



Design-for-recycling at RETAL: A day in the life of a packaging engineer

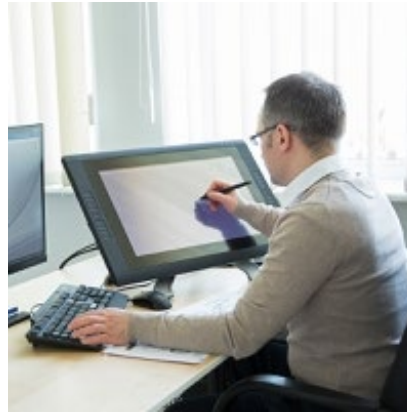
23 May 2022 --- R&D is an integral part of daily life for design engineer Andzejus Buinovskis. Buinovskis has worked at global plastic packaging manufacturer RETAL since 2015, bringing his creative design skills to his CAD-based role in the company's R&D team at its largest facility in Lithuania. To demonstrate how R&D supports progress at RETAL, we share a day in the life of Buinovskis.

In terms of product development, Buinovskis acts as a pivotal point of contact between the sales team and the market, with his remit to translate the requirements of the customers into functional packaging solutions. A day in the life of Buinovskis reflects how design is integral to the ongoing development of packaging solutions at RETAL, including evolving tethered closure options, lightweighting and integrating environmental sustainability at every stage.

Buinovskis generally starts his day by checking what online meetings are scheduled to understand what new information may be forthcoming. A regular participant in meetings for various teams throughout the company, Buinovskis's input is valued by the sales, NPD, communications and sustainability departments.

He says: "I like to keep a structure to my day where possible so that I can be creative outside of that structure. Design development can often require very small changes in order to deliver major advantages, so I have to keep my mind open and be able to visualize iterations that can be taken forward."

The first Teams video call sees Buinovskis talking to the key account manager for global beverage brands, discussing the latest feedback on how the most recent 3D CAD drawings have addressed the need for a tethered closure that provides a clear signal that it has been fully opened, while also being comfortable for the consumer to use. Following the call, Buinovskis analyzes the feedback in relation to the specifics of his drawings and considers where changes may be possible while still keeping in line with the latest legislation.



Andzejus Buinovskis, design engineer at RETAL.



Design is integral to the ongoing developments at RETAL, including tethered closure solutions.



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Recycling focus

With the next meeting scheduled between Buinovskis and the new product development chemical engineer in the RETAL sustainability team, they discuss how the company's current design-for-recycling focus can evolve with greater emphasis on integrating recycled material into the initial preform.

Buinovskis explains: "Our sister company NEO Group has developed PET flakes with recycled PET (rPET) integrated, so brands can specify this as one material and know that their rPET targets are reached. It's great to work with development teams across engineering, design and production as we all bring different expertise, new ideas and specialist understanding to reach the same goal."

Last year, NEO GROUP shared insights with us on its commercially available solution for integrating 15% rPET flakes directly into virgin PET, allowing for just one product to be used by converters (rather than both virgin and rPET) and without requiring investments in existing production processes.



Quality assurance sits closely with R&D at the RETAL testing lab.



RETAL's preform design.

Presentation planning

Buinovskis spends the rest of the day working on a presentation for an upcoming packaging industry event, which will be held online in the form of video presentations and a virtual round table discussion.

Industry issues surrounding the influence of plastic packaging in the circular economy are the theme, with Buinovskis planning to share how design-for-recycling must be introduced as early as possible into the project for maximum benefit to be achieved.

He notes: "Presentations are certainly out of my comfort zone, but I appreciate that explaining how influential design development is in terms of reaching a realistic circular economy is crucial. I work with our communications team and our R&D team to clarify the key points and then use my experience of reverse engineering our closure solutions to illustrate how environmental sustainability can be embedded into responsible plastic packaging when you make smart design decisions and work in harmony with the customers' requirements."