

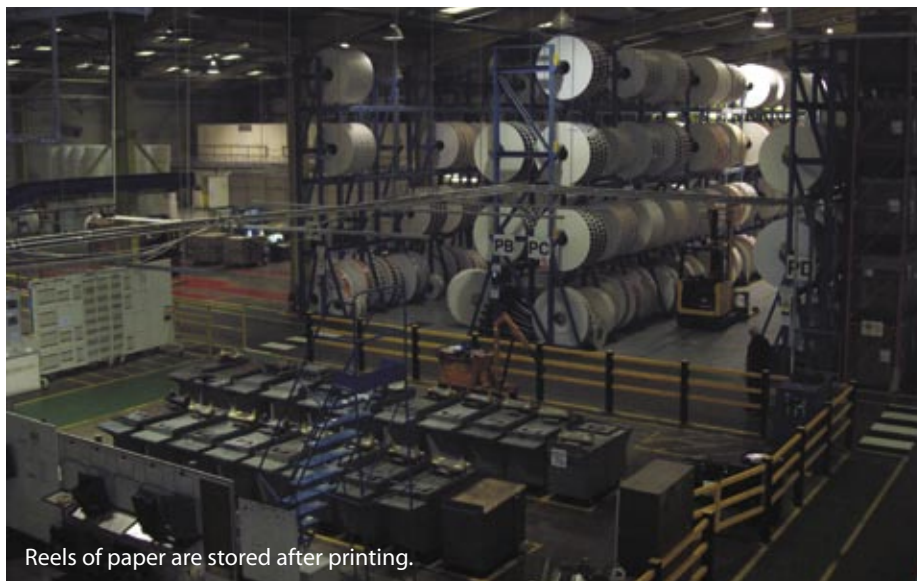
# Recession-busting paper cup

**Following the divestment of its napkin business in late 2009, the Benders Paper Cup Company has become the only European cup manufacturer dedicated to the production of paper cups. What's more, its focus is firmly on the vending market, with a team of sales and account managers with years of experience in vending and a promise that as a company it understands the specific needs of the vending business. AV visited the Benders factory in Wrexham.**



It is a measure of how rapidly the market for paper vending cups in the UK has grown that a manufacturer can build a very healthy business just catering for that sector. In fact, Benders is running at beyond full capacity in its factory (how can that be you may well wonder - I'll explain later) and is investing in additional cup forming capacity with the specification of a state-of-the-art, high speed cup forming machine to further boost its production capacity. This new machine has a capacity of six cups per second with automatic stacking and packing and is to be installed in the final quarter of 2010 with full production scheduled to start in the New Year. The company is also strengthening its sales team with several new appointments in wholesale and export.

This new focus for Benders has all been made possible since it withdrew from the manufacture of napkins. Reducing the cost base associated with this formerly loss-making side of the business and the



Reels of paper are stored after printing.

inevitable restructuring has resulted in the impetus and resources to drive forward the paper cup manufacturing business.

### A specialist approach

Benders is not the largest supplier of paper vending cups in Europe, but, with a focus on the trade rather than end user accounts and its particular understanding of the needs of vending, it is certainly up there among the leaders for this sector. That, in fact, is the niche that Benders has carved for itself, supplying the very many small to medium sized operators across the UK with their paper vending cups, understanding the market and being on hand to sort out any problems. On the day that we visited, managing director, Andy Cunliffe was himself heading out to visit a client with a problem. He explained, "Vending can't be serviced by a 'plc' approach to the market. If our product doesn't work the customer suffers immediately."

Benders was recognised for its commitment to vending when Associated Vending Services, AVS, awarded the company its sole supply contract for paper vending cups. Chief Executive of AVS, Brian Tustain, has since described Benders as a

Supplier of Excellence, noting the significant improvements made throughout the factory, during a recent visit, since his initial audit in 2007.

Traceability is one example of how Benders' focus on vending has resulted in initiatives to help the operator. Driven by the operator, Benders now prints the time and date of manufacture on each cup. Previously this information was just printed on the box, but as the box is discarded as soon as the cups are loaded into the machine, this was no use if a subsequent problem made it necessary to trace the source back

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Andy Cunliffe,  
managing director.

Benders' PLA lined compostable paper cup.



to a specific operator, shift, or batch of raw material.

Quoting a 47 per cent growth just in vending cups as the move to paper from plastic continues at a far more rapid pace than anyone expected, the Benders factory has been running its machines at 93 per cent efficiency, beating the machine manufacturer's own recommendations, in order to meet demand. The installation of the new high speed cup forming machine will increase production capacity significantly, thus enabling the sales team to actively target new business, so Benders is looking forward to even more growth throughout 2011.

