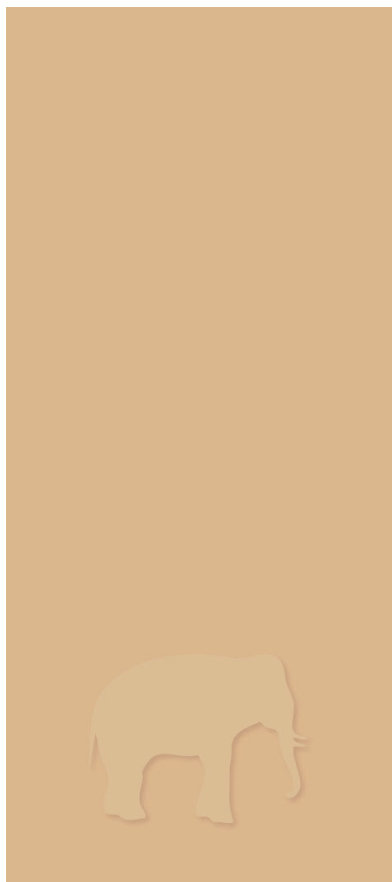


Business Stories

The Chai Stop

The Chai Stop improved its packaging to increase its shelf appeal



Background

A producer of over 50 varieties of premium curry, The Chai Stop sells award-winning dishes made in small batches from authentic recipes. The company uses naturally grown local produce, preferring to cook with organic vegetables and outdoor-reared meat wherever possible. All its products are wheat and gluten free and sell in individual portions either direct to the public or through a network of farm shops.

The challenge

Whilst The Chai Stop had a loyal customer base, its packaging did not reflect the high-quality of its produce. Sold in standard foil containers, with a simple black and white label, its curries had nothing to differentiate them visually and they failed to stand out from competitors in a freezer cabinet.

The response

Partner Tina Cesbron realised that improving packaging would help the business to grow but she hadn't found a way of addressing the issue until her Business Link adviser suggested she contact South East Design (SED).

The Chai Stop was referred to the European and SEEDA funded project, Design and Innovation for Business Sustainability (DIBS), which is delivered by SED. The project then funded a two-day consultancy package to examine the company's existing packaging, the way in which it was used, and develop a sustainable design that would help to build the brand and make a point of difference in store.

"We are a very environmentally aware company," said Tina. "We use lamb's wool to insulate our frozen food deliveries and the quality of our food is firmly rooted in the quality of our ingredients. It is important that our packaging should also be as sustainable as possible."

The company chose to work with Laurel Miller of a.m. associates. A specialist in structural packaging, Laurel was able to look objectively at the brand and the packaging.

"As well as providing a choice of design ideas, her recommendations looked at overall sustainability, including the



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materials used, the recyclability and general availability,” said Tina. “She also offered a way of evaluating each option.

“We decided to retain our recyclable foil containers, but incorporate one of Laurel’s recommendations to give all our products a premium edge”.

The Chai Stop now has a stunning cardboard sleeve to use across its entire range, featuring a colourful embossed elephant.

“Like all the best ideas Laurel’s solution is very straightforward,” said Tina. “The sleeve is really eye-catching, and quite unlike anything else in the market. It is also fully recyclable, and as we will only use it on products being displayed in retail outlets there will be no unnecessary waste.”

Cleverly the sleeve design also incorporates a cut out revealing the label on the foil container below. This efficient device allows The Chai Stop to use the same sleeve for all its 50+ dishes, reducing set-up costs, simplifying production and usage and creating a more sustainable product.

The outcome

The Chai Stop is confident its new packaging will help the company increase both turnover and profit. Initial customer research is very positive and the enhanced feel of the packaging now matches the quality of its contents. This should give the company the edge it needs to compete for shelf-space in premium farm shops and supermarkets.

“We are now looking to double our turnover in the next two years and will have to recruit to fulfil new orders,” said Tina. “The whole experience has been incredibly positive and I’d recommend it to any business wanting to increase its share through design.”

Design and Innovation for Business Sustainability (DIBS) is a European funded project that supports companies in the South East to develop practices that reduce their costs, improve their supply chain credentials and cut down on wastage on new and improved products, packaging and services. With one-to-one advice from professionals and thought provoking workshops available this project really helps you increase profits.

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