How to Choose the Right Online Proofing Software

A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR BRANDS AND CREATIVE AGENCIES

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1.

Setting the Scene

Packaging Projects Are Complex.
Your Tools Shouldn't Be.

Who This Guide Is For

If you're a **brand manager**, **marketing lead**, or **packaging coordinator** in an FMCG or consumer goods company, this guide is for you.

You're juggling:

- **Multiple product lines**

- **Dozens (or hundreds) of SKUs**

- **Tight launch timelines**

- **Constant feedback loops between internal teams, external agencies, printers, and suppliers**

And most importantly — your packaging has to be right the first time - every time.

Whether you're overseeing a packaging refresh, launching a new line, or managing a steady stream of artwork updates, you already know that errors, delays, and confusion are costly — in money, time, and brand reputation.

This guide helps you **choose the right platform** to simplify your packaging review and artwork approval processes, so you can get to market faster, with fewer errors, and full confidence in every file.

Why Managing Packaging Is Harder Than Ever

In today's fast-moving, omni-channel world, your packaging doesn't just sit on a shelf. It appears:

- **On retail shelves in multiple countries**
- **In online shops with dynamic pack shots**
- **In influencer campaigns and launch ads**
- **In regulatory submissions**
- **In multiple languages and layouts**

That means your packaging content needs to:

- **Be consistent across markets**
- **Pass through legal and compliance review**
- **Be stored, versioned, and retrieved at any time**
- **Launch without delay**

And yet — the tools many teams still use were never designed for this.

> **"Before, we managed packaging files in local folders, email chains, and Excel trackers. Versions got lost, searches took forever, and mistakes were costly — often requiring paid agency re-work."**
>
> Marie Lannebrink, Senior Brand Manager, Kavli AB

What This Guide Will Help You Do

By the end of this guide, you'll be able to:

- **Map out your packaging artwork journey**

- **Identify your biggest bottlenecks and risks**

- **Understand which software features actually matter for your workflows**

- **Evaluate and compare vendors with confidence**

- **Build a business case to get internal buy-in**

This isn't about technical jargon. It's about helping your team:

◆ **Work smarter**

◆ **Launch faster**

◆ **Reduce risk**

◆ **Get back time to focus on creative work and brand growth**

Let's get started! ➡ ➡ ➡

2. Mapping The Packaging Journey

From Brief to Launch — Where Things Go Off Track, and How to Stay in Control

Why Map the Process?

Every marketing and brand team has some kind of process in place for getting packaging from initial idea to finished product on the shelf — but let's be honest, very few of those processes are actually as smooth or streamlined as they could be. Even the most organized teams can find themselves tangled in a web of back-and-forths, unclear expectations, or last-minute surprises.

By taking the time to **carefully map out all the key steps** — from the initial creative briefing, through rounds of internal and external reviews, all the way to final approval and product launch — you'll quickly start to notice a few things:

◆ **Where delays sneak into the workflow and slow everything down**

◆ **Where communication tends to fall apart between teams, departments, or partners**

◆ **Where avoidable mistakes are introduced, often not discovered until it's far too late (and expensive) to correct them**

Having that visibility is the first step toward building a packaging process that's not only **faster and more efficient**, but also **less stressful for everyone involved.**

"**We make a lot of small changes—not just big launches. If the process isn't structured, you lose track fast.**"

Lisa Müller, Partner in Pet Food Europe

Your Packaging Journey: Key Stages

Here's a typical packaging workflow for a new product or pack change in an FMCG setting:

STAGE	ACTIVITY	COMMON PROBLEMS
BRIEFING	Creative brief developed internally and sent to agency	Misaligned expectations, unclear files, multiple emails with content
DESIGN & ARTWORK	Designers create or update artworks, pack shots and other marketing assets	No visual feedback tools, wrong template used
INTERNAL REVIEW DESIGN	Marketing, brand and product teams review and give feedback	Feedback via email, multiple PDFs, conflicting comments
INTERNAL REVIEW LEGAL & COMPLIANCE	Regulatory review, claims check, version control	Long email chains, outdated versions accidentally used
PRINT DELIVERY	Pack ready for print — print house receives files	Missing approval steps, wrong files sent
ARCHIVE & REUSE	The final artwork is stored for future updates and audits	Files get buried in folders or lost over time

Where Things Fall Apart

When things break down in projects, delays, confusion, and costly mistakes often follow. Here are some common breakdowns that disrupt the process:

Many Revisions before final approval

Feedback gets scattered and revisions pile up. Conflicting comments lead to confusion – was version 3 the final? Or was it 4?

