



The Clever Little Bag will come into use in transportation, storage and display of Puma athletic shoes. Consumers will carry off their new purchase in the re-usable red bag, leaving the box behind to be recycled or re-used. CREDIT: PUMA

Puma announces sustainable packaging and distribution system

Sports brand Puma has launched an initiative that it believes re-invents the shoe-box, turning it into part of a new and more sustainable way of transporting and presenting its shoes to shoppers. The new idea, The Clever Little Bag, is part of the company's quest for what it calls "a carbon neutral paw-print"...

Puma made it clear from the outset that the initiative was part of a wider programme through which it aims to reduce waste and carbon emissions by a significant amount. One component of this is a move away from traditional product packaging such as shoe-boxes and apparel polyethylene bags. These two types of material emerged as the focus points of the packaging project, but only after the company investigated and invested in more 2,000 ideas and 40 packaging prototypes over a period of 21 months. The specific task it had set itself was to reduce the environmental footprint of each shoe's packaging, from its source to the shop floor.

The Clever Little Bag was created by renowned Swiss industrial designer Yves Béhar. It consists of a box made

Sports brand Puma announced a new part of its sustainability strategy on April 13 with an event at the Design Museum in London to unveil a concept called The Clever Little Bag.

from a single, folded piece of 100% recycled cardboard that will come into use in transportation, storage and display of Puma athletic shoes, and a re-usable red bag, in which consumers will carry off their new purchase, leaving the box behind to be recycled or re-used.

Puma said the initiative, which will go live in its supply chain during the second half of 2011, will enable the company to use 65% less paper in its packaging each year, reduce its carbon emissions by 10,000 tonnes, and its use of plastic by 275,000 tonnes.

Mr Béhar said at the London event that he had been happy to take on the project, especially as the brief was open, allowing him to examine exactly how far he could

“...as a matter of interest...”

WHY THE LITTLE BAG IS CLEVER

Puma will start to use the Clever Little Bag concept in its footwear supply chain during the second half of 2011. The benefits it expects to make the following savings:

- 8,500 tonnes of paper – a reduction of 65%
- 20 million megajoules of electricity
- 1 million litres of fuel oil
- 1 million litres of water
- 500,000 litres of diesel
- Up to 275 tonnes of plastic by eliminating plastic shopping bags/footwear 13.3%.

take the idea of reducing the contribution of packaging and distribution to what Puma calls its overall environmental ‘paw-print’.

“Reinventing is hard,” he said. “Reinventing the shoebox, which is what we have done here, almost, meant discovering a whole new world for me of distribution centres, and the back-rooms of stores. It also meant taking the new idea to the logistics team at Puma; German logistics engineers know what they are doing. So all of this took great courage on the part of Puma.”

He told World Footwear that he believed The Clever Little Bag concept would lead to a better retail experience for consumers. A quick fold inwards of the box, which he is sure retail staff will be able to learn to do easily, will make the re-useable bag look like it’s lining the box. This will be a classy way to present customers with their new shoes. “It makes me think of high-class linens,” he said.

Puma chief executive, Jochen Zeitz, explained at the event that his company had changed its mission statement. It has had the stated aim for a number of years to be the most desirable sports lifestyle company in the world. To this, it has now added the word ‘sustainable’. It has a vision of a better world, Mr Zeitz continued, and to achieve that vision it is committing itself to four key attributes: to be fair, honest, positive and creative.

The new packaging and distribution ideas that the company presented in London are linchpins of its wider sustainability strategy, Mr Zeitz said. That strategy also encompasses the choice of material it will use in its footwear and apparel collections. For example, it will insist that all the leather in its shoes is free of chromium VI. Another of its commitments is to encourage its outsource manufacturing partners to accredit their production facilities under the bluesign system.

All of these ideas will combine to form a new Puma Sustainability Index (S-Index), which the chief executive said deliberately made a play on the word ‘sin’. He explained: “We feel responsible for our sins. We have to face the reality that our company, and our industry, are not sustainable yet. Business is part of the problem. So, at the very least, we have to find ways of being less



Puma chief executive, Jochen Zeitz, says his company's plan is to give back to the environment what it takes out.

CREDIT: PUMA

unsustainable. This is no longer negotiable.”

Using the S-Index, he said Puma would commit to making 50% of its international footwear and apparel collections sustainably by 2015. In the process, he said the company would reduce by 25% the amount of energy and water it uses and the amount of carbon and waste it emits. It will also reduce by 75% the amount of paper it uses across the business.

“The long-term plan is to give back to the environment what we take out of it,” Mr Zeitz said, “to have a neutral paw-print. When it comes to corporate social responsibility, this is just the beginning. The mission we have set ourselves is ambitious, but we have no choice but to believe it if we believe in a better world.” 🌍