

# Coloring Inside the Box

CUSTOMER SOLUTIONS CENTER BRINGS BEST OF DESIGN, PROBLEM-SOLVING CAPABILITIES UNDER ONE ROOF



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It's time to think inside the box again. With the next evolution of PCC's new Customer Solutions Center, clients can now step outside their same-old design routine and step into a facility dedicated exclusively to putting their products and brands in the best light – literally.

Situated on PCC's Asheboro, North Carolina campus, the Solutions Center consists of a high-end color design center, affectionately known as the "light box," linked to a comprehensive research laboratory. It's an ideal marriage between the art of color and the science of plastics, a creative and problem-solving oasis where clients can immerse themselves in branding and product line development, buoyed by decades of PCC expertise and state-of-the-art equipment.

"We engaged our customers; we asked them what a solutions center should look like, how it can actually benefit them... and that's the way we are creating it," explains PCC Director of Development Tim Workman. The design center features a balance of real-world color lighting conditions including straight fluorescent, fluorescent/daylight and cool gray; a 10,000-chip color library, a resource library, and all the amenities of a relaxed living environment... fully stocked refrigerator, big screen plasma TV, inspirational and informative wall art, and ultra-comfortable furnishings. "Designers like to be in a relaxed work environment," says Strategic Accounts Manager Noah Bronson. When creating a brand identity, when a new product line needs to have consistent, perfect color across a broad spectrum of polymers, the design sessions can get very long. "Looking at colors for that long you can get really goofy," jokes Noah, adding, "It's almost like writing a script. That's really what we do here... tell a story in colors."

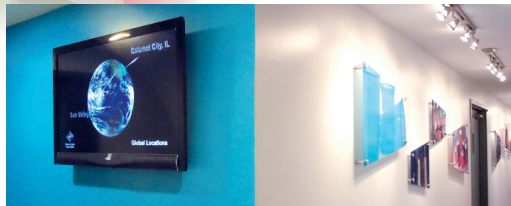
While the Center will bring key resources together for the customer's benefit, there's much more to it than physical presence. "There's a lot of market need out there that requires more than just a phone call – it requires some real collaboration between vendors, processors and end users, and that's what the Solutions Center provides... the perfect means to get all their ideas in one place to make the physical product."

And equally important, adds Noah, "everyone can be involved at the inception of the idea."

The Solutions Center is also an ideal flex environment, giving individual customers the benefits of focused, direct collaboration while also providing multiple customers the benefits of PCC's market-driven, in-house research and problem solving. A perfect example of the latter is SoluPLAs™, PCC's new line of additive solutions designed to enhance the physical properties and aesthetics of polylactic acid (PLA).

SoluPLAs was created through the Solutions Center when PCC recognized a need in the marketplace to address the processability of PLA. While there was

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no specific customer request, once SoluPLAs was developed “we had a customer that could then introduce his product into more types of products than he could before. He was able to expand his product offering to his customers because of what we did to address market concerns,” says Tim, summarizing, “If the market is looking, we may start a project based on that. Our SoluPLAs line is a perfect example.”

And it’s just one example of how PCC’s Solutions Center can be employed to take customers beyond simply meeting today’s challenge. Whether anticipating general market needs and trends, or collaborating in the light box on a new branding initiative or product launch, PCC is partnering with our customers to develop the products, services and solutions that will drive their businesses for years to come.

## ***Putting the best face on it***

**CHALLENGE:** An international cosmetics company wants to establish a new product line. Dozens of new colors are needed, and the packaging has to differentiate the line while remaining color consistent across a variety of retail and real world settings.

**SOLUTION:** The cosmetic firm’s designers spend two days at PCC’s Solutions Center, where they can see any of 10,000 color samples in a variety of lighting environments. As the cosmetics team settles in with samples, PCC designers and research technicians tap their packaging and marketing experts to collaborate with the cosmetics team on a comprehensive go-to-market strategy that looks beyond color preferences to examine lifestyle and fashion trend projections three to five years out. Consumer packaging preferences and trends are studied at the PCC design center. Product samples are created in the adjoining laboratory incorporating a mix of color-evident and color tab packaging techniques and materials. Samples are proofed in the Solutions Center’s “light box.” The cosmetics firm and PCC work closely in choosing the right packager, and this partnership continues through production and beyond product launch.

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## ***When performance is paramount***

**CHALLENGE:** A major international molder was working with a very specific set of packaging requirements from the OEM who wanted higher performance in its package. The OEM wanted to replace a standard colorant pigment with higher performance pigments and additives.

**SOLUTION:** Per the OEM’s direction, only product performance information was provided to PCC’s Solutions Center. Working through the Solutions Center research lab, PCC engineers followed the customer’s criteria for the large-scale project. The molder reviewed samples of the new products’ color and opacity at different concentration let downs and in comparison to similar examples from the marketplace. The customer now had detailed performance-based metrics to show the OEM and how they met the OEM’s specific criteria. PCC fine-tuned the formulation to the customer’s satisfaction, demonstrating the ability to drive positive results from any number of constraints, including very specific performance standards.