Email chaos

Approvals get lost, versions get mixed up, and key files vanish in cluttered inboxes. Endless threads make it hard to track what's final—or who said what.

Delays add up

Waiting on feedback slows momentum, and urgent approvals drag out when files aren't easy to find or share.

Missing key stakeholders

Critical details slip through – legal doesn't see the last version, packaging misses a barcode update, and sales never approved the new layout.

Mapping your workflow is the first step to identifying the tools and structure you need to:

SPEED UP LAUNCHES
Accelerating project initiation and execution
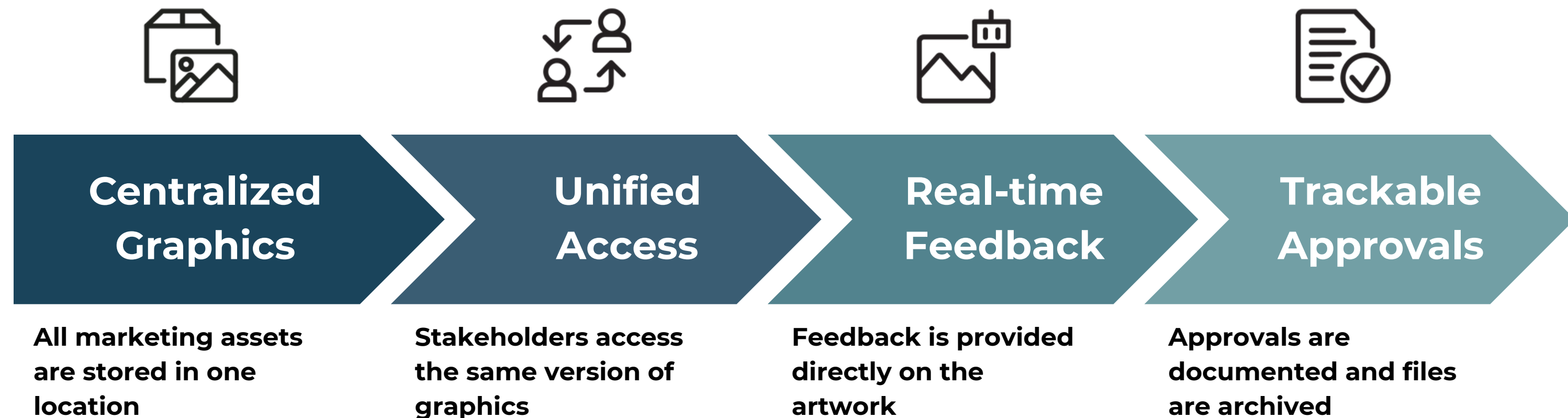
AVOID COSTLY MISTAKES
Reducing errors and financial losses

MAINTAIN CONTROL
Ensuring oversight of all versions

How to Gain and Maintain Control

A good way to manage marketing assets starts with **one central collaboration platform**, giving all stakeholders instant access to the latest files, clear feedback loops, and real-time visibility.

Centralized Graphics	Unified Access	Real-time Feedback	Trackable Approvals
All marketing assets are stored in one location	Stakeholders access the same version of graphics	Feedback is provided directly on the artwork	Approvals are documented and files are archived

What is Online Proofing Software?

Online proofing software exists to make that process smoother. **It brings structure and speed to how creative assets** — like artwork, packaging graphics, and videos — are reviewed, approved, and finalized. Instead of chasing feedback across emails, PDFs, and shared drives, teams use a single platform to collaborate, comment, and track progress.

Online proofing software comes in many forms, but at the core, it's features like these that help make your workflow faster, simpler, and more secure.

In-context feedback
Comment directly on artwork, video frames, or layouts — so there's no confusion about what needs to change.

Real-time collaboration
Invite multiple reviewers and contributors to work together on the same file — without version chaos.

Version control
Track every change and approval, with a full history of revisions — a must for compliance-heavy industries.

Smart file sharing
Skip the downloads. Share any creative file — from flat artwork to rich media — directly through the platform.

Workflow automation
Route files for review automatically, set deadlines, and reduce the manual follow-ups.

