

FORCEpkg's remote working beginnings come in handy



KO Industries, a new York County company developing hand sanitizer for the COVID-19 pandemic, teamed up with FORCEpkg to create labeling for its new product in record time.

FORCEpkg creates packaging designs and develops branding with store shelves and online marketplaces in mind. The firm's clients include Robitussin, Advil, ChapStick and Stoner Invisible Glass.

Most of Force's clients are life-sustaining businesses so the company's workload has yet to see many changes, and a majority aren't local so the staff has already familiarized itself with keeping in touch with clients remotely.

Newmaster said biggest pivot the company had to make in recent weeks was in regards to a contract with a new company started by Springettsbury Township, York County-based industrial automation firm K2 Kinetics.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, K2 Kinetics launched KO Industries, a new company developing hand sanitizer amidst shortages for the product. K2 Kinetics used its experience in processing and packaging automation, particularly in the food and beverage industry, to quickly bring together a new hand sanitizer product to the market as KO Industries, said Kevin Keller, founder and CEO of K2.

The product went from concept to store shelves in a matter of weeks so KO Industries turned to FORCEpkg, knowing from experience that they could trust the firm on a quick turnaround.

"Ben McLaughlin (general manager at K2 Kinetics) had used Tom Newmaster in the past to design packaging for confections and snacks so having a well-trusted resource available was important as we needed to move quickly to design packaging and get products out into the marketplace," said Keller.

When the call came to leave the office, the staff at FORCEpkg took their computers and worked from home, something many of them had done before the downtown Lancaster package design firm purchased its brick and mortar headquarters.

FORCEpkg in downtown Lancaster began as a cloud-based business and while the company has since moved to a physical office, its roots of working over the internet made the switch to remote work an easy one, said co-founder Tom Newmaster.

Prior to opening its office on the top floor of the W.W. Griest Building at 8 N. Queen St. in Lancaster, any in-person meeting for the FORCEpkg staff was held at a restaurant or coffee shop.

"Our whole system is cloud-based and everything is on a laptop and people take their laptop home so we just had to tell people not to come in and they could open their laptop and work," Newmaster said.

Newmaster said that with the speed that the product needed to get into store shelves, a relationship built on trust was necessary to allow Force to get packaging in the hands of KO without delay.

“They went from a nonexistent company to packaging for retail in three weeks, which is blazing speed,” Newmaster said. “You can’t be afraid of making small mistakes and on the client side, they have to trust that whatever you come up with will work.”

The staff may be used to working remotely but Newmaster said that leaving the firm’s physical location has still impacted communication. For example, all of his staff knew what their team members were working on, but with the changes in workflow brought on by the pandemic, many were probably surprised to see that the company designed the packaging for the new KO Industries sanitizer.

“You aren’t communicating with the group so when you aren’t together they don’t know what the group is doing, so there were probably some people on our team that saw it on retail and didn’t know we made it,” Newmaster said.

The firm may be continuing with work unaffected by most of the perils of a sudden shift to remote working, but if Newmaster misses anything it’s the office’s great internet connection.



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