

From bright idea to market-ready brand #239255

By Kevin Robinson | Published: 7-Sep-2026



Manufacturing

Packaging

For nutraceutical start-ups and young brands, outsourcing can provide the manufacturing expertise, infrastructure and regulatory support needed to launch efficiently, protect cash flow and build a more resilient route to growth, writes Emma Verkaik, CEO of the BCMPPA



Young brands have something in abundance: **passion**. The excitement of taking a new idea to the market is understandable, but **enthusiasm alone is not enough to take you all the way**.

Nutraceutical entrepreneurs must turn a promising concept into a safe, compliant and commercially viable product, often with limited capital, a small team and little direct manufacturing experience.

The growth of the nutraceutical entrepreneur is already visible in the BCMPA's own activity. At the first **Pitch the Co-Packers** competition, launched at **Packaging Innovations & Empack** earlier this year, three of the four finalists were start-up brands from the nutraceutical sector.

The winner was **Renata Sá**, founder of **HANGOV**, a new wellness brand offering a Brazilian-style preparation drink designed to support the body before alcohol consumption.

Enabling new brands

Outsourcing enables founders to concentrate on the areas where they add most value: establishing the product concept, the customer proposition and the all-important marketing and brand building.

The chosen production partner can provide established facilities, trained staff, quality systems, technical knowledge and proven processes without the founder having to fund a factory, filling equipment and machinery, warehousing and an operational and quality control team before demand has been validated.

For **Chris McDonnell**, CEO of **Black Label Creations**, the choice of partner is

fundamental and can be the "difference between a product that scales successfully and one that stalls after the first production run."

Both **Tammy Williams**, Sales Director at **Chester Medical**, and **Sophie Thomas**, Business Development Manager at **Complete Co-Packing Services**, concur, noting that outsourcing is an ideal approach for new brands, providing expertise and infrastructure to bring products to market.



This matters in a category where formats can range from capsules, powders, sachets and stickpacks to wellness shots, gummies, functional drinks, pouches, tubs and subscription-ready packs.

“ Each format brings its own production, packing, labelling, storage and distribution considerations. ”

Yet, a strong idea or format is only the starting point. The formula, production method, minimum order quantity, cost base and distribution plan must work together.

McDonnell says that standing out in a busy category goes well beyond having a good idea.

“Instead, it's about understanding from the outset what the genuine need is for what you're building; whether your target market is actually big enough to build a real business on; whether your point of difference is strong enough; whether your brand identity and packaging are doing the work they need to do; and whether you've got a marketing strategy that can actually cut through.”

He adds that founders also need “the endurance, grit and cash to stay the course.” In practice, outsourcing can help to preserve that runway by converting major fixed investment into a more flexible operating cost.

It does not remove commercial risk, but it can prevent scarce resources from being tied up in assets and capabilities that already exist elsewhere.

Outsourcing advantage

Contractors also have an educational role, according to Chester Medical's Williams.

“By sharing our technical knowledge and industry experience, we help to guide them through the development process, providing practical advice and delivering a manufacturing solution that is both commercially viable and fit for purpose.”

From handling multiple projects on behalf of many different customers, this advice has been gained with time and provides brands with a major advantage.

It is an **inherent, unseen competitive benefit** of using third parties that adds to the successful launch or production.

Outsourcing partners can react if, for example, a packaging format isn't working or if they know a quicker way to handle a task. It's this ongoing experience that can help the next customer by helping them to avoid common pitfalls and saving both time and money.



Thomas highlights the wider service offer. Alongside packing or manufacturing, a partner can advise on packaging and recipes, provide storage and fulfilment, and dispatch to retailers, foodservice customers or consumers.

Bringing these activities together can simplify handovers, improve visibility and reduce the number of suppliers a young business has to manage.

“This allows them to spend more time and money on sales/marketing and growing their customer base,” says Thomas.

“Another key benefit is the expertise and knowledge we have because we are familiar with these products; we can make suggestions about packaging or recipes. We can also support with storage and fulfilment, acting as a one-stop shop by sending to retailers, foodservice operators or directly to consumers.”

Building resilience

Supply chain resilience is particularly important for start-ups, which may lack the purchasing power, safety stock and supplier relationships available to larger brands.

A contract manufacturer can draw on established procurement networks, production planning experience and knowledge of alternative materials or formats.

It can also consolidate demand across customers, although availability, pricing and lead times will always depend on the product and market.

Early collaboration matters.

Sharing realistic forecasts, launch dates, specifications and promotional plans gives the contractor a better chance to secure ingredients and packaging, schedule production and flag risks before they become delays.