Security & permissions
Control who sees what. Protect your pre-launch assets with enterprise-grade privacy features.

3.

Defining What You Actually Need

How to Turn Needs Into Software Features That Matter

The Smart Self-Audit for Finding the Perfect Proofing Platform

Bringing in new software can be a big decision. You need to balance budget, team adoption, integration needs, and — most importantly — make sure it actually solves your workflow problems. The wrong tool can slow you down even more.

Before choosing a platform, ask yourself these 8 key questions:

1. What does your current review and approval process look like?
Map it out — so you know exactly what needs to improve.

2. What types of content do you usually review?
Packaging artwork? 3D visuals? Ads? Static or video? Choose a tool that supports your formats.

3. How do you want users to interact with the platform?
Do you want apps and windows where you can multitask and drag and drop between activities?

4. What markup features do reviewers need?
Look for tools with clear commenting, version comparison, and side-by-side views.

5. Who makes decisions in your review and approval process?
Make sure the platform supports roles, permissions, and accountability.

6. What are your security and integration needs?
Will it work with your DAM, project management, or other systems? Does it meet your IT/security standards?

7. How will you track the review and approval process?
Can you see who's approved what? What's pending? What's overdue?

8. Do you have to meet specific compliance regulations?
If legal or regulatory checks are part of your process, your software must support that level of traceability.

Quick Checklist: What Kind of Packaging Work Do You Do?

Check all that apply to get a quick picture of your requirements:

Content Complexity

☐ Our packaging includes legal claims, nutritional tables, or regulatory info

☐ We work with multi-language versions of the same product

☐ We have different layouts for different markets, even within one article

Workflow Involvement

☐ We have 3 or more stakeholders reviewing each artwork

☐ We need approvals from different departments (Marketing, Legal, R&D, Supply Chain)

☐ We often get feedback from external partners (e.g. agencies, printers, freelancers)

More boxes to tick ➡

File & Asset Types

☐ We review and approve 2D artworks (AI, PDF, InDesign)

☐ We use 3D packshots or CGI visuals for e-commerce

☐ We manage product photography, POS material, and digital content

Process & Risk

☐ We've accidentally sent the wrong version to print before

☐ It's not always clear who approved what

☐ We've had to dig through email threads to resolve mistakes

How Many Boxes Did You Check?

3–5 boxes
→ You'd benefit from a centralized review and approval tool

6+ boxes
→ You need a dedicated packaging proofing system to avoid costly errors

8+ boxes
→ You're likely losing time, money, and clarity on a regular basis — it's time to upgrade your tools

How to Turn Needs Into Software Features That Matter

Here's a table to help convert your needs into practical platform requirements — so you can see what's essential vs. optional.

YOUR REALITY	WHAT YOU NEED IN A PLATFORM
Multi-stakeholder reviews	Role-based access, approval workflows, audit trail
Multi-market products	Version control, localization tracking
Legal and compliance-sensitive content	Time-stamped approvals, comment history, data encryption
Frequent artwork changes	Compare versions visually, track revisions
External printers and design agencies involved	External sharing without login, real-time collaboration

More ➡️

YOUR REALITY	WHAT YOU NEED IN A PLATFORM
Tight timelines and overlapping launches	Task reminders, dashboard overviews, mobile-friendly viewer
File chaos and unclear ownership	Digital artwork management platform (DAM), file linking instead of duplicates
High SKU volume across formats	Time-stamped approvals, comment history, data encryption
Teams working across time zones	Asynchronous collaboration, activity logs, flexible notifications
Need for faster approvals without follow-ups	Automated reminders, approval tracking, visual status indicators

Customer Insights: What Matters in Practice

Case: Kavli AB — Finding the Right Version Fast

"Before Cway, we used local folders and Excel trackers. Versions got lost. Now I always know I'm working on the latest file."

— Marie Lannebrink, Senior Brand Manager

Need: Seamless version control and archiving

Platform Features: history toggle and compare tool

Customer Insights: What Matters in Practice

Case: Fria Bröd — Save Time, Every Time

"Proofing used to be a long process with emails and PDFs. Now it's fast and clear."

