



Ernest  Packaging Solutions™

WHITE PAPER

Product Packaging Design: Your 5-point Plan for Protecting Success



**Ernest
To The
Rescue**

For companies of all shapes and sizes, growing your business in today's retail market means expanding outside of your local area. The explosion of online shopping and fast delivery means small companies can reach a much bigger market. It also means you have to ship your product to reach those new customers.



No matter what you're selling, making sure your product arrives in perfect condition is essential to your success. When damage occurs during shipment or delivery, your customers have a negative experience. And that often means you've lost their business, with the potential to lose even more if they write about it online. After all, customer reviews are king.

your business is a startup and you're still searching for the right packaging solution, or you're a seasoned company using an outdated solution, if your packaging is not protecting your product during shipment, your business is suffering and so is your bottom line.

Damaged product can also increase your expenses due to the high cost of returns, refunds, and replacement costs, not to mention any fees you might incur if you're selling through a third-party retailer. It all adds up to more losses and less profit. Whether



Rum Sisters
Packaging

It's Time to Get Creative Inside the Box

Whether you're shipping five units a day or 5,000, engineering your packaging to better protect your product can have significant ROI, even if it costs a little bit more at the outset. Just as damaged product has a long-tail negative effect, protecting your product during shipment can have a positive impact on your business for years to come, earning you repeat customers and a good reputation—both of which create value for your whole business.

When it comes to engineering your product packaging, it's important to look at the big picture. In many cases, investing a little more in your packaging will actually save you money overall. While this may seem counterintuitive, the packaging design that best protects your product will also save you on costly returns, prevent bad transit-related experiences, and promote growth.

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With so many packaging options available, it can be hard to know where to start when you're seeking a more protective packaging solution. Considering the following five points will help you engineer a solution that will better protect your product, while also improving your bottom line:

1. Be open to changing your process
2. Understand your failure points
3. Take an iterative approach
4. Get creative with off-the-shelf solutions
5. Calculate all the costs

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Since changing the way we package our cakes, we can ship them anywhere without worrying about them falling apart before they get there. Working with Ernest was really a game-changer for our business.

- Kelly O'Sullivan, Rum Sisters



#1 - In with the new: Be open to changing your process

Change is never easy. For many businesses, you do things the way you've always done them, and that's just how it is. This can apply to your packaging or any other process, and may be especially true of larger companies where administrative challenges can add to the difficulty of changing processes or implementing new ones. The idea of making any kind of change—even for the better—can be overwhelming.

If the packaging solution you're using isn't doing its job, being open to change is a necessary step to reducing damage, and enabling growth—both of which are better for business.

After years of packaging its produce the same way, Fresh Point, North America's largest wholly owned produce distributor, found itself in need of change. The company's product was fresh, but their packaging was stale, and this was causing big problems. Fresh Point was using containers that had to be pre-built and hand-taped each day before they could start packaging and distributing their local produce. That meant they were losing crucial hours building boxes. And that's not the only problem—some of their produce was just too heavy for their boxes. When faced with high humidity that weakened the cardboard, Fresh Point was having trouble with watermelons, bell peppers, and celery breaking through or warping the bottom of the boxes. This made them difficult to stack, which further slowed down distribution. And when damaged boxes resulted in watermelons and veggies on the loose, customers weren't happy.

Ernest Packaging Solutions engineered a custom design that solved both problems by combining an auto-bottom box with a snap 123 top.



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Changing the way we were packaging our produce changed our business. Now, instead of worrying about breakage and other issues, we can focus on distribution and growth.

- Zach Farmer, Fresh Point

The new auto-bottom design eliminated Fresh Point's need to tape every box. This actually saved the company two-fold—first on the cost of tape, and second on the considerable man-hours devoted to taping. Every hour they save on taping is an hour they gain in distribution.

The newly designed snap top reinforces the box strength for better stacking and faster distribution. The new design is also able to withstand humidity—so no more breakage or rolling produce.

Fresh Point was able to redeploy considerable savings from the new packaging to promote rapid growth. Zach Farmer at Fresh Point says, "Now, instead of pre-building and taping boxes for hours every morning, we're able to start packing at 6am sharp. And that means we get more produce out the door, without worrying about breakage." For Fresh Point, taking a fresh look at their product packaging design was a wise choice.

#2 - Work backwards to find a solution:

Where is your packaging failing?

If you don't know where your packaging is failing, you can't fix it. In many cases the first step to finding a better packaging solution is figuring out exactly where your current design is falling short. By pinpointing where you can prevent breakage or any other kind of damage, you can work backwards towards the best solution.

Crazy Coolers is a Raleigh based company that manufactures and sells one-of-a-kind motorized coolers you can actually drive just about anywhere. While their product was doing great off the shelf, they ran into big problems when they started shipping. A whopping 30% of their product was being damaged during shipment or delivery. You can imagine what this was doing to their business—not only were they suffering major losses on returns, they were also experiencing the impact of negative customer reviews online. They needed a completely new packaging solution to solve their protection problems.



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As soon as we started using the new packaging, our damages dropped from 30% to zero. We couldn't believe the difference.

