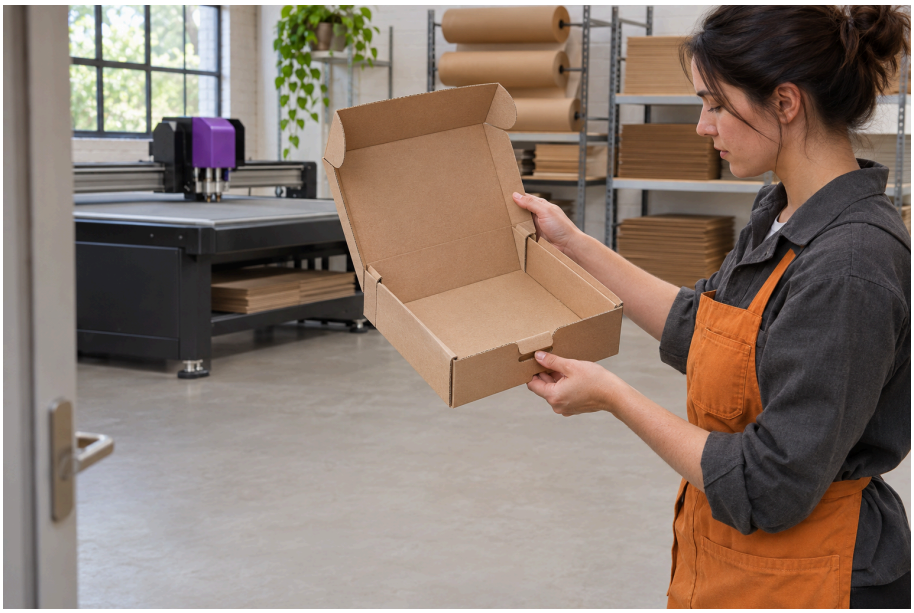
TAPFLARE / RESEARCH & PRACTICAL GUIDANCE

Outsource Packaging Artwork: Get the Production Dieline First

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Executive Summary

Buying packaging artwork for an existing product goes best when the **production dieline** is settled before a designer is asked for a committed production-artwork quote. A dieline is the flat cut-and-crease template at real dimensions, in PackOS's description (packos.ai). Packaging suppliers publish their own rules for who supplies that template and when. One supplier says it sends a dieline with the quote, usually within one business day of a complete brief (triapackaging.com). Another says it provides the template for free once an order is paid in full or a custom sample is bought (packmojo.com). A third warns that every supplier uses slightly different sizing, cut lines and tolerances (inke.gorgias.help). A file built on one supplier's template therefore remains unconfirmed until the supplier that will produce the pack approves it.

This report proposes a **pre-purchase readiness gate** with four outcome branches: graphics on a manufacturer-approved pack, an unresolved production template, a new structural package, and a visual concept only. The buyer sends the manufacturer a short request for the current dieline and specifications, records what is known and unknown, and only then briefs a graphic designer. Providers are compared by confirmed responsibilities, not monthly fee. ManyPixels states that custom box shapes or dieline creation require a specialist (www.manypixels.co), Superside's help centre asks briefs to include dielines and specifications (help.superside.com), and Upwork advises buyers to specify visual design, structural design, or both (www.upwork.com).

Market context does not measure demand for this topic. The US Census Bureau estimated Q2 2026 retail e-commerce sales at $340.2 billion (www.census.gov). The packaging-market figures appear in the Data Analysis section. The findings are qualitative, drawn from supplier help pages and one forum thread.

The decision rule is short. If the manufacturer confirms a current dieline and an approved die, the job is surface artwork and fits a graphic-design freelancer or subscription. If the template is missing, changed or unconfirmed, the brief stays conditional until the supplier responds. If the shape, material or insert is new, a

structural specialist comes first. If only visual direction is needed, a concept is a legitimate but different deliverable. The examples and templates below are illustrative; have your packaging supplier review the worksheet before relying on it.

