

Success Story: Designing A Box Fit for Premium Mozzarella

Building A Business

Tony Russo knows Italian cheese. For 40 years, he has been active in the family business, which specializes in pizza supplies. Recently, he launched a new company, Sopra Cheese Company. Sopra Cheese Company will feature a complete line of Italian cheeses; the first cheese to be offered is a premium shredded mozzarella.

Tony is working with a copacker that will manufacture, shred, and package his product. His copacker, which specializes in dairy products, didn't have experience processing and packaging shredded cheeses and sourced a standard box for shipping his product. It didn't take long to realize this box wasn't structurally sound enough to hold six 5-lb bags of cheese, be stacked on a pallet, shipped across North America, and delivered safely to pizza parlors.

Since this was a new venture, creating brand equity was also important. The box's structural design plays into the brand story, but the company also needed a brand design that spoke to the cheeses' premium status and would stand out in a crowded market.

Tony turned to the experts for help; however, working with local companies was essential to him.

"We enlisted the help of a graphic design firm that has ties to our region down here. We are packing the cheese in a plant that is tied to our region with local jobs, and we brought in a local corrugated company, who outdid any of the larger corrugated companies that were looking to do the same thing," said Tony.



I got the best quality box, at the best price, and we are going to get a level of attention we wouldn't get anywhere else."

– Tony Russo

Tyoga Brings Its A-Game

The local corrugated company is Tyoga Container. Tony contacted Charlie Frysinger, president of Tyoga Container, and asked him to design a box that would handle the unforgiving stress from shipping and handling.

"I reached out to Charlie and said, 'Can you help me with this?' He was here within two days," said Tony. "It wasn't about just duplicating a box. It was about how we could make it even better than what we had. He identified the weaknesses of what we thought was a good box."

Tyoga performed structural analysis on the brown box to determine what board combination was needed to ensure the boxes would structurally meet the full distribution channel's requirements. To help elevate the brand, Tyoga provided a white box instead of an ordinary brown box.

"Within a week, he was back here with a prototype, and we were able to use the prototype when we did our next run a few weeks later," Tony said.

Testing The Prototype

To test the boxes in a real-world setting, Sopra performed sample shredding of small lots of 1000 to 2000 lb, and the mozzarella was packaged into the prototype white boxes and moved through the distribution to ensure the boxes were structurally sound. Charlie was on site to ensure the packaging went as planned.

"Not only was he there, but he was analyzing everything they did in their operation that might compromise the corrugated box—right down to helping them use their equipment better to pack the product," said Tony.

Sopra closely monitored the sample runs. They regularly reported back to Tyoga with pictures showing how it looked when it arrived on truck, how it appeared on the racks in the cooler, and how it appeared when it was distributed to restaurants and pizzerias. The first prototype left a little extra room in the box, potentially crushing the product. The second version was perfect.



Maximizing Pallet and Truckloads

Beyond the box itself, pallet loading was also crucial to Tony. Maximizing truckloads can save a great deal in shipping costs and have a positive environmental impact.

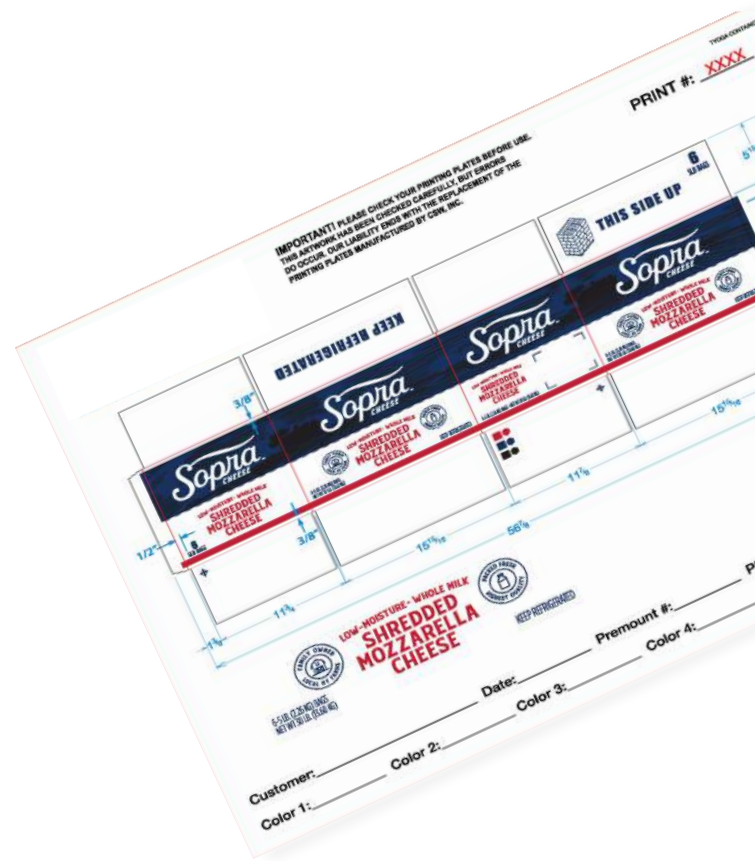
“Tyoga did everything we needed, including designing how it stacks on the pallet. We were trying to achieve getting 60 boxes on a pallet,” said Tony. “A lot of the industry can only get 30 to 40 cases on a pallet, but we are trying to maximize pallets to maximize transportation. They were able to do that.”

Ensuring Color Consistency of the Graphics

Once the prototype proved itself, the next step was branding the box.

“Once we identified the box, elaborate graphics were added – elaborate for food service, in terms of color and shading. Our partners in graphic design had a certain look they were trying to achieve,” said Tony.

Tyoga collaborated with the graphic design team to ensure the brand colors, once printed, were on point. Getting the colors right is extremely important for brand messaging. Because the ink can appear differently on different substrates and papers, Tyoga and the design firm worked together to do ink drawdowns to perfect the colors. An ink drawdown is where the inks are placed on the paper used for the corrugated box. Tyoga also took the graphics to its ink supplier to ensure they would get it right because of the coloring’s complexity. In all, three rounds of drawdowns were done to get the brand image they were looking to achieve.



Moving Forward

The Sopra Cheese company is picking up momentum and plans to add 8 to 10 SKUs in the future. Tony is pushing to make sure Tyoga is there to provide the boxes for the new products.

“We are looking to add another 8-10 SKU s to the lineup. Our copacker has another corrugated supplier, but we are pushing for Tyoga. Things happened so much faster and smoother than it could with some of the large integrated companies. Tyoga is a fantastic company in my eyes with what they have done for us in a very short amount of time.” Tony added, “They are very professional and efficient, and I have been very pleased. I got the best quality box, at the best price, and we are going to get a level of attention we wouldn’t get anywhere else.”