

## The Giftware Association AGM REPORT – 2022

### 2021 ACHIEVEMENTS

#### NAVIGATING A POST-LOCKDOWN PANDEMIC RECOVERY

##### 1. Digital

2021 was dominated by the GA's work on supporting our members virtually and digitally. We upscaled the delivery of our **education programme**, providing numerous webinars, training, and additional resources from our service provider members, to help our supplier members in their strategic growth and recovery. Our own learning and delivery during 2021 has significantly influenced the development of the education hub in the new website, as we have successfully found new digital ways of connecting service provider and supplier members to share knowledge and resource to the benefit of all.

The GA was involved in all the **online and digital shows** in our industry during the pandemic:

- BCTF Online – The GA had a presence speaking to exhibitors and using the platform to promote the association
- Giving and Living Online – presence on the platform as well as welcome video from the association and speaking to fellow exhibitors who were online
- Spring and Autumn fair online – GOTY award videos hosted on Spring Fair Online, seminars held at Autumn Fair online

**Gift of the Year 2021** was a fully online competition, with entries and promotion all done in the digital sphere across email, social media, and strategic partnerships. Without a ceremony, the GA recorded and hosted 22 individual events for each category in which the winners were announced and posted over a week and during Spring Fair Online. This enormous undertaking ensured that the competition's momentum kept on moving forward and growing. Engagement was incredible and the value of the awards was keenly felt by all entries, not just the finalists, as they benefitted from a huge uplift in digital PR. The learnings from this process inspired the strategic development of the awards in 2022, cementing the decisions to make changes to a year-round competition and ensure that digital forms a key part of the physical awards in the future.

##### 2. Trade Shows

The Giftware Association transitioned from an online trade show world to attending physical events with Harrogate Home and Gift in June 2021, which was a hugely successful event in which we launched Gift of the year 2022. The return of physical shows really demonstrated the value our members place on 1-2-1 interaction with our team, particularly Sarah, who made time with every single GA member at that show. Since Harrogate Home and Gift, Sarah has visited every single trade show relevant to our industry.

##### 3. Membership

Victoria Rottan, our new Head of Membership was recruited in 2021 to look after membership and boost retention amongst members. Victoria has added enormous value to the team, liaising with members, boosting retention, and driving member engagement. Against a very challenging backdrop of running a membership organisation during a period of post-lockdown pandemic recovery, Victoria has successfully ensured membership levels ended just over the recovery budget set in 2021 and further growth has been seen in the first half of 2022.

#### 4. Voice of the Industry

A big success for Sarah and the GA in 2021 was the collaboration with Genesis and the influence Sarah has been able to have in parliament, ensuring that the GA really has cemented its role as the voice of the industry. In addition to this a stronger relationship has been formed with both BEIS, DIT and Chambers.

### 2022 ACHIEVEMENTS

#### COMMUNITY, CONNECTIVITY AND CREATIVITY

##### 1. Trade Shows

In January, we thought we would have another major disruption to the much-needed return to the full trade show calendar. Yet despite Omicron's best efforts, by the end of the first quarter, Sarah had visited 15 trade shows, 13 in the UK, one in Milan and one in Las Vegas. There has been so much eagerness from buyers and manufacturers to return to UK trade shows, and we are happy to report that, despite all the challenges besetting our industry from all directions, there is more of a vibrant eco system than ever before. New supply chains are being sought, interesting collaborations are being negotiated, and businesses are continuing to grow as a result.

We are better placed than ever as an association to advise our members on the very best trade shows to visit in the coming year. Advice that will be tailored to each individual member and based on a clear understanding of what they are seeking to achieve and what the different trade shows can offer them to enable to achieve these goals.

##### 2. Voice of the Industry

Things are tough – more so than at any point in the last 5 years. This is why the **GA's place at the top tables in the Bank of England, Genesis and government** is so important. In March, Sarah was one of 7 trade leaders invited to join the Bank of England to discuss the economy. Asked to speak first, she was able to get transparency on what the immediate future holds, and demand greater support for our industry. It cannot be underestimated how important it is that the Giftware Association is able to have a direct line to the policy makers who have such an impact on our industry.

The role of Sarah and the GA as the voice of the industry has been further enhanced by a new **LinkedIn strategy** in 2022. Sarah's role as a thought leader has been cemented using LinkedIn to share, comment, lead and inspire.

##### 3. Website

The phase 1 launch of the new website is a huge success story from the first half of 2022. The new website will allow members to join and pay their subscriptions online. Members will have their own profiles which they can update and boost their profiles online as well as backlinks to their own trade websites. This new profile will also allow them to access exclusive member news and offers, as well as resources, training videos and more. Phase 2 of the website will follow soon, and in this the education and resource hub will be fully ready, providing enormous benefits to our members, and reflecting all the learning and development from the past three years.

#### 4. Membership

We face an incredibly challenging time as a membership organisation, as so many of our member's struggle. We are constantly interrogating our membership benefits so that we can provide the very best support for all sizes of business. We are pleased to report that we have signed up more new members than usual so far this year, as a direct result of our trade show activities and the increased member engagement. One of the key benefits members can access, is one-to-one mentoring with Sarah. We realised that we have delivered over 70 mentoring sessions so far this year – each one over an hour-long, masterminding members' business challenges and connecting them with service providers who can help to further their journey. Our National Committee members have also contributed more time to supporting recruitment and retention drives and offer their expertise bolstering value in being a member.

#### 5. Sustainability

This year we launched our sustainability campaign, designed to showcase, and champion the incredible efforts some of our members are making to lead from the front when it comes to running a truly sustainable business. So far, we have created video content, social media assets and PR around two such members, Talking Tables and Sebini, and will be developing more events, content, and resource in this area over the next 18 months. Some of our work has been further strengthened by our strategic partnership with Products of Change.

#### 6. Gift of the Year

Gift of the Year 2022 has been our most successful competition to date with over 800 entries and the new awards ceremony in May. This wonderful event marked a significant, unified step forward for the UK gift industry with the Giftware Association's Gift of the Year awards and The Greats gift retailer awards joining forces, to celebrate the very best in our industry at the stunning Royal Lancaster Hotel.

The two award programmes saw both gift product excellence and retail prowess recognised and rewarded. Against a backdrop of a pandemic, rising prices, crippling supply chains, soaring inflation and the heart-breaking war in Europe, the awards celebrated the way in which our industry has continued to create, to build, to innovate and to drive forward.

We are now recruiting more industry judges, many of whom saw how successful the judging of the competition was when it was held at the Spring Fair in February. The move to a year-round competition has been a huge success and makes the awards integral to the future of the GA.

#### 7. Collaborations

We have been making strategic partnerships and seeking collaborations and new service provider members with a range of experts and industry leaders, who can help us drive the association forward and increase member benefits. One of the new events we have initiated is our Sharing Lunches, the first of which was hosted by Talking Tables and enabled like-minded GA member businesses to understand the journey they have taken to become B-Corp, whilst sharing knowledge and resource. Our sharing lunches are set to continue on the basis that we will host them around the UK at members' businesses and will be an opportunity for those businesses to network with fellow members, as well as talk about topics that are important to them. Future topics we have earmarked are competitions, marketplaces and social media and marketing.

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