

Corrugated Industry Unites in Sustainability Messaging Strategy

You can't work with the corrugated industry for long before learning to appreciate corrugated as a material that offers tremendous value to a wide range of business interests, consumers and the environment. Many also come to see corrugated as an unsung hero, taken for granted.

This summer, the Corrugated Packaging Alliance will complete the first-ever life-cycle analysis (LCA) for the U.S. corrugated industry. For the first time, clear, hard data will quantify the corrugated industry's environmental footprint. Then, armed with peer-reviewed, credible facts, the industry will tell its story to the world.

While data collection for the LCA continues, a team has assembled to develop a message strategy that will shape the way the industry communicates its story to stakeholders. Artemis Strategy Group (www.artemisg.com) is working with CPA leadership to position corrugated packaging as the material of choice across a spectrum of key stakeholders, using new data from the LCA and other research.

The message development team kicked off its effort with an organizational meeting in Portland, Maine, last week. Artemis' Jon DeWitt led a searching discussion to help define and prioritize stakeholder groups, messaging goals and strategies. Joining the CPA core group of AF&PA, AICC and FBA representatives to provide expert input were John Heckman (Director, Five Winds International, currently working on the LCA), and Brian Wagner (Vice President and COO, Packaging & Technology Integrated Systems, LLC and Global Sustainability Solutions Inc.).

The team grappled with strategic questions such as: what do our stakeholders think and how do they behave toward corrugated now? What do they need to know about corrugated in order to establish or solidify its preference?

These questions and more will be explored through a compilation and review of current research, and through in-depth interviews with industry leaders to catalog issues and insights into potential positioning options. A detailed list of target stakeholders within key

audiences including packaging buyers, specifiers and influencers, will be compiled. At the conclusion of these exercises the team will again come together in a message workshop on June 23-24 in Seattle, Washington.

The process will culminate with development of tested, salient messages and information that will be used to educate stakeholders about corrugated's sustainability story, and to equip corrugated member companies with consistent messages and materials for educating their own employees and customers.

The entire message development process will be completed in time for the fall trade shows, including research, creative, testing and tracking activities. New industry communications will be issued at the Sustainable Packaging Forum and SuperCorrExpo in September, and PackExpo in November. The FBA Sustainability and Communication Committees will provide strategic input along the way.

Meanwhile, corrugated industry members are invited to share existing, relevant research findings pertaining to sustainability issues and market perceptions of corrugated packaging, for input to the information gathering process. Send your input to: Cheryl Young (cyoungpr@verizon.net) and Taryn Pyle (tpyle@aiccbox.org).