Introduction and Background

E-commerce founders, marketing and operations leads, and agency account managers frequently receive the same request: refresh the packaging for a product that already ships. The brief sounds like graphic design, but a printed box is a flat sheet that is cut, creased and glued, and artwork only works if it sits correctly on that sheet. An anonymous practitioner on a design forum (relative date "3mo ago" when retrieved on 2026-11-08) described holding a physical box and writing, "I don't have the original dieline from the box manufacturer." (www.reddit.com) The top reply, from a self-described prepress worker, said to get the dieline file from the printer or manufacturer (www.reddit.com). That thread is one qualitative signal, not survey evidence.

Existing coverage already separates graphics from structure. ManyPixels, in its comparison post, states that "the key distinction is between visual design and structural engineering." (www.manypixels.co) PackOS, in a 2026 guide, says packaging design is structural design first and graphic design second (packos.ai). This guide goes a step further with a buyer-side commissioning tool: a short supplier request, a readiness gate, a provider comparison keyed to confirmed responsibilities, and a revision record for template changes after design has started.

The scope is narrow: buying and briefing creative work, not engineering packaging. A general design subscription is a graphic-design resource and does not by itself supply structural testing, regulatory advice or manufacturing. Tapflare, the publisher of this report, is a flat-rate design and web development subscription managed by a dedicated project manager. Whether Tapflare takes on packaging or label artwork, and on what terms, should be confirmed with Tapflare in writing before purchase; a general design subscription does not on its own establish dieline engineering, physical prototypes or print management. The gate below tells a buyer which branch of the job a subscription can take on and which needs another party first. General print-file preflight and QR code behavior are covered in separate articles and are not repeated here.

Defining the Deliverable: Concept, Artwork, Structure or Production Support

"Packaging design" can mean four different purchases, and quotes for them are not comparable. The first step in outsourcing packaging artwork is to name which one is being bought.

The four deliverables

- **Visual concept.** Imagery, color, typography and layout direction, shown on a mockup or a generic flat. It establishes brand direction and lets stakeholders react. It does not establish that artwork will fit a specific production template. Superside's packaging page lists creating mockups to picture the final result and get stakeholder buy-in as part of its process (superside.com).

- **Graphic artwork on a confirmed template.** Surface design placed on a production dieline supplied or approved by the manufacturer. Penji states that its designers know print production requirements such as bleed areas and die lines (penji.co), and Arka states that it will place a buyer's artwork on a dieline and send a digital proof (www.arka.com).
- **Structural design.** The shape, material and construction of the pack itself. ManyPixels places dieline creation, material selection, prototyping and print-production management under structural design (www.manypixels.co). Upwork describes structural work as creating dielines, dimensions, folds and packaging structures with tools such as ArtiosCAD or SolidWorks (www.upwork.com).
- **Production support.** Supplier-side file review, proofs, sampling and printing. Packhelp states that every order, whether submitted on a dieline or created in its editor, is reviewed by its DTP (desktop publishing) team (packhelp.com).

What a visual concept can and cannot establish

A concept answers questions of brand: hierarchy, tone, color palette, how a product line looks as a family. It can be produced before any production parameter is known. It cannot answer whether a logo clears a fold, whether a panel is hidden when the box is closed, or whether the board and process reproduce a specific color. PackOS warns that designing the surface first and forcing a structure to fit it is the most expensive way to work (packos.ai). A concept brief therefore states that panel placement is provisional, and a production brief states which dieline revision it is built on.

Where the standards fit

A catalog style is not a production dieline. FEFCO and ESBO developed an international code that replaces long verbal descriptions of fibreboard case constructions with simple symbols (www.fefco.org), and the ECMA (European Carton Makers Association) code groups folding carton styles into a limited number of categories (ecma.org) for use as a reference archive in CAD-CAM systems (ecma.org). Esko states that its ArtiosCAD library includes the ECMA and FEFCO standards (site.esko.com). A style code tells buyer and supplier they mean the same family of box; the exact panel dimensions and glue-flap positions for a job come from the supplier's template.

Who Owns and Approves the Production Dieline

The second question in the gate is ownership: which party issues the dieline, which party approves it, and what happens when the buyer holds an older file. Supplier help pages show a consistent pattern with important variations.

