

# EDITOR'S CORNER

## First-hand experience is the best teacher



**Y**ou know the saying "Put yourself in their shoes." It means that, to truly understand what someone is going through, you must experience it yourself.

Here's an example of how well this works:

**The experience of running his own systems for profit taught him how to better design packaging machines.**

Sam Lubus, head honcho (truly, that's his title) at Inline Filling Systems, shared an insight with me earlier this year. His company makes packaging equipment for

turnkey liquid packaging operations ([www.fillers.com](http://www.fillers.com)). For a while, Sam branched off into the contract packaging business—in which, of course, he used his own machines. Now the margins for contract packagers are as tight as Britney Spears' pants. You get paid by how much "good" product you get out the door. Reliable, operator-friendly equipment becomes vital, as Sam quickly found out. He admits that the experience of running his own systems for profit taught

him how to better design packaging machines, ones that are sophisticated yet remarkably easy to use.

This reminds me of the time I operated a curled blister packaging machine while visiting the folks at Alloyd Corp. They were testing a semi-automatic unit that was ready to ship to a lip balm company. For several minutes, I filled empty blisters with the product. At first, keeping up with the target speed was a problem as I fumbled with the small containers, but I quickly learned the rhythm and did okay.

Kent Hayward at Alloyd congratulated me on my accomplishment and then showed me a finished product. The package looked pretty good, except that the lip balm tube was upside down.

Now my brief adventure as a packaging machine operator didn't teach me how to design better machines. But I did learn that an intimate understanding of other tasks that connect with yours can help the whole packaging process work better.

*Lisa McTigue Pierce*

Lisa McTigue Pierce  
Editor-in-Chief  
[lpierce@fdpagnito.com](mailto:lpierce@fdpagnito.com)

## FOOD&DRUG packaging

### STAFF

**PIETE GIANNAKOPOULOS** Vice President/Group Publisher  
[peteg@fdpagnito.com](mailto:peteg@fdpagnito.com)

**BRUCE WEBSTER** Associate Publisher  
[brucew@fdpagnito.com](mailto:brucew@fdpagnito.com)

**LISA MCTIGUE PIERCE** Editor-in-Chief  
[lpierce@fdpagnito.com](mailto:lpierce@fdpagnito.com)

**PAUL DEMETRIAKAKIS** Associate Editor  
[pauld@fdpagnito.com](mailto:pauld@fdpagnito.com)

**CHRISTOPHER BARRY** Associate Editor  
[cbarry@fdpagnito.com](mailto:cbarry@fdpagnito.com)

**RON LEVINGON** Senior Marketing Manager  
[ronl@fdpagnito.com](mailto:ronl@fdpagnito.com)

**SEN DYER** Senior Marketing Manager  
[sen@fdpagnito.com](mailto:sen@fdpagnito.com)

**ANTHONY BOGEMAN** Senior Marketing Manager  
[anthonyb@fdpagnito.com](mailto:anthonyb@fdpagnito.com)

**CAROLE YOUNG GILANDO** Classified/30 Sec. Rep.  
[caroleg@fdpagnito.com](mailto:caroleg@fdpagnito.com)

**BILL ANTONIAK** Design Department Manager  
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[dhanes@fdpagnito.com](mailto:dhanes@fdpagnito.com)  
**ERICK JORIN** Internet Technology Manager  
[erickj@fdpagnito.com](mailto:erickj@fdpagnito.com)  
**GENEVA VAN BOWEN** Circulation Manager  
[genovan@fdpagnito.com](mailto:genovan@fdpagnito.com)

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For Volume Reprints Contact  
Lisa McTigue  
Phone: (516) 379-1097  
E-mail: [lpierce@fdpagnito.com](mailto:lpierce@fdpagnito.com)

How to contact  
**FOOD&DRUG** packaging  
Mail: 750 South 46<sup>th</sup> Street,  
St. Charles, IL 60174  
Phone: (630) 377-1000  
Fax: (630) 377-1097  
Web: [www.fdp.com](http://fdp.com)  
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