### Striving for improvement

It has to be rare that a company finds itself in such a strong niche. The demand for the product is growing exponentially and the barriers to entry for new manufacturers in the market are financially prohibitive. Benders' focus is to continue to meet that demand with a quality product, backed by its after sales support. Over the last 18 months, the aim for this business has been to change the philosophy of the workforce and the business as a whole with a target for improved quality and they have been rewarded with a dramatic drop in quality defects. At the same time, the company's service performance has also been a focus for improvement.

Health and safety and waste elimination are other important factors. The culture of health and safety throughout the factory has been improved with every single employee empowered to stop a machine if they see something wrong. Targeting waste elimination has seen scrap material product reduced, unplanned factory downtime reduced and improved storage conditions for base raw materials. Storing



The Verona cup coming off the production line.



David Clough, AVS group purchasing manager and Ian Keeffe, vending and beverage manager for Benders, signing the AVS paper cup supply contract.

a fast turnaround that can be useful for promotional items for specific events. When Auto Vending visited we saw some World Cup designs featuring the St George's Cross, the emblem of the England team, however, as we all know, England's performance was so poor that this great design was

not a commercial success!

the paper board in the correct humidity and temperature can help prevent problems later; identifying specific boards for specific jobs can reduce wastage, for instance, by ensuring the board is suitable for the print finish required. These factors also make good financial sense.

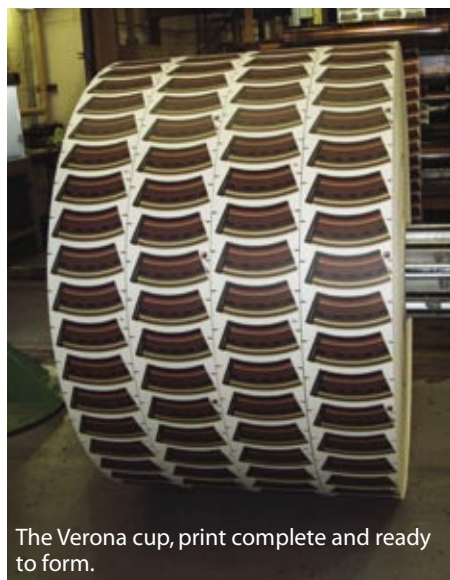
### Make it look good too

Its sophisticated and flexible print capability is another plus for Benders. Customised print can be offered from as few as 5,000 cups and its Prompt Premium Print service guarantees

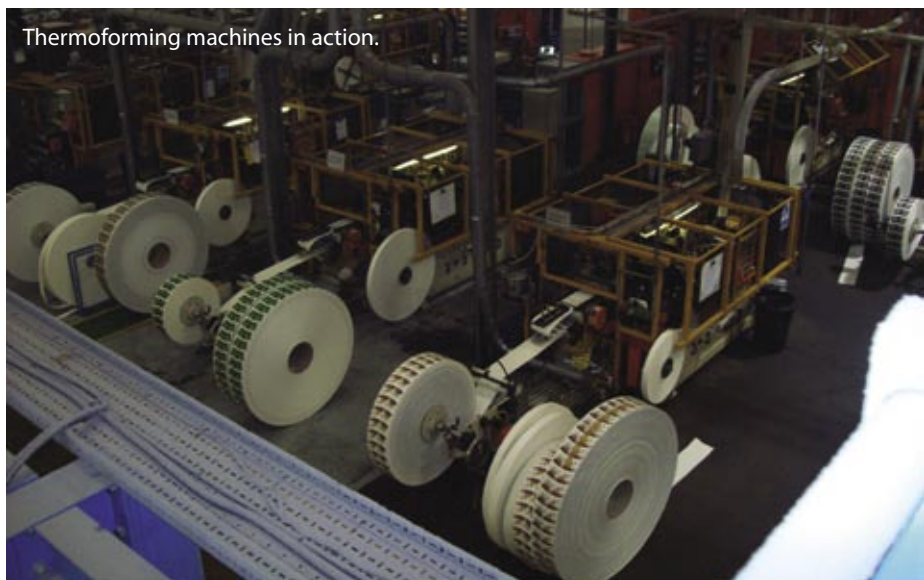
### Branching out

With its roots firmly in vending, Benders is now looking to build on that base with the addition of new products, targeting new markets. The café/coffee shop market is one that vending operators are increasingly moving into and the production of a paper cup for this sector enables Benders to meet all of its vending customers' needs whilst also opening up new potential markets.

[www.benders.co.uk](http://www.benders.co.uk)



The Verona cup, print complete and ready to form.



Thermoforming machines in action.