

CHAIRMANS REPORT 2020

The Giftware Association, JDA and BTAA and the businesses it supports and represents has faced a challenging year, first with looming Brexit uncertainty and then with the more recent Covid-19 crisis, both threatening our industry. With increased levels of online marketing and training from us as an association we are helping our members to come out of this crisis stronger than ever before.

The last three months has really seen The GA shift its strategy to become an increasingly strong online presence that sits at the heart of our industry. The team have been working on projects that not only protect our members business but set us up as an association for the future. Some of the projects that we have been working are:

- **Webinar series** – Working closely with one of supplier members, Widdop, what started as a webinar about looking to the other Side of Covid-19 turned into a nine-week webinar series covering topics such as Social Media, Personal Development and Responsible Retailing;
- **Online Training** - From this webinar series we have had offshoot webinars using the experts from each week and created an individual events centred around their expertise; Whilst previous webinars have been free to attend we are beginning to roll out paid for webinars.
- **#GIFTTHEMTHANKS** was created by The GA and members as a charity campaign in the aim to give back to keyworkers. The campaign promotes our members during this time of crisis as well as supporting our nations hardest workers. The campaign is growing well, and we have recently been in talks with charity 'Feeding Britain' to add gifts to their activity boxes for children.
- **Covid-19 advice and tool kits** for our members, as well as constantly updating our members on government updates that could affect their business.
- **Gift of the Year** is currently modernising its website and exciting new categories have been added to take in the current climate. With an increasing digital presence, we are exploring ways to add additional revenue streams from this event.

Brexit

Before Covid-19 the majority of our sector were waiting on news of what Brexit would mean for business. By late January, Boris Johnson signed off on a Brexit deal that confirmed we were leaving the EU. The details of the deal have yet to be finalised and our industry remains in the dark on how it will affect business long term.

The Federation organised a successful campaign to notify our members of the risk of leaving without a deal and how they could trade still without a deal in place. The campaign covered advertising in trade magazines, website advertising and communications out to our members written by experts in their fields covering legal, trademarks and financials.



Gift of the Year

This year's Gift of the Year competition was one of most successful yet, both in terms of entries and engagement with our audience. The competition had the most varied line up of judges yet with over 50 retailers, buyers, bloggers and key industry experts either judging online or in person at our live judging event in Birmingham. We hosted our very first well attended VIP days for those companies who were lucky enough to have been shortlisted. 200 delegates learned tips from previous winners, and judges on how to make the most of their accolade. The awards evening at the NEC was well attended by over 300 people. The networking curry night held afterwards in one of Birmingham's best Asian cuisine restaurants was also well attended with over 150 winners and finalists joining us to celebrate their success.

Spring Fair Stand

Our fantastic looking GOTY display at Spring Fair was one of the most heavily invested stands we have curated. A resounding success in terms of feedback and engagement, it celebrated the Gift of the Year competition and giving the awards a strong presence in Hall 5 at the NEC. Each of the categories were represented individually so it was easy for a buyer or retailer to find the correct category they were looking for. This also allowed the GA team to speak to retailers and collect data and opinions.



GOTY's future

To continue the strong growth of the awards, we have invested in a brand-new awards website which will be open all year, rather than just competition periods. The year-round promotions celebrate the winner's success, the history of the awards and advertising campaigns which will all help to grow the competition organically. We will also be introducing an ecommerce portal where there will be a B2B and a B2C opportunity to buy shortlisted products of the current year's competition. This will further add to our revenue streams and our presence online. The website is due to go live in August. Prior to launch, we are running two promotional competitions which will keep GOTY on people's minds.



Events

We have organised and curated 18 in person events up until February 2020. More recently we've held 7 webinars. We have seen fantastic attendance and engagement with our events which have covered topics such as Social Media, Facebook and Instagram advertising, an incredibly successful Meet the Buyer with John Lewis and a Harrogate Home and Gift drinks evening. Our priority is to help our members with the training and meet the buyer events they most need. The events afford the GA team a great opportunity for one on one time with member's we may never get to see throughout their membership. We learn about their issues, concerns and can tailor future events and support accordingly.

Webinars

With Covid –19 still on the horizon our events have moved online saving us and our members time and money. The average global webinar attendance from those registered is around 45% but our webinars we have constantly seen between 50%-60% attendance. We are also seeing good numbers of people reviewing the events by playback afterwards. We hope to keep this momentum going with many more events planned for the future, covering a range of topics from our members, a potential online meet the buyer / supplier and many more paid for events.

Membership

Our membership, although seeing a slight year on year decline, we have seen continued engagement, especially with an audience that don't actually pay for membership and just subscribe to us and are actively engaged with the GA team to get the support they need. This has enabled us to remain agile with our strategy as the industry landscape continues to shift. Our small team can manoeuvre quite quickly onto new projects and initiatives to help our members.

We have had a strong start to the year, with 80% of our members funds paid. This was due to us starting the process of renewals earlier and getting them sent out in November. We are still chasing the outstanding renewals from the start of the year but given the current climate some of these may remain unpaid.

To make up for these losses, additional revenues are expected from paid for events online, meet the buyers online and our hugely successful Yearbook, which helps buyers source products from our members. The GOTY competition will also continue to grow and generate more income.

Growth Subscriptions

In addition to our current membership model, we are considering adding a 'training/growth subscription' for a nominal monthly fee collected by Direct Debits. These subscribers would have access to some of our events and material, but the remaining membership benefits will only be available to full members.

Trade Shows

The GA team have visited more trade shows over the 2019-20 year. Working closely with new partners Akateks, we attended three trade shows in Paris, to judge the current climate and appetite for European shows and to explore potential for expanding the GOTY internationally. Our partnership with Akateks in Turkey has also allowed us to promote an alternative to China and India in sourcing for textiles and other materials. Many of our members are interested in finding out more with potential factory visits set up for the future.

National Committee

The National Committee is also going through change, with Patrick Newton and Howard Thomas recently stepping down and Louise Welsby joining us. We would like to thank them both for their service to the committee and their valued help and input. The GA is looking to add even more actively engaged members to our National Committee including those with good experience of retail and online digital marketing and ecommerce. Jeremy Corner will become Deputy Chairman of the national committee and Gert Schyberg is the incoming Chairman. Gert now also sits on the Board of the Federation.

The Future

As we emerge from the Covid 19 pandemic we have yet to see the long-term effects on our members and community. Early signs, from other countries who have already emerged from their Lockdowns, looks promising and retailers are still selling to consumers. The move to online has certainly been accelerated this year. Positioning the GA well online should stand the organisation in good stead. We are currently redesigning our main GA website to help with this.

It's becoming increasingly clear that taking care of our planet is becoming an urgent priority. Many of our members have been doing a fantastic job of reducing plastic packaging and finding innovative ways to cut waste from their supply chains and reduce, reuse and recycle. The GA will continue to support environmental efforts and help our members transition to the new legislative changes that will be enforcing this in the coming months and years.

There has also been a wonderful wave of creativity recently that will affect how and what is sold going forwards. Whatever happens on the road ahead, our industry needs support, training and help with the challenges they face. Staying close to our members and understanding their needs so that we can do this effectively will continue to be our focus at The GA.