

## Bubble Trouble?

By Gwynne Richards

As a logistics consultant I'm always interested in how companies manage e-commerce orders in terms of communication, packaging and delivery.

I recently ordered a dinner service on line from a well known UK High Street Retailer. Having paid on line I was sent an e-mail with all the relevant details to enable me to track my order through the parcel company's web site. Unfortunately the site did not recognise the reference number – problem number one.

My Amazon experience a few days later was very different with accurate information which gave me a lot more confidence.

The crockery arrived three days later in three large plastic bags. I signed for the parcels electronically. I then set about unpacking the goods which took over an hour which for a 23 piece set was pretty excessive. I have not seen so much bubble wrap and cardboard in a long time! I accept that crockery is fragile however the amount of packaging was excessive. Not only were the items wrapped in standard bubble wrap but the oversized boxes were also filled with 'voidfill' bubble wrap.

Unfortunately I didn't photograph the amount of packaging received but got a second opportunity when I discovered that three of the dinner plates were missing.

These subsequently arrived in three separate cardboard boxes of differing sizes with copious amounts of bubble wrap and delivered within one large plastic bag. (see photograph below).

The amount of packaging used I believe was excessive. Is this an indictment on our parcel companies in terms of damages in transit or a lack of control at the fulfilment centre in terms of the amount of packaging used?

As a consultant I would ask whether anyone has measured the damages incurred using different amounts of packaging and looked at the trade off between the cost of damages in transit and the cost of the packaging.

The retailer may think that ensuring that the product is received damage free is paramount which I would agree with however the inconvenience of storing and then disposing of a large amount of packaging is also a negative.

Logistics has always been about trade-offs and this is no exception.

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