The pattern: the supplier issues the template

Packaging suppliers publish their own rules for who supplies the dieline and when. The suppliers quoted below (a non-representative convenience sample of help and guide pages) each describe a supplier-issued template or supplier-generated dieline, and they differ on timing: some provide the file with the quote, some on download, and some only after an order or sample purchase. Examples, each in that supplier's own words:

- **Custom Box Makers** says to select the box type and download the template in PDF or AI format (www.customboxmakers.com).
- **4OVER4** says custom boxes are not built in its online design tool, and that buyers download the template for the style and size they want (www.4over4.com). For a custom die line it says to contact the production department (www.4over4.com).
- **UPrinting** says it will send a PDF dieline template for buyers who design offline (www.uprinting.com), and **PackMojo** says it provides the template for free once an order is paid in full or a custom sample is bought (packmojo.com).
- **Blue Box Packaging** says the dieline template can be received for custom boxes once the order is confirmed (www.blueboxpackaging.com).
- **Tria Packaging** says it sends a dieline with the quote, usually within one business day of a complete brief (triapackaging.com). Its guide displayed an update date of October 31, 2026 when retrieved on 2026-11-08.
- **PakFactory** says its dielines are carefully engineered using its proprietary software (www.pakfactory.com).

The timing difference matters. If a template arrives only after payment, the designer cannot quote production artwork until the order is placed. The gate asks for the template, or a written statement of when it will be issued, before a production quote is committed.

The risk: reusing a file from another supplier or board

Inke states that a dieline from another supplier should not be used for its online orders because every supplier uses slightly different sizing, cut lines and tolerances (inke.gorgias.help). Tria states that a dieline drawn for a different board will not fold the same on its own board (triapackaging.com). Custom Box Makers asks buyers not to stretch or proportionally resize a production dieline (www.customboxmakers.com), and Packhelp asks buyers not to change the shape of its die-cut template (packhelp.com). These are supplier-specific statements, but they support one narrow conclusion: a box file inherited from a previous manufacturer, material or tooling is **unconfirmed** until the new supplier approves it.

Dimensions and units are part of ownership

Suppliers disagree about which measurement basis they use. UPrinting states that its listed box dimensions are for the box's interior (www.uprinting.com), and Arka states the same for its custom mailer sizes (www.arka.com). Inke lists store product sizes as external and recommends downloading the dieline template to view internal dimensions (inke.gorgias.help). 4OVER4 asks for the box style and finished dimensions so the template is built correctly (www.4over4.com). The FEFCO code states that dimensions are internal unless otherwise specified (www.fefco.org). A buyer who writes "the box is 8 by 6 by 3" without stating the unit and interior or exterior has not yet specified a dieline.

The Four-Branch Readiness Gate

The gate is a short worksheet completed before asking designers for a committed production-artwork quote. It has two parts: a record of what is known and unknown, and a branch decision. *Table 1* below shows the record, with each row tied to a real responsibility rather than a universal template geometry.

Gate item	Known (record the answer)	Unknown: request from whom	Action
Supplier and job identification	Supplier name, quote or job number, product name	Supplier account contact if the job number is unknown	Quote the job number in every message so the template is tied to this job
Finished dimensions and units	Numbers, units, and whether interior or exterior	Supplier: which basis its template uses	Ask the supplier to state the basis and confirm the numbers on the template
Board, material and process (as confirmed by the supplier)	What the supplier has written, with date	Supplier: any change since the last order	Treat unwritten assumptions as unknown; do not copy from an old order
Dieline owner, revision and date	File name, revision label, issue date, issuer	Supplier: is this the current revision	Ask for the current file with a revision identifier
Named panels and orientation requirements	Panel names on the template	Supplier: which panels are inside, outside, hidden when closed	Ask for panel names and orientation to be marked on the file
Existing die approved?	Supplier's written confirmation, if any	Supplier: is an approved die in place	If not confirmed, route to the "unresolved" branch
Approved copy and images	Which text and images are final, and who approved them	Buyer's brand or legal owner	List approved items; mark the rest as placeholders
Items needing a manufacturer or specialist	Transit testing, material change, new shape, regulated content	Supplier, structural specialist, or the buyer's qualified reviewer	Do not assign to a graphic designer

