



Fab Lab
Manchester

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It's Unique: Innovation Diary

Fab Lab, The Manufacturing Institute's fully kitted hi-tech fabrication workshop, has not only solved a northwest greeting card manufacturer's problem that no one else seemed to be able to, but has also succeeded in reducing the cost of its invented substitution from £1 to an astonishing 2p.



"I can only describe the environmentally-friendly, laser-cut, pop-out card stand Fab Lab came up with as positively ingenious"

Mike Smith,
Managing Director, It's Unique



Hadyn Insley (Fab Lab), Christine Phipps (Fab Lab) and Mike Smith (It's Unique Ltd) applying one of the laser cut prototypes

Brief

 To design a cost-effective method of keeping a pop-up greeting card open on a surface

Achievements

 Production of a laser-cut card stand to replace the existing expensive, high-carbon plastic stands liable to damage car in transit

Financial implications

 Production of stand costs reduced from £2 per pair to 3.6p per pair, saving 98.8% plus reduction in carbon footprint

Delivered by



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Product Description

It's Unique, the Bolton-based manufacturer of an exclusive range of pop-up greeting cards, was having great difficulty in finding a way of keeping their 'unique', themed greeting cards open to view in an aesthetic and cost-effective manner. Even after two years, their current solution is a plastic holder which, at £2 per pair, were not only expensive, but liable to damage the card if sent through the post.

Managing director **Mike Smith** was referred to Fab Lab by the Manchester Chamber of Commerce, and, following a consultation, the Fab Lab team, were able to come up with a solution that was not only incredibly cost-effective to produce, but was also complementary in design to the card, environmentally friendly and would fold completely flat for inclusion with the card.

The Business Solution

Mike Smith explains: "We offer a range of quality, themed pop-up

cards suitable for all occasions. However, when we developed our unique sport-themed stadium cards – a range of pop-up football and sport stadia - we realised that the way they should be displayed is somewhat different to traditional 3-D greeting cards. They sit horizontally on the surface, and to display the stadium in correct perspective, they need to be propped open as one would a hinged box lid.

"Our existing plastic stand pairs, although suitable for the job, were costing £2, which although fine when used for retail display use, were too expensive for customers, taking into account the card retails for only £4.99. They also have a relatively large carbon footprint, and most importantly, they can damage the greeting card when included with it in an envelope."

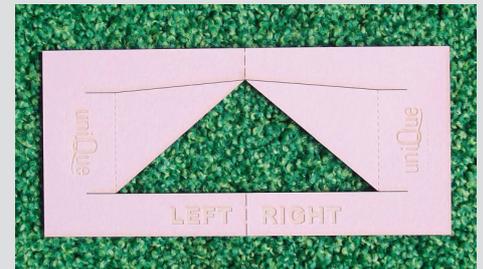
Fab Lab manager **Chrissy Phipps** said: "We were delighted to be able to come to the help of a local entrepreneur. That is what Fab Lab is here for. We not only give everyone, from young children through to entrepreneurs and businesses, the capability to bring their ideas and inventions to life, but to help lend a creative hand when and where we can."

Previous Setbacks

Mike had already overcome a couple of setbacks as he entered production prior to engaging with Fab Lab. Four premier club he approached with the idea of turning their stadium into one of their pop-up cards demanded an incredibly high and unrealistic five-figure annual licence fee for accepting the card into their souvenir shops. And, to add insult to injury, they

subsequently not only withdrew the offer of a contract they had set up with him (one actually having taken a large, four-figure licence fee that Mike subsequently struggled to have returned) but disclosed his idea to a third party manufacturer to replicate. Thankfully, they did not succeed in copying the design and failed to replicate the finish and quality of the It's Unique product by quite a long mark.

"However" Mike concluded, "I can only thank Fab Lab for helping me out and finding such a simple, yet creative solution to the problem."



Fab Lab Manchester

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