

# Packaging industry needs to be ready for 2017 boom



By [Candace van Zyl](#)

23 Aug 2016

A few decades ago, packaging companies needed many more tons of machinery to produce the output that they do today. Back then, the more heavy machinery they had, the more value was produced. Now, things are done differently; with less material. The difference is information.

“Businesses in South Africa, especially those in the packaging industry, stand the risk of losing their competitive advantage, or worse, becoming irrelevant, if they fail to mature their business strategy and systems,” says Heinrich van der Vyver, CEO and founder of QuickEasy Software, a business process management software company that allows businesses to simplify how they operate in order to improve efficiency across all business cycles.

“Business owners carry the continued burden of their businesses on their shoulders. They have to think about everything - did they remember to invoice for that job? Do the machines need to be serviced again? Is there enough stock for that big order? Did someone call that client back? Insomnia is a common by-product of owning a business. They need help, as it is a near-impossible expectation for them to strategise about growth when they are neck deep in the daily grind of running the business. Something has to change.”

## Three ways to work smarter

**1. Panic less, post start-up:** There's a special brand of adrenaline that comes with the chaotic frenzy synonymous with a start up. This creative energy is necessary for a business to be birthed out of nothing but a good idea, and to take its first gasping breaths. However, 10 years down the line if you're still relying on 'grit, spit and adrenaline' to run your business instead of sound processes and systems, your creative energy has turned toxic. Instead of hoping for growth, you can bank on burnout, high staff turnover, panicked clients and a quarterly ulcer flare-up. You need to take a breath, and consider the possibility that there might be a better way to do this.

- Meet with a mentor or business coach

- Network with other business owners and see how they approach challenges. Try your local BNI or join an IPSA event
- Get the team together and brainstorm better ways to operate - they are at the coalface and have probably noticed things that need improvement that you are not aware of

## 2. People and processes:

- *Process thinking:* To set the team up for success they need to know what is expected of them and have the tools and training to do it efficiently. Processes are the guidelines that take the team through the steps needed to produce a desired outcome - be it systems-, product- or admin-related. Take the time to think through the steps of your business cycles, and map out your processes. We like Visio or SmartDraw for this.
- *Consistency:* The repetitive nature of packaging products means your clients expect consistency in the product you produce. If you are not consistent, you stand the risk of lower profits, or ultimately losing the contract. In order to have consistency of outcome you need to manage the input and the control of the processes. Manage the input and you have a consistent product and a predictable outcome. Do this through regular staff one-on-ones, performance appraisals, process training and spot checks. More importantly, incorporate innovative ways to reward your team to affirm correct behaviour.
- *Standardise:* Reduce human error and confusion by standardising processes. If everything is standardised, it is easily repeatable.
- *Measure:* In order to know if your team is, in fact, following procedure and producing consistent products, you need systems in place to measure efficiency. How efficient are your machines? How productive are your teams? Use QuickEasy BOS for this as, not only does it produce powerful insight into every aspect of the business, but it's online planning board also tracks time, stock and queued jobs with ease. It also produces monthly reports showing business growth and overall productivity.

**3. Pick what works:** Business strategy always wins. The temptation with implementing MIS and ERP systems is to install them out of the box without customising it to meet your specific business needs. To get more output from your business you need to improve the speed of material and information and this is dramatically improved by MIS/ERP software. The trick is to know what information you need.

- *Customisable:* Make sure the MIS/ERP you purchase can be customised to meet your business needs. Identify what information you need in order to run your business processes optimally, and then request that from your supplier. Make sure your software covers every aspect of your business cycles: leads, estimates, orders, operations, inventory management, staff management, time tracking, invoicing and reporting.
- *Affordability and integration:* There are many ERP and MIS packages available for manufacturing, print and packaging, however most come with a hefty price tag, are somewhat limited, and after-sales support can be a challenge especially with international products.

Working smarter will keep your head above water so that you can see the bigger picture and budget for growth. Get your business ready for growth.

## ABOUT CANDACE VAN ZYL

Candace is the marketing manager at QuickEasy Software, a proudly South African software company in Cape Town with a national footprint, focused on simplifying business processes by integrating every aspect of the business cycles into one, easy-to-use system. With a well-known legacy in the printing sector in South Africa, QuickEasy is now effectively offering the same efficiency-improving software to packaging, and to all businesses, in South Africa.

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