

COOL PAK LLC

Delivering fresh produce from the fields to the grocer with SolidWorks software



Using SolidWorks software, Cool Pak established its own internal design department to more effectively respond to customer demand for innovative and environmentally friendly packaging solutions.

Do you ever wonder where the blueberries and strawberries that you add to your morning cereal grew? Do you ever think about when your fresh produce was harvested, or how far it traveled to arrive at your local grocer? In all likelihood, the only questions that you have concerning produce are these: How fresh is it, and how good does it taste?

Making sure that the answers to those questions are “very” and “great” is the job of Cool Pak LLC. As a key supplier of packaging to growers, shippers, repackers, and other food suppliers, the company designs and manufactures a variety of trays, tills, tubs, clamshells, and domed containers that are used to package, transport, and sell fresh produce. The company’s staff combines decades of experience in agriculture and packaging—acquired through its long family history of manufacturing and distribution in California—with a commitment to innovation in the design and production of packaging solutions.

Until recently, Cool Pak contracted its design and mold development work with outside consultants. However, as the company grew and customer demand for innovative and environmentally friendly packaging solutions increased, Cool Pak needed to establish its own internal design capabilities, according to Product Development Manager Leo Lira.

“I was hired to build a department and transition product design and prototype mold development in-house,” Lira explains. “Cool Pak is growing as a company, and we need to increase productivity to compete successfully. We also need to address new requirements from our larger chain customers, such as giving them the opportunity to approve new designs in advance. New traceability regulations from governmental agencies also require us to have greater control of the process.”

Cool Pak chose SolidWorks® design software because it is easy to use, facilitates mold development, and is fully integrated with the Gold Partner Certified CAMWorks™ machining system, which the company uses to run its CNC equipment to create tooling.

Challenge:

Transition design function for developing fresh produce packaging from external consultants to internal designers to support growth, reduce costs, and control quality.

Solution:

Implement SolidWorks 3D design software to efficiently build an in-house design department for developing packaging designs and prototype molds.

Results:

- Cut development cycles by 75 percent
- Moved from design to prototype mold in a single week
- Reduced waste throughout customer supply chains by over 35 percent
- Built internal design capability

"I felt that in order to build a department and get it up and running quickly, SolidWorks software was the obvious choice," Lira says. "Because it is easier to learn and use—particularly for working with mold developers and creating prototypes—SolidWorks software was simply the logical solution."

Facilitating company growth

By implementing SolidWorks software, Cool Pak can now handle in-house its design and prototyping needs, which have dramatically increased as the company has grown. In addition to ramping up throughput, SolidWorks software has helped Cook Pak to shorten customer response time, innovate new packaging, and facilitate design changes.

"We are winning new business because we can show customers how they can ship more product with our packaging," Lira notes. "With the combination of SolidWorks software and CAMWorks, our quality has increased, while our delivery times have decreased. For example, with our patent-pending, tamper-evident packaging, we not only have eliminated steps from the manufacturing process, but also have developed a more space-efficient design that enables our customers to pack and move more produce in a single load."

Faster, cheaper, better

Using SolidWorks software, Cool Pak has greater control of the product development process, resulting in time savings, cost reductions, and improved quality. The company uses SolidWorks software to generate all package designs and prototype molds, which manufacturing partners then use to produce packaging on a truly global scale.

"We've cut the time it takes to create a design and produce a prototype mold by 75 percent," Lira stresses. "Being able to go from design to prototype within a week is a significant advantage, and we are doing it while improving quality and reducing material usage at the same time."

Fresh produce via environmentally friendly packaging

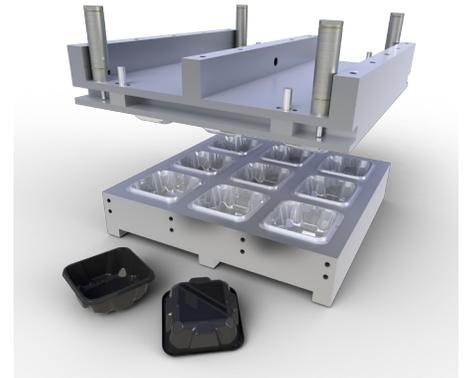
Since implementing SolidWorks software, Cool Pak has made tremendous strides in producing containers that drastically increase shipping and packaging efficiencies, while lessening environmental impacts. By increasing the number of clamshells that can fit on a pallet and in a truck, the company helps customers reduce the amount of fuel required to deliver fresh produce to the marketplace. In some cases, Cool Pak has been able to reduce waste throughout the supply chain by over 35 percent.

The company primarily produces its clamshells from recycled PET plastic (RPET), with at least 85 percent of every clamshell containing RPET and some containing 100 percent RPET. Cool Pak has launched a number of programs for various companies, including Walmart and Trader Joe's, using corn-based, biodegradable PLA material, and the company is developing new biodegradable plastics.

"With SolidWorks software, we have the tools we need to grow our business and develop the innovative green packaging solutions of tomorrow," Lira says.

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Leo Lira
Product Development Manager



The combination of SolidWorks design software and Gold Partner Certified CAMWorks machining software has enabled Cool Pak to improve quality while reducing delivery times.



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