Table 1 turns an informal conversation into a record. The most important row for brief writing is dieline owner, revision and date, since every later file and proof refers to it. The last row is a reminder that some outstanding items are not graphic design: Esko notes that packaging carries legally required content, such as ingredient lists, allergen declarations and nutritional information, and that checking it is a distinct prepress stage (www.esko.com). Requirements come from regulators: the US Food and Drug Administration states that food labeling is required for most prepared foods (www.fda.gov), the US Consumer Product Safety Commission states that labeling requirements vary by product type (www.cpsc.gov), and EUR-Lex states that responsibility for EU food information lies with the manufacturer marketing the food under their name (eur-lex.europa.eu). This report gives no category-specific labeling advice; consult a qualified reviewer for regulated content.

The four branches

- **Branch 1: Graphics on a manufacturer-approved pack.** The supplier has confirmed in writing the current dieline revision, dimensions, material, process and die approval. Surface artwork is the job, suitable for a graphic-design freelancer or subscription, with the template left unaltered.
- **Branch 2: Unresolved production template.** The buyer has an old file, another supplier's file or no file, or the supplier has not confirmed the revision or material. Do not request a committed production quote. Send the manufacturer request below, or limit the designer to a concept with panels stated as provisional.
- **Branch 3: New structural package.** The shape, material, insert or closure is new. Esko's user guide for its 3D packaging tools states that they need a structural design file to describe the shape of the package (docs.esko.com), so a structural specialist or the supplier's structural service produces that file first. PackMojo, for example, states that for custom box inserts the dieline comes with a purchased structural design service (packmojo.com).
- **Branch 4: Visual concept only.** The buyer needs direction for a pitch or review with no immediate production commitment. The brief states that the concept is not production artwork and that a production phase needs a confirmed template and a new scope.

Briefing the Designer and Comparing Provider Categories

What the graphic designer receives

For Branch 1, the brief should hand the designer a small, specific package of inputs.

- **The production dieline file** with its revision identifier and issue date, as received from the supplier, unaltered. Tria asks for artwork to be supplied as a PDF with the dieline on its own layer (triapackaging.com).
- **Named panels and orientation.** Packlane asks for each print side to be saved as a separate file and labeled clearly (packlane.com). PakFactory asks for interior and exterior artwork in separate, properly named layers (www.pakfactory.com).
- **Supplier's file instructions**, quoted rather than paraphrased. Packly says to lock the template layer without making any changes (pack.ly), UPrinting says to avoid moving, rotating or manipulating the dieline layer (www.uprinting.com), and Newprint says not to move the dieline or change the artboard size (newprint.helpscoutdocs.com).
- **Approved copy and images**, with an explicit list of what is placeholder.
- **Items the designer must not decide**, such as regulated content, barcode numbers and legal claims. GS1 states that a GTIN is created by combining a licensed company prefix with a unique item reference (gs1.org), so the number is an assigned data element the buyer supplies.

What the designer returns

The return package should match what the supplier accepts, and the brief should say so. Adobe's Illustrator documentation describes packaging a folder with the document, necessary fonts and linked graphics (helpx.adobe.com), and notes that a warning displays when fonts are packaged (helpx.adobe.com), a sign that

font licensing limits what can be handed over. Converting type to outlines permanently transforms text into vector shapes (helpx.adobe.com), so a supplier that requires outlines and a client who needs editable source files may need separate deliverables. Packlane, for example, states that all fonts are converted to outlines or paths in its print files (packlane.com).

The return package should carry the dieline revision identifier in the filename or file, so a later proof can be traced to a template. General print-file preflight is a separate topic: Adobe notes that preflight success depends on how well the inspection criteria are defined (helpx.adobe.com), and the PDF Association explains that PDF/X exists for exchanging print data between a print buyer and a print producer (pdfa.org). The preflight and QR code checklists live in separate articles and are not repeated here.

Comparing provider categories by confirmed responsibilities

Table 2 below summarizes what each category of provider states or does not state about six responsibilities. Cells report what the provider's own pages say; "not stated" means the pages read did not address it, which is not the same as the provider declining to do it. Prices are intentionally excluded because no comparable confirmed scope exists.

