

CROWN HOLDINGS

CASE STUDY

Packaging designer and manufacturer Crown Holdings, Inc. (Crown) was established over a century ago. Since then, Crown has developed into one of the world's leading packaging companies, with a varied portfolio of markets and product lines, including everything from beverage and food cans to lipstick cases.

The relationship between CROWN Technology in the UK and design software provider NT CAD/CAM has grown from site to site globally since the late '90s. At its Technology centre in Wantage, Oxfordshire, the decision to source NT CAD/CAM's SolidWorks design package was made by the Innovation Team back in 1997, after the company recognised the need to progress from 2D hard-copy design to 3D CAD.

Innovation Manager Chris Ramsey had come to realise that the 2D approach had too many limitations, the main one being lack of flexibility. "We wanted to be able to present some of our customers with fully rendered, curved designs. Therefore we needed a computer package that could generate curved 3D shapes, and help us to take a maximum of two or three days to draw up a design as a 'solid'. We then wanted to be able to make any further adjustments accurately and quickly in accordance with customers' instructions. SolidWorks was ahead of the other players in the market in terms of this type of functionality. For example, there was no other package at the time that offered an integrated rendering system with decal wrapping." The demand for 3D CAD was, and is, largely because of the flexibility and ease of use.

As Martin Stokes, Design Engineer from the Product Design Team, explains, Crown has a large number of casual users who simply want a design tool they can use then move on to their other weekly tasks.

Engineering Design Manager Ian Flude explained that once SolidWorks was up and running, which occurred within days, training was next on the agenda. Crown's designers attended either induction or development instruction at NT CAD/CAM's premises in Buckinghamshire, depending on experience. The Innovation Team began with three seats of the package, in conjunction with existing 2D tools. The number of seats within Innovation, Engineering Design and other teams within Technology has steadily increased to 15 over the past three years.

Within CROWN Technology in the UK, the two design teams, Innovation and Engineering, use SolidWorks in different but complementary ways. Innovation is predominantly focused on the product design of plastic or metal packaging. The Engineering Design Department uses SolidWorks more from a mechanical design perspective.

Since SolidWorks was first acquired by CROWN Technology in the UK, other sites worldwide have acquired the system. "Overseas offices, including those in the US and Germany, are now actively using the package," said Ramsey. "So SolidWorks is increasingly becoming an invaluable tool for us, not only in the UK but globally."