Contingency planning should cover approved alternative suppliers, substitute pack formats (when appropriate), minimum order quantities, storage requirements and responsibilities for stock ownership.



This approach helps to transform outsourcing from a simple transaction into an operational partnership. The goal is not merely to fill or pack a product, but to create a repeatable route from order to delivery that can respond as demand develops.

Complex legislation

The UK's packaging **extended producer responsibility** (EPR) scheme requires organisations and brands to register and report packaging data, with financial obligations depending on factors such as turnover and the amount of packaging they handle.

It is just one regulation that adds another layer of complexity, with packaging choices and data quality therefore having direct operational and cost implications

For brands selling into the European Union, the **Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation** (PPWR) entered into force on 11 February 2025 and applied generally from August this year.

It introduces requirements across the packaging lifecycle, including measures on recyclability, material use, packaging minimisation and labelling, with different provisions taking effect on different dates.

Chester Medical's Williams explains: "As a packer, we have a responsibility to manage EPR requirements, provide guidance and information relating to PPWR, and support the due diligence and documentation requirements associated with the EU Deforestation Regulation.

Many businesses are still unaware of these evolving regulations and the impact they will have on their packaging choices and supply chains.



"For example, PPWR focuses on reducing the environmental impact of packaging by addressing areas such as packaging size, material selection, unused space, material thickness and logistics efficiency, including considerations such as the number of units per pallet. Understanding and adapting to these requirements is essential to developing compliant, sustainable and efficient packaging solutions."

Where the EU Deforestation Regulation is relevant, its scope must also be checked carefully.

It applies to specified commodities and products; packaging used only to support, protect or carry another product is generally treated differently from packaging placed on the market as a product.

Again, accurate scoping and documentation are essential.

Long-term partnerships

The right partner is not simply the one with available capacity or the lowest unit price.

Founders should assess technical capability, quality systems, relevant sector experience, communication, financial fit, scalability and the ability to support the intended sales channels.

Required standards and certifications will depend on the product and market, but they may include BRCGS certification or Soil Association certification for organic products.

"Choose a partner that you can grow with and build a long-term relationship with," says Thomas.

"It is also important to ensure they have the relevant standards and accreditations in place for your particular product, giving you confidence that your brand is in safe hands as it scales."

Williams' advice is equally direct: "Find yourself the right partner. Work with a company that can support, guide and advise you."



McDonnell also urges founders to validate the proposition before manufacturing begins and to understand how the product will reach its market once it exists.

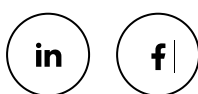
"Manufacturing is a huge milestone, but it's only one part of a much bigger picture," he says.

"It's much harder to work out the how and the why once a product is on the shelf. **Do the research first**; it'll save you time, money and a lot of hard lessons in the long run."

For ambitious nutraceutical start-ups and growing businesses, outsourcing is about more than avoiding capital expenditure.

At its best, it gives access to a ready-made operational platform, experienced problem-solvers and a partner that can help turn a promising idea into a compliant, resilient and scalable business.

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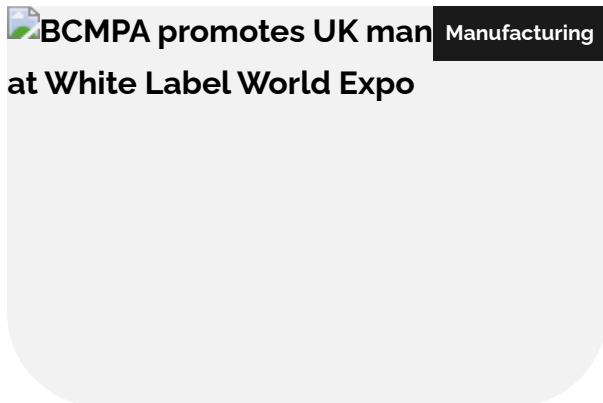
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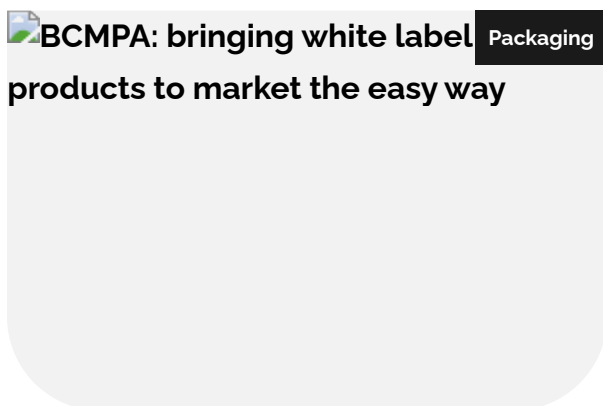
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