



# CartonVille™

## Stars



Packaging may conjure up a picture of a boring brown box but there's so much more to it than that. There are plenty of reasons to work in packaging – the industry is thriving and this diverse sector offers real opportunity to apply your skills and personality to the right role. From designers, to production staff, management, sales and brand development – there's a range of careers in the packaging industry to suit a variety of interests and skills.

BPIF Cartons caught up with Gareth Smith in his Digital Marketing role at leading carton converter Alexir Partnership to find out what it's like to work in such a diverse industry. Producing a staggering 200 million cartons a year for leading brands involved in food, cosmetics, toiletries and pharmaceuticals markets, Alexir is a market leader. Gareth joined the company 20 months ago and worked initially on the finishing line before

being promoted to his new role in the Digital Marketing department three months ago. He has had a varied career before joining Alexir and manages two record labels and a global music distribution company representing dance music acts which he now carries out in his spare time.

### What made you make the leap into the packaging industry?

"My move into the packaging industry was a geographical choice as well as a career change. I used to live in the North East of the UK and relocated to the South-East over the last few years through my record label, later entering the packaging industry at ground level to earn some extra money as cash flow in the music business is erratic to say the least."

### What's a typical day like for you?

"My day is very varied. I arrive early usually around 8:30 – 9:00am and leave at around 5:30-5:45. I check my emails and follow up on anything that needs addressing straight away. I always keep a 'to do' list which is invaluable. I tend to work through this list and then make another one before I leave at night – then I can start afresh in the morning and keep on top of things."

"One part of my job is checking social network statistics and schedule the posts for the day across our networks (LinkedIn, Twitter and other various social networks). I also create the odd picture for the social posts; I write some company blog posts and schedule timings for when they are due to run."

"We have various meetings during the week; this could be with customers or internal catch-ups. There are also plenty of training programs, I watch webinars, take part in lots of training of the new equipment we have had installed. At the minute each day is very different."

### How much interaction do you get with customers?

"Most days we have lots of interaction with various customers who are invited to the factory. We're always meeting new customers, they enjoy coming to see us since our recent launch of a state-of-the-art digital press – the iGen 4, which has been installed on our purpose-built mezzanine. It is always great to be able to have the interaction and to see how impressed they are with the technical capabilities and opportunities that are on offer."



### What projects are you working on at the moment?

"As well as the digital marketing role I'm also working on certain projects progressively over time. This can vary from working on the company open day, trade shows stands, competition entries, flyers, branding and even designing the decor of the new office and many other projects. It really is an extremely varied position."

"I have also been trained on the new Xerox iGen and TRESU coating unit machine alongside the production manager and main machine operator which is really exciting."

### How important is it to work as a team?

"With the digital team being a small team of four we tend to lean on each other when needed and this can involve dipping in to each other's roles, whether it be taking sales orders, organising quotes as well as the printing work."

### What do you like best about the job?

"It is a challenge balancing all the different work. The job keeps changing and evolving and it is great to be involved at such an exciting time for the company as it expands and grows following on from the digital press installation. The machine is the only Xerox iGen digital press in Europe with a thick stock capability, so getting the message out to customers about what we can achieve is so rewarding."

### What kind of education and experience did you need?

"I left school with minimal qualifications later going to college to further my education and also attended computing courses leading to IT Technician qualifications. I've had a varied career so far and have worked at top electronics factories, an aerospace company and at a recording studio amongst other jobs. Managing my own record labels has given me a really good business grounding and a solid digital marketing knowledge. I'm used to dealing with all the marketing for my record business although at Alexir my work has a slightly different slant – instead of marketing business to consumer my work at Alexir is business to business mainly."

### What advice would you give to college students who are interested in working in your field?

"Work hard and keep your options open, never be afraid to fail, ask lots of questions, embrace change."

### How would you like to progress your career in the future?

"I would like to stay settled into this role and get a more solid grounding as I enjoy it very much. Ultimately I see this as a long-term career rather than just a job. The industry is not just about cardboard and it is very interesting when you see how packaging is made and how it can transform a brand."