

Boulder company holds first-ever 'Squeeze Pack Summit'

Conference aims to make single-serve packaging sustainable

A Boulder-bred company piqued Alex Bogusky's interest earlier this year.

Bogusky -- an influential ad man who stepped away from the business this year -- was intrigued by Justin's, a local maker of nut butter products. Justin's found some success by stepping outside the jar and putting its product into portable squeeze packs.

Bogusky wanted to invest in the company but was quick to express his concerns. The squeeze packs, although inventive, were made of petroleum-based plastics.

"I didn't know I had lit any kind of fire," Bogusky said.

He had. And this week's "Squeeze Pack Summit" is one result.



Bogusky's financial backing and call to action spurred founder and CEO Justin Gold not only to seek out packaging alternatives but also to consider organizing a conference on the sustainability of the single-serve packaging industry. Eco-friendly solutions exist, but they're cost-prohibitive, and some of the compostable options need some tweaking for shelf stability, Gold said.

"Ultimately, the goal is to get enough people using compostable film that it takes away our reliance on oil and it really puts pressure on the system to evolve around packaging," he said.

This week, Gold's hopes could come closer to fruition when Justin's, in conjunction with Bogusky and Boulder Digital Works, hosts the Squeeze Pack Summit. Attending the two-day event will be representatives of the likes of Whole Foods, NatureWorks, Nestle, WhiteWave Foods and Kroger.

"Our goal is to close the loop on waste so it's cradle-to-cradle, something you use over and over again instead of filling up landfills," Gold said. "That could take decades, but you have to start somewhere."

The event is not open to the public, but it will be available for viewing via Webcast at theleastyoucando.com, Gold said.

The Web site also will serve as the launching pad for the "large-scale consumer awareness platform," to help drive packaging innovation through consumer demand.

"It's a platform that will launch around this issue and go on and tackle other issues," said Bogusky, who is providing creative director services to Boulder Digital Works for the Web project.

The worldwide packaging industry is valued at \$429 billion and is expected to grow to \$530 billion by 2014, according to a report released in January by Boulder-based Pike Research.

The sustainable packaging sector's growth is outpacing that of the industry, Pike Research officials said. Eco-friendly packaging revenue should increase to \$170 billion in 2014, a 93.2 percent gain from the \$88 billion in 2009 revenue.

"Without a doubt, sustainability has become a major driver in the packaging sector," said John Kalkowski, editorial director for trade publication Packaging Digest.

A lot of the movement behind the growth is coming from retailers and individual companies that have put an increasing focus on developing sustainability policies, he said.

Most companies don't view packaging shifts as an expense, but rather as part of cost-reduction programs, he added.

"It's just good business," he said.

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