



Shipping its paperboard waste bales mill-direct turned Packaging Express' recycling department from a cost center into a profit center with help from Mid America Paper Recycling.

Matt Davis standing by the recently purchased baler.

THERE'S VALUE IN THOSE BALES



Packaging Express, a growing manufacturing/converting operation in Colorado Springs, Colo., has streamlined its paper waste recycling operation, reducing labor, time and expenses, thanks to a partnership with Mid America Paper Recycling.

EXPANDING OPPORTUNITIES

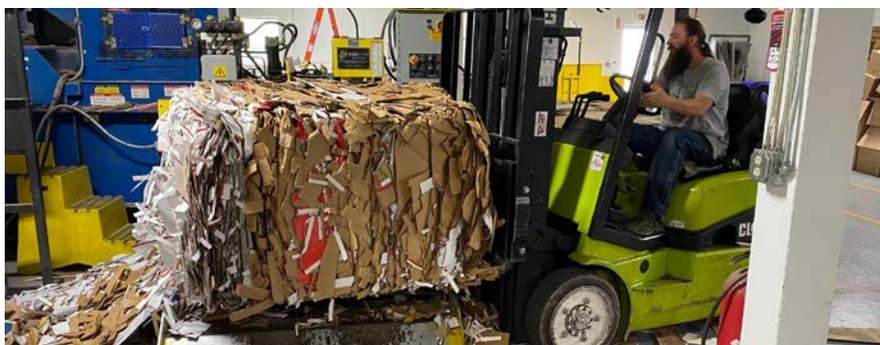
With three generations in the package manufacturing business, Packaging Express is a family owned and operated designer, printer and manufacturer of custom paperboard and corrugated packaging, shipping containers and point-of-purchase displays. In 2020, after more than 20 years in business, the company consolidated three locations and moved to a more spacious 94,000-sq.-ft. facility in Colorado Springs that has already capitalized on numerous efficiencies and process improvements.

"We have experienced continuous year-over-year growth since our inception," states Matt Davis, Packaging Express

President and Chief Executive Officer. "Doubling our space last year allowed us to invest in new equipment and expand our sales force."

Considered one of the last independent box manufacturers in Colorado, Packaging Express embraces a sustainable philosophy and uses recyclable and recycled materials in its manufacturing processes. Not only are its containers 100-percent-recyclable, in most cases it uses 100-percent post-consumer-recycled paperboard to make new containers.

Like its production volumes, scrap material generated from the company's die cutters and other box converting equipment has also increased, which got Packaging Express to think about its recycling procedures. Every three weeks, it was delivering its scrap, which primarily consisted of graded Old Corrugated Containers (OCC), printed board and double-lined kraft (DLK), to



a local recycler using its own drivers and trucks. On average, the loads each weighed approximately 20 tons.

“We leased a trailer to house the scrap, and unloaded the waste materials ourselves and drove back to our facility, which took time and labor,” Davis explains.

Then Davis discovered Mid America Paper Recycling. “Matt and I met in 2018 at a meeting of the Association of Independent Corrugated Converters (AICC),” recalls Mid America President Paul Pirkle. “Matt asked about our services, and wanted us to take a look at his operation. At the time, the recycling operation was doing lot of heavy lifting, and there were definite costs we knew we could address.”

THE DIRECT APPROACH

Learning about the issues, Mid America evaluated the recycling operation, and developed new procedures that could add value and cut costs. “They found ways to capture as much recycling waste as possible,” Davis recalls. “We also installed a new, conveyORIZED two-ram baler, which was the key to jumpstarting our partnership with Mid America. The baler’s automatic conveyor infeed had an immediate impact on our processes, and

began reducing the time spent feeding and baling our paperboard scrap from three of our highest volume machines.”

Packaging Express began working with Mid America in the summer of 2019. Mid America recommended increasing the weight of the bales and revising the bale loading pattern to maximize the number of bales loaded into the trailer. Revising the load delivery process, Mid America suggested arranging for the paperboard scrap to be shipped mill-direct, or directly to a paper mill, which saves the time, labor and expenses of leasing a drop trailer.

“Mid America has helped us to better understand the capabilities of our new baling machine and how to get the most efficiency out of it,” notes Kirby Heck, Chief Financial Officer and Chief Operations Officer at Packaging Express. “Mid America now works directly with the mill and arranges for a trailer to be staged at one of our dock doors. Our drivers no longer have to spend time waiting in line at the recycling center, and we save approximately \$400 per load that was once delivered to the recycler. That includes the amortized cost of a leased storage trailer. Assuming we generate one load every three weeks, we expect to save \$7,000 per year.”

Additional labor savings accrued when Packaging Express added a feeding system that automatically moves the paperboard scrap directly from its die-cutting equipment through a duct system into a separator that drops it onto the baler’s belt conveyor. Prior to having this system, all of the scrap from the die cutter had to be manually put into carts that were transported to the baler and manually loaded into the baler.

FOCUSING ON CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Forming a solid partnership with Packaging Express, focused on continuous improvement, Mid America visits Packaging Express frequently to review the recycling program to see if an update or a change is needed, and seeks more ways to benefit the operation. “Mid America has been great to work with. They’re very attentive to our needs and continue providing beneficial insight,” Davis says. “They helped us get a solid handle on our recycling program, educating us so that we completely understand the process. We now operate more efficiently than ever, and see the relationship as a growing partnership. We’re in discussions with them regularly to get the best return on our waste. Mid America is a valuable resource for any company that has recycling needs.”