

Whisker pounces on transformed packaging and customer experience

Client profile

Whisker is a leading pioneer in pet care, specializing in automated products like the Litter-Robot, a self-cleaning litter box that elevates the care of cats and delights their owners.

Whisker's commitment to both product development and sustainability is the foundation of its success in the pet care industry.



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Adam Freeman, Senior Director of Productivity and Value Engineering,
Whisker

Summary

Whisker, a leader in innovative pet care products, faced challenges with the packaging of its flagship product, the Litter-Robot. Issues with shipping damage and a cumbersome unboxing experience prompted Whisker to partner with NTT DATA supply chain consultants to develop an optimized packaging solution.

The proposed solution identified significant cost savings, opportunities to reduce material waste, and an improved out-of-box experience for Whisker's customers. NTT DATA's recommendations offered timely and effective results that would meet both Whisker's operational and customer loyalty needs.

Outcomes

NTT DATA supply chain consultants developed an optimized packaging solution in less than seven weeks with these anticipated outcomes:

- **\$750K annual cost** savings identified
- **20% improvement** in lineside storage space
- **Eliminates 180,000 cubic feet** of foam from the waste stream annually
- Improves **packaging efficiency** through streamlined assembly processes and reduced labor needs
- Enhances the **customer experience** by simplifying product unboxing

Business need

Whisker encountered several issues with the Litter-Robot's cumbersome packaging, requiring customers to lift the 24-pound product out of a tall box.

Whisker also targeted sustainability and efficiency improvements by eliminating packaging foam and transitioning to curbside-recyclable materials, which would reduce labor-intensive packaging assembly processes and optimize warehouse storage space.

With these goals in mind, Whisker turned to NTT DATA for a comprehensive packaging redesign that would address all these concerns.

Solution

NTT DATA's supply chain consultants met with Whisker and assessed its packaging issues. The team identified a recent material substitution in the Litter-Robot's shipping package as the root cause of increased delivery damage. Isolating that difficulty created an opportunity to approach the packaging redesign from a holistic perspective that included these goals:

- Optimize the packaging to reduce shipping damage
- Employ different packaging materials for greater environmental sustainability
- Improve the efficiency of the packaging line
- Improve the unboxing experience for customers through packaging improvements
- Better packaging and easier unboxing

NTT DATA proposed that Whisker eliminate foam from the packaging and replace it with recyclable alternatives, aligning with Whisker's sustainability goals. The revised design featured a shorter base tray and a sleeve cover held with plastic clips, allowing customers to remove the Litter-Robot from the box without the difficulty of lifting it out of a tall package.

This redesign addressed operational inefficiencies as well. By integrating drop-in-place components into the packaging process, the design team eliminated the need for labor-intensive corrugated cardboard rollups, which slowed down the final assembly process.

Designed and tested for shipping success

Since Whisker relies on FedEx to deliver Litter-Robots, the packaging redesign had to meet FedEx's box-size constraints and stringent ISTA 6 FedEx testing requirements. These industry standards simulate real-world conditions like drops, shocks, vibrations and other hazards encountered in the FedEx shipping environment.

By rigorously testing the packaging against ISTA 6 requirements, NTT DATA ensured that the Litter-Robots would arrive at customers' homes intact and damage-free while also preventing surcharges due to box size restrictions.

Crucial results within weeks

The design team's holistic approach to packaging optimization contributed to the speed and precision with which they completed the packaging optimization project. Within just seven weeks, the team proposed a new packaging solution that met Whisker's operational, sustainability and shipping requirements.

The anticipated results of the project could be transformative for Whisker. The packaging redesign identified savings for the company, which was upward of \$750,000 annually in material costs alone. By eliminating foam from the packaging, Whisker could remove 180,000 cubic feet of foam from the waste stream each year, helping it reach its sustainability goals.

The updated design would also increase operational efficiency substantially, freeing up lineside storage space by 20% and reducing the labor required to assemble the packaging.

Finally, customer satisfaction would be improved significantly due to the enhanced unboxing experience that the packaging design enables, making it easier for cat owners to install and use the Litter-Robot right away.

"We were very impressed," says Adam Freeman, Whisker's Senior Director of Productivity and Value Engineering. "The project was complex, requiring inventive design, rigorous testing and an overriding focus on sustainable practices. NTT DATA's proposed solution would deliver that on time and within our budget. This would be a big win for our business and our customers."