

Packaging

SOUTH ASIA

The Magazine for Modern Packaging



Kamlesh and Nirav Shah, Letra Graphix

Designer shelf-ready litho-laminated cartons



Save Food Congress at interpack
Puja kits packaging

Lively EICMA debate

When box makers think out of the box

Hats off to Milan Dey and the EICMA team in Kolkata for their 'out-of-the-box' humour and thinking at an engaging and lively debate in front of a houseful audience of corrugated box manufacturers. The very unusual topic of debate 'Corrugated box manufacturing does not have a future for the next generation entrepreneur,' evoked strong emotions within the fraternity that has been under pressure of low margins and delayed payments, which are pain points for Indian business across the board.

The debaters for the motion included Ram Kumar Sunkara of SS Consultants, a reputed industry consultant and manufacturer of corrugated boxes, Mohit Bajaj, Alok Agarwal, and Ritu Agarwal while those opposing the motion included heavyweights like Kirit Modi, president ICCMA, Subrata Das, Chaitali Chakravorty Jain and young entrepreneur Rishab Agarwal. The debate was ably moderated by Hemant Sarogi, a past president of EICMA.

The debate surprisingly comes at a time when, after many decades, large scale investment has started flowing into the industry to take it to scalable heights. A young and well informed IIM Kolkata-educated second generation box maker Rishab Agarwal, pointed out to the senior brethren that the ₹9,500 crore industry is growing at a rate of 5% per annum and has huge scope for growth." Surely there is a lot of scope of capacity building of corrugated boxes because packaging needs have been growing at 12% to 15% annually while the kraft paper and duplex board industry are growing at 8% to 10%." Home maker Ritu Agarwal put up a strong case for the motion saying that bad payment terms, high rejections, corrupt purchase managers, long hours and low margins gave entrepreneurs sleepless nights and hypertension, and the profession is unworthy for both the current and the next generation.

Ram Kumar Sunkara of SS Consultants said that his chemical engineer son refuses to enter a career that extracts more out of an entrepreneur than it gives back. Nevertheless, the audience with an overwhelming voice vote decided that the motion was defeated and corrugated box making was indeed a worthy profession for the next generation entrepreneur. Humour and repartee was at its best during the evening with Mohit Bajaj entertaining the audience with great 'sher' and 'shairi' while the evening ended with cocktails and dinner. ■

– Sandip Sen



L to R: Chaitali Chakravorty Jain and B N Mukherjee of MC Packaging, Kolkata

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Room for growth for non-automated plants

After the debate, *Packaging South Asia* met one of the speakers at the meet, Chaitali Chakravorty Jain, director of MC Packaging who has been in the box making business for a decade. MC Packaging was started at Belehata, Kolkata by her uncle BN Mukherjee, the founder director of East Calcutta Packaging and one of the oldest members of EICMA. "The unit is still running today and manufactures cartons only for exports, catering primarily to leather gloves and leather goods exporters," says Mukherjee. These buyers purchase adhesive pasted corrugated cartons that have no stapled joints.

"Ten years ago we started our second unit MC Packaging, an ISO certified unit that is supplying to domestic clients,"

says Chaitali Chakravorty Jain. With consistent quality and competitive pricing, it did not encounter problems in either finding clients or getting the right margins. It converts 250 metric tonnes of liners and board a month with maximum box sizes of 24 x 33-inches and the thickest being 7-ply cartons, for high profile clients including Indian Oil, Bharat Petroleum and Dabur. "We also have several smaller buyers with good and regular demand," says Jain, "and thanks to Ballavpur Paper Mills of Jharkhand, we no longer have a problem in procuring consistent quality of paper. The volumes are moderate but consistent, so the solution is not in more automated plants, at least in Bengal," continued Jain, "but to understand what the clients really need." ■

– Sandip Sen