

Mid-Atlantic Packaging introduced a two-piece display-ready package in 1994 for The Hershey Co.

Photos by Nick Griffin



FIFTEEN YEARS AGO, MID-ATLANTIC PACKAGING INTRODUCED A TWO-PIECE DISPLAY-READY PACKAGE. TODAY, THIS DESIGN IS AN INTEGRAL PART OF CLUB STORES AND POSSESSES A STRONG PRESENCE THROUGHOUT MANY RETAIL OUTLETS.

The development of the display-ready package is a classic example of a box plant partnering with its customer and machinery supplier to brainstorm ideas and solutions. The end result was a patented design that has become a staple at most club stores.

It was 15 years ago that Mid-Atlantic Packaging, a Montgomeryville, Pa., corrugated plant, met with representatives of The Hershey Co., the largest chocolate producer in North America and a long-time customer, to discuss the idea of a combination shipping/display container. They came up with the display-ready package.

The self-contained shipper becomes a multi-color display simply by removing one piece. Over the years the package has evolved into what is

known today as the "retail-ready" package. It can be found in multiple sizes, footprints and applications across a broad range of retail environments.

Perhaps most noticed as the colorful portion of club store pallet displays, it is increasingly being used as shelf displays which contain and draw attention to their product contents.

### Two Pieces, One-Pass

By customizing its specialty folder-gluer in the early '90s, Mid-Atlantic was able to manufacture the two-piece retail-ready package for Hershey. This consisted of the addition of the first "secondary feeder," making it possible to combine two sheets into a single, glued product.

This creative approach to folder-glue continues with the company's recent addition of a Bahmüller Turbox specialty folder-gluer with the Topmatcher module, a machine design based on Mid-Atlantic's input.

The Turbox is a 90.5-inch, all servo driven machine with extensive automation, innovative front folding technology, and graphic user interface operator control panels. The Topmatcher is a multi-piece feeder that allows running two- or three-piece boxes.

Mid-Atlantic's motivation for purchasing the Bahmüller gluer was its commitment to providing Hershey with the highest technology, says Andy Pierson, Mid-Atlantic President..

"We have had a partnership with the Hershey Co. and that partnership every year has involved us coming up with a number of different designs. We've had to continue to invest in our business to make these designs more efficiently," he says. "We looked at the Bahmüller because presently to run these two-piece display-ready cases you had to do them in two passes."

The inner case was glued first and then run through a secondary feeder. "That at the time was the most cost-effective way to do it," Pierson says, adding that Mid-Atlantic worked with Bahmüller on a machine design that would yield a single pass operation. Mid-Atlantic staff even traveled to Bahmüller's headquarters in Germany.

The end result was the Turbox with the Topmatcher feeder. The case can be glued in one pass, providing a more cost-effective solution for Hershey.

"Mid-Atlantic provided some very helpful input," says Andy Reissmann, Bahmüller Vice President. "We sought them out because they had many years of experience running multi-piece boxes for the Hershey Co. There has been a long relationship between myself and Mid-Atlantic. It was us who sought them out."

Mid-Atlantic also involved Hershey in the discussions about the Turbox design. "I was involved with that early on," says Bruce Fair, recently retired Director of Global Packaging Procurement for Hershey. "We felt that was an

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opportunity for [Mid-Atlantic] to grow the business.

"We have some cases that have up to 15 places where they're glued. The more sophisticated glue was where Mid-Atlantic made a lot of inroads and the Bahmüller is just one more step to doing things that other folks can't," Fair says.

### Market Driver

In the early '90s, club stores and retailers like WalMart and Kmart were pushing companies like Hershey to develop a display-ready package, according to Fair. As a result, Hershey switched from plain brown boxes to multi-color display-ready cases.

"We worked with Mid-Atlantic to develop those cases," Fair says. "They developed a one-piece, multi-color display case with a half slotted brown box over the top of it. We shared a joint patent on that. It allowed the stores to pop open the half slotted box and pull it off and put the display-ready case right on the shelf."

Hershey was one of the first companies to adopt this type of shelf presence in the store.

"I would bet in the early '90s at least 90 to 95% of our shipments to customers were in



**Allen Kanter (right),  
Mid-Atlantic Packaging  
founder, and Andy Pierson,  
President, in front of the  
Bahmüller Turbox  
specialty folder-gluer.**



brown boxes. Now it's probably 65% multi-color and 35% brown box," Fair says. "It has been very successful for everyone. Just walk through the candy aisle and everybody is in display-ready, multi-color cases."

At the club store, retail-ready packages allow personnel to quickly convert a shipper into a shelf display with a minimal number of steps. On both pallet displays and on shelves the color and structure of the package provide consumer draw with little to no need for other forms of display marketing.

The retail-ready concept drives impulse purchase marketing and enables many of the U.S.'s largest companies, both manufacturers and retailers, to increase sales while lowering their costs.

A two-piece retail-ready box provides substantial savings for the customer by reducing the number of components, thereby removing unnecessary packaging material from the design, Pierson says. This reduction of fiber while providing the performance characteristics of a two-piece structure directly support another major packaging driver for both Consumer Product Good's and retailers, the oft-mentioned

move to sustainability. This is also evident in reduced shipping costs and more efficient utilization of space.

## Industry Leader

Mid-Atlantic continues to lead the market in the two-piece display-ready category. The company holds 12 patents, in addition to three pending patents on its structural designs. The cases represent a significant part of the company's business, Pierson says.

Fair says Mid-Atlantic's commitment to providing packaging solutions is the key reason why Hershey has been doing business with the board converter for almost 20 years.

"They want to be the best in the industry. They want to be an industry leader in the multi-color, corrugated display-ready, shelf-ready business and they'll do whatever it takes to invest in the business," Fair says. "Allen Kanter (Mid-Atlantic Packaging founder) and Andy Pierson have always been looking for new technology to be an industry leader. That's so important. Allen has done a wonderful job of putting money back into the business," he adds.



Mid-Atlantic Packaging designers meet to discuss package design solutions.