



Providing peace of mind

The merchandise industry has to take the initiative to stay on top of product compliance. **Seth Barnett** of the PPAI explains how they're doing it in the US

As we progress into a more globalised world that continues to demand more of products in the marketplace, the promotional products industry is not free of the scrutiny of regulation, product responsibility and social compliance.

In the United States, demand for products to be produced and sourced from compliant companies is ever growing. It is necessary for all those who have a stake in our industry worldwide to understand the value of social and product compliance programmes. This is not exclusive to industry suppliers. In fact, the knowledge and comfort that comes with providing properly produced products helps ensure the effectiveness and longevity of our industry.

Many suppliers and distributors in the UK and in the US have voluntarily adopted product safety and compliance programmes that they have



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been able to use as a way of differentiating themselves from their competition. While many industry companies have employees who dedicate their time exclusively to continually auditing their supply chain, many others have been able to take part in protecting their product safety and compliance without this level of commitment.

Some of the most effective safety programmes come down to asking the right questions within the supply chain. A distributor must understand where its products are sourced and take pride in that knowledge. Further, it can use this knowledge to drive home product value to its client. Sure, the threat of a product recall always looms, but there are measures that can be taken to protect against this. It is also

worth noting that a recall can affect everyone in the supply chain, not just the sourcing point. The more research that is done about an individual product's journey to the end user, the better the chance that the product will be from a safe source that produces quality and compliant products.

Over the past two years, Promotional Products Association International (PPAI) has developed its own industry compliance programme - Product Safety Aware - to give peace of mind to those doing business within this channel. The programme has been adopted by suppliers and distributors as a means of providing the tools necessary to ask important safety and compliance questions and creating accountability within this unique supply chain.

In fact, this programme has been identified by the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), a government body providing national safety accountability, as the standard after which industries striving for a compliant environment should model their own efforts.

Anyone operating within this channel is encouraged to ask questions about the source of their products. Where does the product originate? Are the materials safe for those for whom the product is intended? Is their proper documentation from each step in the supply chain? There is no company too small to ask these questions. It is also not necessary to wait for government intervention to begin asking these questions. We must all pride ourselves on delivering a unified compliant environment. As our industry becomes more global, the footprint that we leave behind will continue to increase in size. As part of our progress, we should continue to operate as a safe, socially compliant and resourceful industry.

GCP shows the way on quality

Great Central Plastics (GCP) is an example of how of a UK manufacturer, accredited to ISO 9001 quality standards, can offer standard and bespoke plastic promotional products to short lead times.

Building trust with customers is of the utmost importance to GCP, so in addition to quality accreditation, it is Sedex-registered, REACH compliant and has even been factory audited by STR and the BBC.

Distributors can also rest assured knowing GCP is also able to supply certification of FDA and Food Grade Materials and EN71 and Toy Safety Testing.

The BRIMAN member was formed 18 years ago. Over the past two decades, GCP has grown its customer base, product range and premises, expanding to a larger 1,000m² facility, but has remained true to its ethos. In 2012, it proved



it was an eco-conscious manufacturer by adding 132 solar panels to the factory roof, which produce a third of the company's energy.

As a responsible UK manufacturer, GCP focuses closely on green processing techniques ensuring, whenever possible, each stage of the order is produced with an eco-friendly philosophy. This allows distributors to add an environmentally-friendly ethos

as a key selling point of their promotional products.

Managing director, Tony Phillips, said: "Almost anything in our range can be made out of recycled material, and while we love turning any concepts into reality, it's an added bonus when we can give it an eco-friendly twist by moulding the products out of reprocessed material. Not only are the customers happy, but we also know we are doing our bit for the environment."



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Tel: 01482 610902
 info@jadan-press.co.uk www.jadan-press.co.uk
 Rainbow House, Kimberley Street, Hull, HU3 1HH