Provider category	Visual concept	Artwork on an existing dieline	Structural template	Prototype or test	Production review	Print ordering
Design subscription (general, vendor-stated)	Penji states it covers many packaging types, from boxes to labels (penji.co)	Superside's help centre asks that briefs include dielines (help.superside.com)	ManyPixels states custom box shapes or dieline creation need a specialist (www.manypixels.co)	Not stated in pages read	Penji states its files are print ready (penji.co); Design Pickle states it supports print production needs (www.designpickle.com)	ManyPixels states design fees almost never include printing (www.manypixels.co)
Tapflare (publisher, direct provider)	Packaging scope not confirmed in the page cited here; confirm with Tapflare in writing	Not established; confirm in writing whether surface artwork on a buyer-supplied confirmed template is accepted	Not established	Not established	Not established; the buyer confirms with the supplier	Not established
Freelancer marketplace	Depends on the individual: Upwork says a packaging designer develops the visual and, depending on specialization, structural elements (www.upwork.com)	99designs says the printer or manufacturer will often supply the dieline template (99designs.com)	Varies by individual; some freelancers list it	Depends on the individual	Upwork advises confirming printer or manufacturer specifications before production (www.upwork.com)	Not stated

Provider category	Visual concept	Artwork on an existing dieline	Structural template	Prototype or test	Production review	Print ordering
Structural packaging firm	Flaps and Tabs lists CAD dielines, mockups and production-ready files (www.upwork.com)	Not stated in pages read	Zenpack describes structural engineering as creating the canvas for graphics (www.zenpack.us)	Zenpack states it runs physical drop and stress tests at prototyping stage (www.zenpack.us)	Not stated in pages read	Not stated in pages read
Packaging printer or converter	Not the focus	Arka states it will place artwork on a dieline and send a proof (www.arka.com)	Newprint states a basic structural package includes dieline creation tailored to the product (www.newprint.ca)	RHIEM describes a white sample that the customer can test in-house (rhiem.com)	Box Genie states its pre-press team reviews files to ensure they meet production requirements (intercom.help)	The printer produces after the proof is approved

The same words, such as "print ready," appear across categories but sit in different cells of responsibility. A subscription can produce artwork files a printer accepts, but the evidence read here does not show a design subscription producing a production dieline. A freelancer's scope depends on the individual's specialization, so the brief names the deliverables. A structural firm covers sample and test steps that graphic providers do not state, and a printer covers production review and printing. The Tapflare row records what is not established; its packaging scope should be confirmed with Tapflare in writing.

The right provider follows from the branch. Branch 1 fits a graphic provider; Branches 2 and 3 involve the manufacturer or a structural specialist first; Branch 4 fits any provider comfortable delivering a clearly labeled concept. A buyer should not choose by lowest monthly fee, since the fee does not indicate who owns the template, the sample or the production review.

When the Template Changes After Design Starts

Templates change. A supplier updates a dieline, the buyer switches board, or a new manufacturer is chosen after artwork has begun. Treating this as a normal event, with a written revised scope, avoids disputes about what the original quote covered.

Why a template change is not a normal design revision

Revision allowances usually describe feedback on design. Kimp states on its packaging page that its flat monthly fee includes unlimited revisions (www.kimp.io), Penji states it offers unlimited revisions with its service (penji.co), and Design Pickle states that its creatives work on one request at a time (help.designpickle.com). Those statements describe each provider's service model; they do not say that a changed production template, which can alter panel sizes and positions, falls within a prior request. A buyer should not assume an

unlimited-revisions entitlement covers rebuilding artwork on a different template, and should write down whether the change is a revision or a new request. PackMojo's structural design page offers a precedent: changing packaging types, material, size requirements, or the orientation and position of products counts as a revision to the structure (packmojo.com).

Material is often an input to the template. Packly's workflow has the buyer select the printing material thickness (help.pack.ly), Box Genie says the dieline will be generated based on the information the buyer enters (intercom.help), and Die Cut Templates says its parametric dielines redraw automatically when length, width, height and material thickness change (www.diecuttemplates.com). No supplier page read states a universal rule that every material change requires a new file; the pattern is that a change is a reason to ask the supplier, not to assume.

