



Surrey Network for Social Enterprise

Fruity Faces



Photo courtesy of Fruity Faces

Background

Fruity Faces was formed to promote healthy eating and at the same time to raise funds for children's charities through the sales of Fruity Faces products such as fruit carrying cases. It is a small company, comprising one full-time manager (its founder/director) and five part-time staff.

Fruity Faces was registered as a company in August 2004 and formally launched in May 2006 by inventor, businesswoman and mother-of-three Paige Allen. The concept of Fruity Faces was developed by Paige in her school art classes 25 years ago and the idea was turned into reality later when she decided there was a need for a way to promote healthy eating and to enable

children to bring fruit to school without ending up with squashed bananas, bruised apples or pulped peaches! Having sketched some initial ideas, Paige worked together with a Romanian design student to develop these ideas, and soon had a series of detailed designs for eye-catching and fun fruit-carrying cases. The cases are available in four different striking designs – Fenne, Tunda, Sesey and Mengi (named after African fruit).

All profits from the sales of Fruity Faces will be split and donated to three charities – African Revival, FARA (a charity for abandoned Romanian children) and Amber UK, which supports disadvantaged young people in Britain.

Achievements

Fruity Faces products are gradually becoming a 'must have' among school children – a product that makes healthy eating 'cool'! They are on sale through major retail outlets like Lakeland Ltd, Great Little Trading Company Ltd and Harrods, and are currently being trialled by ASDA. Paige has also established a website and is able to take product orders online. "Our products will be in lots more stores this year for the back-to-school season and I'm very optimistic about this year's sales figures," Paige says.

She also believes that Fruity Faces is making a positive impact on healthy eating. A customer survey undertaken last year showed that the use of Fruity Faces increased fruit consumption among 64% of families by between 1 and 4 portions per week. The company has been awarded a license to use the Dept of Health "5 a day" logo and has been positively received by many of the Healthy Schools coordinators across the UK. Fruity Faces has also been an exciting development for the fruit industry, and the firm was a nominee for the Refresh Fruit Industry Awards for "Innovation of the Year", and has been awarded the Startup Business Awards Community Service Impact Award. Paige and her business have been featured on GMTV, This Morning, the Paul O'Grady Show, and Dragon's Den, which she says was "a great PR opportunity – 10 minutes of free publicity – even if we didn't get the Dragons' backing. I don't think they were looking properly!"

continued

Lessons learned

Despite wanting to manufacture her Fruity Faces products in the UK, Paige was unable to find a British manufacturing company able to produce them cost-effectively, so instead she had to get them made in China. Five months after her first visit to Guangzhou in China the first PVC Fruity Faces were in production.

There were, however, some hiccups on the road to a successful product launch, Paige explains. For example, it took a while to get the right grade of PVC. Health and the environment were always extremely important to Paige and she was determined to get exactly the right product, but by the time the

product was launched this was sorted out. Her Fruity Faces cases are made from phthalate-free, non-toxic material, they are food-safe and meet all the latest EU regulations.

Another challenge now is being able to produce enough products to meet demand, and to get the products out there – whilst also making enough money to ensure that the company can meet its obligations to the charities it supports. “Manufacturing prices are rising, and distribution is very costly,” Paige explains. “But we’ve had support and advice from Business Link Surrey, who have been fantastic, and from the Manufacturing Advisory Service and UK Trade & Investment.”

The future

Expanding the distribution, both at home and abroad, is the next challenge facing Paige, and having already got some distribution in Australia and South Africa she is now looking at the European and American markets too. Paige will also be looking at which of the Fruity Faces range have been the most popular and successful products so far. “I’m also starting to explore opportunities for other product lines, and for producing branded promotional items,” she says.



Fruity Faces

Address: Copsem Manor, 50 Copsem Lane, Esher
Surrey KT10 9HJ

Telephone: 01372 844717

Website: www.fruityfaces.com

Email: paige@fruityfaces.com



Surrey Network for Social Enterprise

Fruity Faces is a member of the Surrey Network for Social Enterprise.

To contact the Network Co-ordinator telephone 01483 566072.

Sponsored by:

