

THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX

Choosing Elitron cutting technology to create custom-made cartons proved a 'smart' move for a forward-thinking Spanish packaging company

Thanks to successful intergenerational passages and a genuine passion for corrugated, the Font family has been converting corrugated carton in Barcelona since 1954. A forward-looking attitude has helped the company to grow, both in dimensions – up to roughly 32.000m² of productive plant – and in corporate culture: by investing in the most advanced technologies in terms of product design, production and applying lean production frameworks.

Following this positive and dynamic ethos, Martina Font, Director at Font Packaging Group, launched an innovative new startup to diversify the core business. In an increasingly fast changing world, where mass customisation became paramount, Ms. Font's idea was that packaging needs to turn 'smart', and Kartox was launched in 2014.

The mission of the company is to produce highly custom-made carton boxes, tailored in every detail, from the shape to the dimensions, and with the value-adding proposition of a consulting and designing service.

The new venture was a challenge: not only in terms of business but also technology. However, Kartox was able to succeed thanks to a mix of owned software solutions and, more importantly, an Elitron Kombo TAV-R which enabled the mass customisation with its full automation capabilities. The Kombo TAV-R brought Kartox workflow to another level in terms of efficiency and became the core of its production department.



Countless Kartox packaging solutions are offered



The Kartox team



Inside view of the Kartox packaging shop, where everyone gets their own custom-made box

INTERVIEW WITH MARTINA FONT OLIVÉ, DIRECTOR AT FONT PACKAGING GROUP & KARTOX CO-FOUNDER

Where does the idea of Kartox come from?

It comes from the enthusiasm of my family. We are a great team and we communicate a lot. We started off with the idea of diversifying our core business and we have been looking at new concepts and innovative business models in the corrugated industry. So, speaking with customers and partners, we understood that there was an untapped [niche] in the market: the production of customised boxes, in small quantities, online and just-in-time. In 2009 we founded NT Pack.

How did the project evolve?

It did not work! Back in 2009 consumers were not ready to buy boxes online. Still

that didn't change our mind about the potential of the idea. Simply put, we started too early. When we shut down the project we updated its business model and in 2014 we launched Kartox which is working out fine.

Which are Kartox's unique selling points?

Kartox is the solution to have a box either in a single unit or few quantities in a matter of few days, with tailored dimensions, a dedicated design and the consultancy of an expert. It was something that hasn't existed in Spain or in Europe ever before. It was possible to find a standard box but not such a tailored level.

How did you manage to make Kartox co-exist with the box making facility?

Clearly we couldn't produce five or 10 boxes effectively with our case makers. After a



Elitron's fully automated digital cutting solution Kombo TAV-R with the special web-to-print configuration



A step by step process. Customers are helped by Kartox professionals throughout the whole packaging design journey.

thorough assessment we understood Kartox's project had to be carried out separately as it's a pure service instead of a pure production plant. From that moment on we started investigating the most appropriate technologies.

How did you get to Elitron?

Before the Kombo TAV we had another digital cutter but it was way too slow. We needed a fast machine capable of working 24/7 on several short to medium runs and, more importantly, fully automated in terms of loading and unloading. This was because, when it comes to corrugated carton, margins are rather low and big volumes are needed to make enough money. Automation is then the keyword. Software-wise we integrated our ERP with Elitron's so that we could come up with a fully automated workflow.

But you are not the only ones with software and digital cutting technologies...

Expertise is our strength. My grandfather started converting carton in 1951 and, to me, whoever approaches carton without expertise is going to fail.

Which are the real challenges?

If you are a box maker, those boxes better be working. The challenge in manufacturing a box is to design it, assess the quality of the carton, produce it and eventually deliver it. In doing so, many variables come into play, which include also the weight of the product to pack. Shipping pills or a lamp are two different things.

Who fills your customer base?

As of today it's 60% B2B and 40% end users. There are big brands that must ship samples around the world and ask us for five boxes at a time, or small to medium companies which order around 50 to 100 units per time. Some of them are e-commerce retailers. Some others purchase them for domestic use. Because of this diverse portfolio of customers, we had to move out from the Font Packaging production plant to an external store where we can physically meet the clients, offer them our advice and consulting services.

Which are the next steps?

As of today we only produce plain boxes. However we plan on implementing digital printing from 2018 and we soon expect to introduce another Kombo TAV. The goal is to further expand our business both nationwide and internationally. ■

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