



NAVIGATING IDAHO'S SUPPLY CHAIN SUPPLY CHAIN SUCCESS STORIES



Navigating Idaho's Supply Chain: Vessel for Cocoa Bombs

Challenge: Distribution and Supplier Disruption

Solution: Vessel's Strategic Sourcing and Procurement

Results: Packaging Requirements & Customer Demands Met

Partners Involved: TechHelp, Boise State University's New Product Development Lab, Slant 3D, Panic Plastics, TechHelp's Food Manufacturing Team

Background

Eric Torres Garcia, an Idaho-based entrepreneur and Boise State University alum, created Cocoa Bombs in 2019, selling his fresh take on classic hot chocolate — fine quality chocolate shells which contain goodies like marshmallows and break down when placed in a mug of warm milk.

Although less than five years old, the Cocoa Bombs brand has seen global success, thanks to a viral TikTok video, the product's popularity, and the company's hardworking, visionary leader. However, while rapid growth is typically a good thing for a product business, this is precisely where a problem arose.



All Hands on Deck

As Cocoa Bombs expanded, its plastic supplier — which provided an integral part of the product's packaging — was unable to keep up with the company's success, a problem that was exacerbated by supply and demand shocks. Because consumer demand and online orders for Cocoa Bombs were at an all-time high (and the product had an established presence in hundreds of retail stores across the U.S.), the company risked losing an opportunity to significantly increase its revenue.

"Manufacturers in most industries have turned to suppliers and subcontractors who narrowly focus on just one area, and those specialists, in turn, usually have to rely on many others. Such an arrangement offers benefits: You have a lot of flexibility in what goes into your product, and you're able to incorporate the latest technology. But you are left vulnerable when you depend on a single supplier somewhere deep in your network for a crucial component or material. If that supplier produces the item in only one plant or one country, your disruption risks are even higher."

"Global Supply Chains in a Post-Pandemic World," Harvard Business Review, 2020

Garcia discussed his predicament with a former student employee of TechHelp, a partnership of Idaho's three state universities housing a team of specialists that provides professional services to Idaho manufacturers. Having worked closely with other supply chain and sourcing experts in the state, TechHelp suggested Eric reach out to Vessel for a solution.

ABOUT VESSEL

Vessel is a veteran and minority owned company established and headquartered in Boise, ID. Our mission is to empower growing companies to introduce their products to the market on a commercial scale. From conception to establishing and maintaining your sales funnel, Vessel is poised to drive success for businesses. Whether you need to scale your product by utilizing our established network of manufacturing partners and fully operational supply chain management service, or need an experienced sales & marketing team as you grow, Vessel will take your company to the next level.



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Finding Longitude

"When I first got in contact with Vessel, immediately you could tell what kind of people they are," says Eric Torres Garcia, Cocoa Bombs' founder. "Derik was interested in what I had to say and gave me his full, undivided attention. And Nic was accommodating and quick to address our need to find a packaging solution."

After meeting with Garcia, the Vessel crew immediately went to work leveraging its network to address Cocoa Bombs' dilemma. First, Vessel consulted with the New Product Development Lab at BSU to get another perspective and brainstorm possible solutions. New Product Development Specialist Grey Beaudry referred Vessel to Slant 3D in Caldwell, Idaho due to the company's plastics expertise.

Gabe Bentz, CEO of Slant 3D, then recommended Vessel reach out to Panic Plastics, a Payette-based plastics manufacturer with the scale and tooling capabilities to meet the immediate needs of Cocoa Bombs' rapidly expanding company. With Eric's approval, Panic Plastics quickly began developing samples and started delivering containers, producing enough to meet Cocoa Bombs' packaging requirements.

Meanwhile, Janna Hamlett, a specialist on TechHelp's Food Manufacturing Team in Twin Falls, Idaho, worked tirelessly to make sure the plastics produced met the necessary food manufacturing specifications. (This was a critical step due to the size of Cocoa Bombs' customer base.) Upon receiving the go-ahead from TechHelp, Cocoa Bombs was able to get back on track filling orders for its customers around the world.



CORE SERVICES

SUPPLY CHAIN CONSULTING

- Supply Chain Strategy
- Risk Mitigation
- Engineering & Design
- Quality Assurance
- Program Management
- Purchasing & Negotiations
- Logistics
- Warehousing & Distribution
- Forecasting
- IP Protection

STRATEGIC SOURCING

- Vendor Search
- Vetting
- Negotiations & Purchasing
- Logistics
- Documentation
- Sampling
- Inspections & Reviews
- ERP/MRP Solutions
- Warehousing
- Drop Shipping
- Direct to Manufacturer



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Staying the Course

"We had a great connection with Vessel initially, and as we worked together, that only grew," explains Garcia. "There's typically 12 to 20 weeks of development that happens with plastics, and throughout the entire process, they were quick to get things done, very responsive, and good at keeping us up-to-date on progress. So much could have gone wrong, but everything went smoothly from my end."

The supply chain disruption Cocoa Bombs faced underscores the importance of connection and collaboration that is at the core of Idaho's thriving manufacturing community. Vessel is proud to be an active member of this community, and frequently utilizes its established network of partners to deliver solutions for manufacturers in Idaho. Further, through a deeper understanding of the talent and resources that already exist in Idaho, Vessel makes it possible to close supply chain gaps for manufacturers in our state.

"Working with Vessel was an amazing experience," continues Garcia. "And a key point for me is that they are local. I'm still in Idaho and know the area well, so it made a difference for me to be able to meet with the people who were going to help my business. That's what it's all about — being able to work with your local community."

"We are privileged to work with Idaho companies like Eric's, companies with market validation and scaling due to customer demand with supply chain needs for growth and fulfillment without disruption and risk," says Derik Ellis, co-owner of Vessel. "This is one of the many reasons working with Cocoa Bombs has been such a great experience. Eric is lightning in a bottle — he's a driven and passionate founder and I'm looking forward to experiencing all of the products he brings to market now and into the future. Sit back and watch the magic!"

As we look ahead, it's clear that supply chain issues are our new reality — both now and in the long term. However, Vessel understands how crushing these challenges can be for Idaho product and manufacturing companies, and is dedicated to finding solutions. Whether a company is in its early/ideation stages or fully commercializing a product to market, Vessel is equipped with the in-house capabilities and expert network needed to help them navigate Idaho's ever-changing supply chain.