A written revised scope

When the template changes, the buyer and designer sign off a short written scope covering: the old and new dieline identifiers; which panels change; which panels are unaffected; who supplied the new file; whether the supplier has approved it; and whether the change is billed as a revision or a new request. *Table 3* shows a hypothetical revision record.

(Hypothetical Example) A mailer-box job has one box shared by three product variants. The counts below are invented for illustration and do not come from a real inventory or measured outcome.

Item	Old record	New record	Panel impact
Dieline identifier	MB-A (issued by Supplier 1)	MB-B (issued by Supplier 2)	All artwork must be re-placed on MB-B
Dimension basis	Interior, stated in inches	Interior, stated in millimeters	Units differ; re-verify, do not convert by eye
Lid top panel	Shared across 3 variants	Shared across 3 variants	Shared artwork re-placed once; variant name panel stays separate
Lid front tuck	Shared	Shifted position on new template	Rework once; shared across variants
Inside lid	Variant-specific (3 versions)	Dimensions changed	Rework 3 versions
Approval	Supplier 1 approved	Supplier 2 not yet confirmed	Hold production artwork until written confirmation

Table 3 shows the point of separating shared artwork from variant artwork: in this hypothetical, the change reworks one shared set of panels once and three variant-specific inside-lid files separately, rather than "everything again." If a real job is counted, panel and SKU counts must come from the buyer's actual inventory; no benchmark for revision effort exists and none is claimed.

Manufacturer Request and Quote-Clarification Sheet

Both documents are templates to adapt, not tested instruments. The main uncertainty is whether suppliers accept these inputs; test the request with a packaging production practitioner before drawing conclusions about its effectiveness.

Sample manufacturer request (email)

> **Subject:** Current production dieline and specifications request, [Job or quote number]
>
> Hello [Name],
>
> We are preparing artwork for [product name], produced by your team under [job or quote number]. Before we brief a designer, please send:
>
> 1. The current production dieline file, with its revision identifier, issue date and the name of the person or system that issued it.
> 2. The finished dimensions and units, and whether they are interior or exterior.
> 3. The board or material, and the printing and finishing process, as your team has confirmed for this job.
> 4. The panel names and orientation requirements, including which panels are inside, outside or hidden when the pack is closed.
> 5. Whether a die for this style and size is already approved, and if not, what step remains.
> 6. Your accepted source file formats, layer and naming requirements, and how you name revisions.
> 7. Any terms on our use of the template, including passing it to an outside designer.
> 8. Who approves the proof and any physical sample on your side, and what you need from us to approve.
>
> Please tell us if anything above has changed since our last order. We will not alter the template geometry.
>
> Thank you, [Name and role]

Custom Box Makers' guidance supports the last line: it asks buyers to use the bleed shown in the downloaded dieline and confirm it with the printer (www.customboxmakers.com). The email asks for the supplier's figures rather than proposing any, because margins, bleed and clearances are supplier-specific.

Quote-clarification sheet for the designer

After the manufacturer responds, send the designer the supplier's answers and ask for these clarifications in the quote.

- **Which dieline revision is the quote based on?** The identifier and date from the supplier.
- **Which panels are in scope, and which are shared across variants?**
- **What file formats and layer structure will be returned?** Match the supplier's instructions.

- **Who supplies approved copy, images, barcode numbers and regulated content?** The designer places them; the buyer or a qualified reviewer approves.
- **What happens if the template changes?** Request a written revised scope, not an assumed entitlement.
- **Is a 3D mockup included, and is it for presentation only?** Esko notes 3D renders let teams check that dielines, panels and folds line up (www.esko.com), but a render is not a physical sample.
- **What is explicitly excluded?** Structural engineering, transit testing, physical prototypes, print management and regulatory review should be listed as excluded or assigned to another party.

Physical samples and testing are separate

A white sample, in RHIEM's description, is a sample of the customer's design in a suitable material (rhiem.com). Zenpack describes prototyping in-house to get client sign-off (www.zenpack.us), and Half Price Packaging recommends a physical sample before full production when color matters (www.halfpricepackaging.com). Transit testing is a different discipline: ISTA describes its 1-Series tests as challenging the integrity of the product and package combination (ista.org), and ASTM D4169 as a uniform basis for evaluating, in a laboratory, the ability of shipping units to withstand distribution hazards (www.astm.org). None of this is graphic-design work, and the quote-clarification sheet should say so.

