

PACKAGING DIGEST

PACKAGING CAREER DEVELOPMENT

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Packaging Technology and Research

Wanted: Packaging Professionals to Share Knowledge

Got packaging knowledge? Your expertise is welcome by professors and students at the packaging schools scattered across the country and in Canada.

Claire Sand | Feb 16, 2021

Early this month, Dave Kouchoukos, reached out to see if I knew whom he could contact at the packaging schools. He's worked at several packaging vendors after attending Michigan State and DePaul Universities. Dave simply wanted to "give back" and share his 34 years of packaging industry experience by giving 1-2 hour talks in classrooms as a guest speaker.

Good question, Dave , I get this question quite a bit!

If you're interested in being a guest speaker, the above graphic shows whom to contact at some of the packaging schools. Let's consider why guest speakers are needed and why they want to "go back to school".

The value of industry speakers.

Because packaging is an applied science and a very experiential field, Professors teaching packaging have a unique challenge to teach students content and its context. The hour in which guest industry speakers share their perspective, and practical experience is time well spent for professors, students, and the speakers. Students often ask speakers to share how their careers have progressed, which provides a glimpse of how many twists and turns a packaging career can take. Educators value insights from the industry to help students add context and relevance to what they are taught.

Patrick McDavid at Michigan State University expands, "in my class, speakers have shared many topics outside of distribution packaging such as the perspective of a being a woman in the predominantly male field of transportation, the intriguing world of being a packaging entrepreneur, and how the industry is engaged with distribution packaging."

Joe Bravo , a former McDavid student and Nestle Nutrition (Gerber) Intern, agrees. "I heard a *day in the life* of a packaging professional from different guest speakers that was helpful. For example, one speaker shared how ASTM test results were used to meet a unique distribution environment in the package decision process. This specific industry example and many others helped me understand how complex and innovative the world of packaging is".

Why be a guest speaker?

Industry experts remember the packaging learning experience.

"The idea of sharing my experience as a guest speaker sparked from reflecting on my career and knowledge in packaging development, tariff impacts, pricing models, helping marketing teams make packaging decisions, among other things and how I, as a student, was unaware of these matters," says Kouchoukos. "As a guest speaker, I'll provide insights into how the industry addresses

challenges and makes decisions. And, with many classes being remote, I will be able to provide this insight from Florida and still get in a round of golf or spend an afternoon fishing.”

Similarly, Prateek Lal , Entrepreneur in residence at Adept Packaging, enjoys the dialogue with students.

“It’s a tremendous opportunity — a human opportunity — to support the next generation to thrive in our profession,” he says. “I enjoy encouraging their ambitions, recommending tools for them to be successful and seeing them thrive”.

And you, too, can enjoy the highly rewarding experience of going back to school!

Claire Sand, PhD, has 30+ years of experience in industry and academia. She is owner of Packaging Technology and Research and Gazelle Mobile Packaging and an Adjunct Professor, CalPoly, Michigan State University, and the University of Minnesota. You can reach her at packagingtechnologyandresearch.com or using the email below.

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