

Where the Wooden Crates Go: IES Customers Confirm Potential of Export Markets

Today's specialised export packing demands more than just the ability to make decent wooden crates. Packing and protecting of delicate, high-value equipment is one of the integrated engineering services offered by UK-based IES since 1991. Keen to get the views of export packing users, IES interviewed three UK-based exporters about their experiences and the outlook for export markets...

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With value, quality and performance as important as ever for export packing, Bristol-based IES brought together a trio of UK exporters to discuss [wooden crates](#), global export markets and what makes a great export packing partner.

The three businesses were Flexifill, based near Bristol (liquids packaging machines), SPTS in South Wales (semiconductor production equipment) and IEM Technologies in Somerset (effluent treatment plant for compound semiconductor and related markets). From bespoke crates to CE Marking, each customer has its unique requirements, yet shares the need for high-quality export packing and reliable professional advice. That's where IES comes in, with services ranging across fulfilment, export packing, case making and international logistics.

Still-bouyant export markets

The majority of business for these companies is overseas, and all reported bouyant markets – notwithstanding any uncertainties about the Chinese and other economies.

As for the future, Flexifill anticipates stricter standards for heat-treated packaging, security-led tightening of specifications and changes to waterproofing and sign-off requirements. IEM foresees rising costs and owner, Peter Codman says: 'Airfreight is very expensive compared to 10 years ago – what cost under £1000 then costs more than twice as much now. Surface shipping is more economical, but lead times are critical. Whatever the future brings, value and performance of wooden packaging will be more important than ever – along with the right choice of export packing partner to provide them'

Cheap wooden packaging is rarely the answer

Asked about the special challenges of export packing, all three highlighted the importance of an experienced, reliable export-packing partner – and mentioned the potentially high direct and indirect costs of damage in transit. According to the interviewees, cheapness was rarely an advantage. What was universally popular, was having a partner who could be entrusted to manage the process, thereby taking the worry from the manufacturer and freeing them to get on with other business activity.

Export crate specialists

Specialist capability came to the fore again when the trio discussed their most challenging projects: Flexifill owner, Malcolm Shipway says: 'For us, it's often contracts with very specific packing specs and those where we have to send multiple equipment orders.'

Mike Hewlett, vice president of manufacturing at SPTS Technologies, recalled the challenge when faced with the unique size and weight of an ion beam deposition (IBD) system: 'IES's expertise with wooden crating was invaluable for the first article, and they advised on bespoke crate design and special loading equipment.'

High-value equipment must be treated with special care for export. With anything for the semiconductor industry, or similar hi-tech industries, there's the added constraint of packing and moving in clean environments. Faced with this, there's no substitute for an export-packing partner with extensive experience of the semi-con sector. Even better, one of the few export-packing businesses that are also used to doing turnkey factory and machinery relocations for the advanced technologies sector.

'We like flexibility in an export packaging partner'

'That's what we really like about IES,' says Peter Codman. 'Flexibility, a genuinely can-do attitude and 20 years' experience in our industry – they probably know the semiconductor industry better than us and understand all the standards required. It's hugely reassuring and saves us so much time because we can just let them get on with everything knowing they'll do it correctly.'

Malcolm Shipway agrees: 'A firm like IES knows all the answers; from pack-on-site work to door-to-door pick-up and shipping in wooden crates, we employ them for their knowledge, expertise and solid reputation.'

What sets the best export packers apart?

So what sets the best export packing firms apart from the also-rans? All three interviewees emphasised the obvious point about getting product to where it should be, on time, and in the condition it left the UK. They all



IES Clean Room Packing

“ The importance of an experienced, reliable export-packing partner... ”

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recalled cases – not from IES – where a poor-quality wooden packing case failed and led to costly in-transit damage. Wasteful, unnecessarily expensive, environmentally-unfriendly over-packing also happens! Clearly, one of the industry's secrets is achieving the perfect balance between cost and protection.

'Cheap wooden crates are a false economy'

Speaking after the interviews, Niels Morch, IES managing director, thanked all the interviewees and said: The messages they gave us bear out our own experience – and gave us useful ideas for service improvements. We've seen the results of poor quality packaging solutions on many occasions – too often it's a false economy. It was also interesting to hear positive views on our own staff, our wealth of industry knowledge and resourcefulness.

'We're as aware as anyone that challenging times lie ahead. Whatever happens, we'll draw confidence from growing through previous recessions. From an ISPM 15 wooden crate to bespoke logistics solutions, whenever specialist export packing or other engineering services are needed, we're here – with cost-effective, carefully-engineered solutions that give customers such as Flexifill, SPTS Technologies and IEM Technologies value and complete peace of mind.'

Resource Box

Since 1991, IES has developed special capabilities and acclaimed technical expertise in export packing and case making (including the heat-treated crates now required by legislation. As well as wooden packaging, other IES specialities include the following:

Factory relocation

- Machinery movement
- Other engineering services for the semiconductor and other advanced technology industries
- Road freight and logistics services
- Customs clearance
- Business relocation services
- Engineering programme management
- Industrial storage
- Engineering resource support

As well as having been honed in the semiconductor industry, these integrated services make IES the perfect one-stop partner for organisations in many other industries. From sending precision machinery across town in a bespoke wooden crate, to moving complete factories around the world, IES has everything covered so its customers save time and money, and enjoy priceless peace of mind.

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To stop lateral movement on the base



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