COOL GEAR INTERNATIONAL, LLC
SUPPORTING GROWTH IN COOLER PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT WITH SOLIDWORKS PROFESSIONAL

Using SOLIDWORKS Professional design software, Cool Gear has realized rapid growth by consistently delivering innovative cooler products that are designed to keep beverages cold and food fresh for busy, on-the-go lifestyles.

cool gear

Challenge:

Grow the product offering, design throughput, and product development staff to support partnerships with leading household brands, and to support its merger with Igloo Products, the world's leading cooler brand.

Solution:

Implement SOLIDWORKS Professional product development software.

Benefits:

• Doubled product offering
• Increased diversity of product line
• Grew partnerships with major brands
• Supported merger with Igloo Products

Cool Gear International, LLC has revolutionized the hydration and housewares industry by delivering innovative cooler products that are designed to keep beverages cold and food fresh for busy, on-the-go lifestyles. Utilizing the company's patented "freezer gel" technology, each Cool Gear product features a unique design that promotes individuality through vibrant colors, graphics, and function.

Since its founding in 1986, Cool Gear has realized rapid growth by consistently delivering superior quality products. The highly collaborative, talented Cool Gear team designs custom product, packaging, and point-of-purchase displays for retailers, as well as for the premium market. Cool Gear is also an official partner with several major brands, which includes being an exclusive Worldwide Hydration Licensee for Coca-Cola®.

Igloo Products, the company that originated the cooler product category in 1947 and the No. 1 cooler brand worldwide, acquired Cool Gear International in January 2015. Joining the iconic Cool Gear® and Igloo® brands brings a new collaborative level of innovation, design, and quality to the company. The merger also challenges Cool Gear to maintain growth in its fun, colorful product line. Since the cooler products manufacturer moved from the Adobe® Photoshop® and Illustrator® graphics packages, which it initially used to create design concepts, to SOLIDWORKS® Professional product development software, Cool Gear has expanded its product line by improving design accuracy and taking advantage of large-scale manufacturing automation, according to Senior Product Designer John Mason.

"As soon as we looked at SOLIDWORKS software, we recognized that it was the best fit," Mason says. "SOLIDWORKS is the perfect bridge between creative design and CAD modeling."

Cool Gear chose SOLIDWORKS Professional software because of its ease of use; advanced surfacing capabilities; and superior service, training, and support. "We encourage everyone that we hire to take SOLIDWORKS training at CAP, Inc.," Mason notes. "They have an excellent staff over there, and the feedback from our people has been consistently great."

EXPANDING PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

Using SOLIDWORKS Professional software, Cool Gear has expanded product development, both in terms of its design staff and in the number and diversity of its products. "As our company has grown, so has our product development effort," Mason explains. "We've gone beyond basic hydration products to develop several new product lines—more than doubling our product offering in the process—and expanded our development team from a single designer to a staff of seven creative professionals.

"SOLIDWORKS software has helped us support this growth by accelerating our development cycles, facilitating collaboration, enhancing design visualization, and driving the establishment of our dynamic rapid prototyping/3D printing studio," Mason continues. "SOLIDWORKS helps us maintain our lean philosophy while advancing our design effort. We are generating so many product designs with SOLIDWORKS that it seems like we can't manufacture new products fast enough."

> "With SOLIDWORKS software, we've brought designability to a whole new level. We can quickly create designs, generate renderings, produce prototypes, and expedite design changes, all of which enables us to beat the competition and stay ahead of the game."
>
> — John Mason, Senior Product Designer

ADVANCING RAPID PROTOTYPING

The move to SOLIDWORKS Professional software not only enabled Cool Gear to generate accurate, visual representations of new product designs, it has also allowed the cooler products manufacturer to heavily leverage rapid prototyping and 3D printing technologies. "SOLIDWORKS, 3D printing, and rapid prototypes are integral parts of what we do," Mason says.

"In addition to our Stratasys Dimension® 3D printer, we've installed a 3D Systems Viper® SLA (stereolithography) system that uses a clear resin to prototype products for which clarity is a requirement, such as water bottles," Mason adds. "SOLIDWORKS software provides us with the tools to interact visually with a design, and the ability to quickly produce physical prototypes adds a tactile, in-the-hand experience to the process. Using SOLIDWORKS and our rapid prototyping studio, we can create working prototypes that are as close to the final product as possible. The benefits of this capability extend beyond design because in many cases, the prototype actually sells the product."

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BEATING THE COMPETITION

Leveraging SOLIDWORKS Professional software to maintain a lean, fast-response approach to product development gives Cool Gear an advantage in an increasingly competitive market. In addition to applying this philosophy to the development of its own product line—such as a double-walled, insulated vessel that looks like a soda can—the company brings the same approach to its partnerships with major brands—chiller cups for Coke®, for example. "There's so much competition, that you need to be fast and reliable to win," Mason stresses.

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Recently acquired by Igloo brands, Cool Gear has leveraged SOLIDWORKS 3D design tools and Stratasys 3D printing technologies to expand its lean, fast-response approach to product development.

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