- Crazy Coolers

Ernest identified the Crazy Coolers packaging failure point, which was inadequate padding inside the box for such a heavy product—each cooler comes with a weighty 49CCOHV engine. Ernest quickly engineered a solution, which included expanded polystyrene (EPS) pad inserts. When the Crazy Cooler product changed, Ernest was able to re-engineer the package for even better protection using die-cut polyethylene foam (PE) and air cells. As a result, the new packaging absorbs multiple impacts and handles vibration much better.

With their shipping problem solved, Crazy Coolers was able to up its production and grow the business thanks to a great customer experience and positive reviews online. Now they can ship their unique product to fun-loving (and a little crazy) folks all over the country without worrying about damaging their product, or their reputation.

“Thanks to the new packaging solution Ernest designed, our customers can unbox their coolers and drive away happy—and that keeps us happy too.”

- Craig Riley at Crazy Coolers

#3 - If at first you don't succeed: Take an iterative approach

For early stage businesses or those who've been around the block but are new to the shipping game, don't be discouraged if you can't opt for the perfect package right off the bat. You have many options to choose from and investing a little time into trial and error can pay off dividends in the long run. When you land on the right solution that will protect your product the way you need it to, you'll reap the rewards.

This was the case for Rum Sisters, a boutique bakery that specializes in gourmet cakes with a kick—they're infused with 45% alcohol. Already doing great in their native Gulf Shores, AL, these feisty entrepreneurs were ready to expand and start shipping their product all over the country. But they ran into problems right away. The high alcohol content was causing their cakes to crumble during shipment. The Rum Sisters knew what their failure point was, but they had no idea how to solve it.

“We knew people everywhere would fall in love with our decadent flavors, but all they were getting was a box full of crumbs. We had no clue what to do,” says Kelly O'Sullivan.

Ernest met with the owners and began a process of trial and error, shipping cakes back and forth to test various packaging solutions. Rum Sisters provided extensive feedback on each design iteration. Having a clear idea of what they liked and didn't like helped Ernest find a solution they were happy with much faster.

That solution was a stock RETT ("roll-end tuck top") box with bubble wrap on top. This packaging offers double protection for the delicate the cakes: the RETT fits snugly, holding the cake in place during shipment, and the bubble absorbs the impact so the cakes don't crumble.

*The best designs
have a tremendous
amount of
customer input.*

Duncan Jennings
Ernest Director of Client
Relations, Raleigh NC



As an added bonus, the new design eliminated the need for a shipper, which cut the company's costs by \$2 per shipment. With the new protective packaging ensuring their cakes arrive in one piece, Rum Sisters began shipping all over the country, spreading seasonal spirit from coast to coast. This holiday season the company will use an even better packaging solution, which includes a corrugated ring insert that Ernest custom designed as the next phase of the product's shipper strategy.

Jennings explains, "It's important to remember that the initial design is just the beginning. As your business evolves and grows, the design can be continually tweaked and improved to meet your changing needs."

#4 - Start with what's available:

Get creative with off-the-shelf options

You might think engineering a solution to solve your product's unique needs and challenges means you have to spend a lot on designing and tooling a custom solution. That's simply not true. There are plenty of great options available off-the-shelf. Knowing where to start is the key. The right partner can help you find the best combination to deliver the product protection you need to grow your business, without blowing your budget.

For both Rum Sisters and Crazy Coolers, Ernest combined off-the-shelf options to create a custom solution that delivered the product protection they needed. Once your business is enjoying the benefits of better product protection, you can upgrade to a custom packaging solution if better results and increased revenues make it a smart business decision.

#5 - Spend more to save more: Consider all the costs

While choosing a less expensive packaging solution may seem like an obvious way to improve your bottom line, it doesn't always work that way. You need to look at the big picture and consider all the costs. If your packaging design is not protecting your product, it's costing you in many ways. In this case, cutting expenses up front may lead to greater overall losses and less sales.

For Crazy Coolers, while the new packaging solution cost considerably more than what they were using on a per unit basis, the overall benefits far outweighed the additional cost. By eliminating damage during shipment they saved a bundle on losses and refunds, which meant they were also able to up their production and grow their business. More protective packaging led to increased revenues.

In some cases, paying a little more for a custom design will save you costs in other areas too. For Fresh Point, even though their new packaging cost a little more, switching to a solution that did not require assembly actually saved them on overall outlay. For Rum Sisters, investing a little upfront to find a solution that offered complete protection for their cakes during shipment enabled them to expand their business nationwide.

Good for your product, better for business

If you find yourself in need of a new—or better—protective packaging solution, taking the five factors outlined above into consideration can lead to tremendous ROI. Take your time, keep an open mind, and consider all your options before you settle on the best solution for your product's unique needs and challenges. Better protection for your product can mean greater customer satisfaction, less damages, and the ability to grow your business. And that adds up to success.



At Ernest Packaging Solutions, we specialize in helping clients find the best protective packaging options for their specific needs. Contact us today and let's talk about engineering a better solution to protect your product, improve your business, and deliver success.

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