Data Analysis and Evidence

The quantitative material for this topic is limited and serves as context, not proof of demand.

Market context

The US Census Bureau reported that seasonally adjusted Q2 2026 retail e-commerce sales were $340.2 billion, up 3.8 percent from Q1 2026 (www.census.gov), which accounted for 17.1 percent of total retail sales (www.census.gov) within total retail sales estimated at $1,986.5 billion (www.census.gov). The Census page scheduled the Q3 2026 release for November 19, 2026 (www.census.gov), so Q2 is the latest quarter as of the 2026-11-08 reference date.

Smithers, a market research firm, valued the global e-commerce packaging market at $75.3 billion in 2024 (www.smithers.com) and forecast $116.1 billion in 2029 (www.smithers.com), with corrugated board dominant at $61.3 billion in 2024 (www.smithers.com). A later Smithers write-up projected average annual growth of 4.8 percent between 2026 and 2031 (www.smithers.com). The two publications cover different windows and this report does not reconcile them. These figures describe packaging as a market, not the market for outsourced artwork.

Supplier-stated rules vary

The figures below are statements by individual suppliers about their own templates and are not universal standards.

- **Safe area and margin.** Packhelp's dieline guide describes an 8 mm area as a line inside the green line (packhelp.com), while a separate Packhelp help page asks for at least a 10 mm margin for graphics (packhelp.com). The two pages describe different workflows, which is itself a reason to read the figures

on the downloaded template.

- **Dimension basis.** Interior at UPrinting (www.uprinting.com) and Arka (www.arka.com); external for store listings at Inke, with internal dimensions on the template (inke.gorgias.help); finished dimensions at 4OVER4 (www.4over4.com).

Counting the supplier evidence

Among the supplier pages cited in this article, each describes a supplier-issued or supplier-generated template, and timing varies from at or before quote to after payment. Margin and bleed figures are given only as each supplier's own. These are the pages read, not a survey. The pages were found through search, not drawn at random, and they over-represent online custom-box suppliers.

Source evidence on dielines as a resource

The Dieline's October 28, 2015 post states that it partnered with Design Packaging to bring a free dieline resource (thedieline.com), describing all-new vector dielines for shopping bags, folding boxes, rigid boxes and gift card carriers (thedieline.com). It is a disclosed collaboration, not an independent endorsement, its readership claim of over 300,000 reads for the first book (thedieline.com) is self-reported, and the download destination's current availability was not verified. A university course page at UNESA lists "Packaging Dielines 1" among its readings (sindig.unesa.ac.id), but its link goes to a book search, so it is not counted as a separate backlink.

Case Studies and Real-World Examples

No published case study of this gate was available, so both examples are hypothetical illustrations of scoping logic, not measured production results.

(Hypothetical Example) Mailer-box branding refresh on an approved dieline

A direct-to-consumer company reorders the same mailer box from the same manufacturer with no change of size, board or process. The manufacturer confirms in writing the current dieline, its revision and issue date, the interior dimensions, and that the die is approved. This is Branch 1. The designer receives the unaltered template, named panels, approved copy and the supplier's file instructions. The scope is surface artwork, and revisions during design are feedback on artwork only. A subscription or freelancer is a reasonable fit, and the brief states that structural testing and regulated-content review are outside the designer's scope.

(Hypothetical Example) Reusing a box file with a different manufacturer and material

The same company moves to a second manufacturer and a different board to save lead time. The old file is on hand and a designer offers to start immediately. This is Branch 2. The second manufacturer has not yet confirmed that the old geometry is acceptable on its board and tooling, and Tria's statement that a dieline drawn for a different board will not fold the same on its board (triapackaging.com) is the kind of supplier-specific caution that makes the file unconfirmed. The buyer sends the manufacturer request, limits the designer to a provisional concept, and revisits the quote when a revision-identified template arrives, recording any redraw in the Table 3 format.

