

# CASE STUDY



Date: November 2017

Customer: Charity Sweets

## AMVAR SUPPORTS TREATS BUSINESS WITH AN INTEGRATED HANDLING AND STORAGE SOLUTION

Bob and Sue Strong recently spent an afternoon at Buckingham Palace at the invitation of the Countess of Wessex. As a major fundraising partner to Mencap, the UK's leading charity supporting people with a learning disability, he and his wife Sue were recognized for raising half a million pounds for Mencap through their snacks and sweets business Sweet Causes Ltd.

In the 20 years since they started their business the company has helped to raise millions for many charitable causes by offering small businesses a confectionary box



Bob and Sue Strong – inventors of the Charity Sweets concept

where all of the profit from Sweet Causes Ltd is passed to the designated charities.

It's a business model which they invented and although other entrants took up the idea of Charity Sweets, it is still the biggest name in the sector. It started, as so

many businesses do, from a simple concept of bagging small treat-sized confectionary and offering them to smaller businesses as a service to employees searching for that occasional sugar-hit or treat.

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They are now a familiar sight in most company reception areas. Each box is branded to make it clear who the beneficiary charity is. Payment is through an honesty box. It's a formula that took off and Sweet Causes Ltd is now twice as big as any of the later arrivals.

Originally, they sourced products from various UK and International suppliers, which included the filling and packaging of a wide variety of sweets and snacks. Having to rely solely on external suppliers inevitably limited the growth and innovation in the business. So, they decided to relocate the business and acquire their own offices, warehouse and production unit. This meant that they could now inboard the confectionary packaging and branding activity with the launch of a sister business Hummingbird Confectionary.

Based in Aldridge in the West Midlands the business is now able to fill and pack many of its own products and take on contracts for other customers. "It's meant significant investment in buildings and automated filling plant, said Bob. But crucially by integrating this activity it now means we can grow faster and innovate more. We are currently building a new product development area where we can create and test latest ideas".

The best news however is that this step-change has meant that 100% of profit from all of the Charity Sweets is now passed to charities. It's a tremendous boost to our client charities

To achieve this well over £100k was invested in new plant and packaging equipment and required substantial changes to the production space to generate enough capacity for warehousing and production to be accommodated.

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“We worked with Amvar Handling Solutions who were able to show us how to efficiently maximise the space and light”, explained Bob.

Midlands-based handling and storage integrators Amvar, specialise in mid-size warehousing design and construction projects. They handle the complete project from concept to completion.

As Bob Strong explained they needed to generate extra capacity to allow for their current plans and provide scope for business growth. “Amvar designed and built a new mezzanine floor that has given us valuable floor space and released a designated production area that now houses our filling and packaging activity. They also designed a high-level racking system that gives us tremendous storage capacity as our product range grows”.



New mezzanine offers scope for expansion

“It was refreshing to find a company that took on full responsibility for the whole project. They gave advice on all sorts of issues that arose including locations of fire exits and other technical matters. They were very much a single source supplier”.

Materials handling is also key to the business as it is in almost all manufacturing operations. Amvar supplied a new forklift which is adapted to extend to the high-level racking system and which cleverly also has an integral weighing facility to weigh pallets with incoming product. This has saved the cost and floorspace of a separate weighing machine and is a much quicker and efficient way of checking incoming stock.

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Stock is rapidly turned as each of their 55,000 national locations for the Charity Sweets is frequently visited to refresh and add different tempting products. That means a distribution network of over 70 agents needs to be supplied on a weekly basis with new stock and additional product lines. And that involves smoothly and efficiently moving stock in, through and out as quickly as possible.

“We therefore rely on Amvar to keep our warehouse and materials handling system as reliable as possible with regular checks and services and an efficient call-out service that gets to us on the same day. Dealing direct, without having to go via a call-centre is really helpful for a small business that relies on good service”, explained Bob.



New materials handling offers multi-duty capability

Ends.