

## TIME TO START THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX

Over the past 50 years the plastics industry has made great strides in developing new materials, new production processes, and new uses for products made out of “plastic”. During this entire amazing evolution, there is one thing that has remained constant. Developed when the industry was in its infancy, the 60 + year old “cardboard box” (more commonly referred as a gaylord) continues to be abundantly found in almost every form of plastic processing plant in North America. Granted the “box” has changed to some degree – with heavier side walls, larger sizes, and in some newer developments has evolved into being manufactured from plastic – but it still remains “A BOX”. Liners bags still remain being used and vacuum wands are required to suck the material out in order to feed the processing lines. Employees have to diligently monitor “the box” on a constant basis to ensure that the vacuum continues sucking up the raw materials so as to ensure that the processing machine continues in production. [Downtime is a major concern to any manufacturer](#) who wishes to remain competitive in today’s demanding international marketplace.

In the past a slightly used cardboard box and it’s associated wooden skid could be sold to a reseller, or reused internally. In today’s downturned market the interest by resellers in purchasing these items has waned as their inventories have grown. Boxes used beyond three times generally have to be disposed of by either incineration (polluting the air), or by sending the cardboard to landfills. Newer regulations pushing towards a more sustainable / green lifestyle will hamper these methods of disposal within the near future. Most recently more durable and reusable plastic skids have started to be used however the wooden skids still retain about 95% of the U.S. market according to Pallets, a report from Cleveland-based Freedonia Group Inc. Like the cardboard gaylords, these wood skids represent a disposal challenge to the plastic processor. The cost of labor time and energy in handling the boxes and skids just preparing them for disposal must be taken into account by any management team when searching for ways to improve their operations.

**It’s time to start thinking outside of the box!** Not all cardboard gaylord boxes can be eliminated however. There will always be the need for them for transporting and supplying lower volume required bulk materials. However if the processor is receiving all of his major resin in 1,000 to 1,600 lb gaylord lots, he can save the premium that his supplier is charging for this type of delivery. [As the raw resin material costs continue to rise](#) processors must look toward ways to reduce some of their costs.

There is [a sustainable option](#) to “the box” available today that can solve many of the above problems as well as lower the plants employee costs and improve the entire operation. The plant savings will have an immediate impact on the bottom line profit picture, and the ROI can be realized in as little as 12 months.