Implications and Future Directions

For buyers, sequence beats price. A cheaper subscription that starts before the template is confirmed can cost more when artwork is rebuilt, and a structural specialist engaged for a surface refresh adds unneeded scope. The gate makes three facts explicit before any production quote: who issued the template, which revision is current, and whether the supplier has approved it.

For design providers, packaging scope statements are most useful when they say who supplies the dieline, what file the designer returns, and what is excluded; several providers read for this report state some of these and not others, so a buyer may need to ask. Tapflare, the publisher of this report, offers a design subscription; whether its scope covers packaging surface artwork when a confirmed template is supplied should be confirmed with Tapflare in writing, and this report does not establish it. A general design subscription is not a structural packaging engineer, prototype lab or print manager, and it is not the right fit for a single one-off structural job.

Three questions remain open:

- **Supplier acceptance.** Whether suppliers accept the proposed inputs and respond promptly is untested.
- **Version control.** It looks informal, since no supplier page read states a revision-naming policy.
- **Demand.** Demand for packaging-artwork services is unmeasured here.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What is a dieline in packaging?

A dieline is, in PackOS's description, the flat cut-and-crease template at real dimensions (packos.ai). Artwork is placed on it, and the cut, crease and glue areas show where the pack is cut, folded and glued.

How do I get a dieline from a packaging manufacturer?

Ask the supplier directly and in writing. Some provide a template with the quote, some offer a download for standard styles, some route custom requests to a production department (www.4over4.com), and some provide it after payment (packmojo.com). Use the sample email above and ask for the revision identifier and issue date.

Can I use a dieline template from the internet for my packaging design?

A generic template can be useful for concepts, but a production file should come from, or be approved by, the supplier that will make the pack. Inke states that every supplier uses slightly different sizing, cut lines and tolerances (inke.gorgias.help). Packhelp asks buyers not to change the shape of its die-cut template (packhelp.com).

What file requirements apply to packaging artwork?

They are supplier-specific. Examples include separate labeled files for each print side (packlane.com) and fonts converted to outlines (packlane.com). Ask the manufacturer for its list.

Should I hire a packaging designer or a design subscription?

It depends on the branch. A graphic freelancer or subscription fits surface artwork on a confirmed template. Upwork notes that a packaging designer may cover structural elements depending on specialization (www.upwork.com), so a freelancer's scope should be named in the brief. A new shape, insert or material needs a structural specialist or the manufacturer's structural service first.

Conclusion

Outsourcing packaging artwork is a sequencing decision before it is a design decision. The deliverable being bought, whether concept, graphic artwork, structural design or production support, determines which provider can quote, and the production dieline determines whether artwork can be scoped at all. The supplier pages read for this report consistently place the template with the manufacturer, vary in when and how they release it, and caution against reusing files across suppliers or boards.

The proposed gate converts that evidence into four branches. Graphics on a manufacturer-approved pack can go to a graphic-design freelancer or subscription once the dieline revision, dimensions, material and die approval are confirmed. An unresolved template should stay a provisional concept until the manufacturer responds. A new structural package starts with the manufacturer or a structural specialist. A visual concept is a valid deliverable but a different one from production artwork. Provider choice follows confirmed responsibilities, not the lowest monthly fee, and template changes after design starts need a written revised scope.

The evidence has limits. The practitioner signal is one anonymous thread, the supplier sample is a convenience sample, the examples are hypothetical, and the worksheet has not been tested with a packaging production practitioner. Buyers who want a graphic-design subscription for the surface-artwork branch can find more about Tapflare, a flat-rate design subscription, should confirm in writing that packaging artwork is within its scope, and should state in the brief that structural engineering, prototypes, testing and print management are outside a design subscription unless confirmed in writing.

Source links

Links cited in this article, in order of first appearance. Full addresses are provided for readers using extracted text.

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Each subscriber has a dedicated project manager who learns the brand, assigns every request to a senior specialist in that kind of work, and reviews the result before it is delivered. Requests are submitted and discussed in the Tapflare portal, each plan includes a daily allotment of design or development time, and the client keeps full ownership of the export and source files.

What it covers

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