— Sofia Wallsten, Product Manager

Need: Cut approval time and reduce error risk

Platform Features: Commenting, status indicators, visual feedback tools

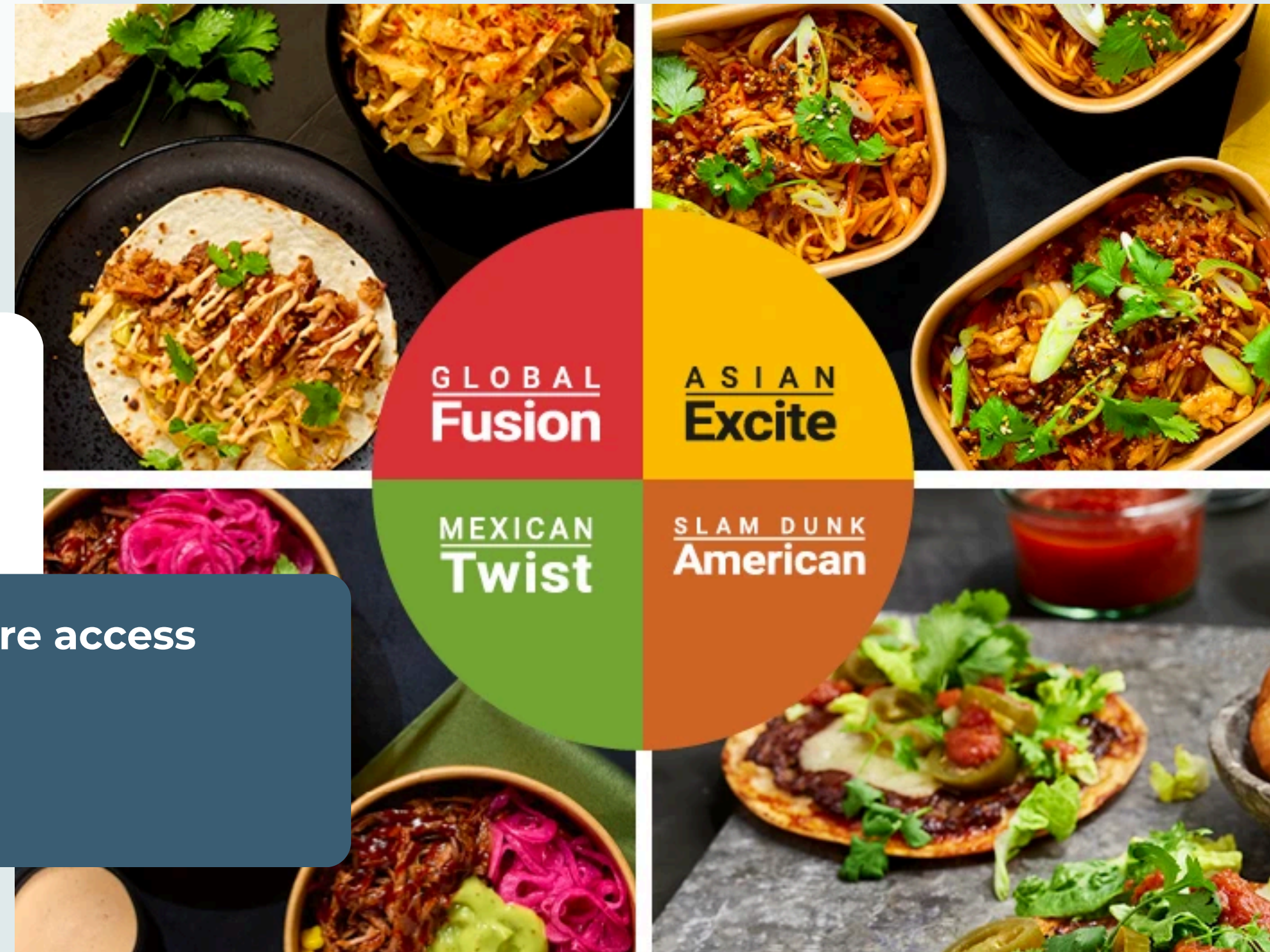# Customer Insights: What Matters in Practice

Case: Santa Maria — Bring Legal, R&D and Marketing Together

"Cway helps everyone — marketing, legal, R&D, suppliers — see the same version and avoid missteps."

— Susanna Gustafsson, Marketing Assistant

Need: Cross-functional clarity and secure access

Platform Features: Centralized viewer, versioning, role-based permissions

Pro Tip!

As you evaluate platforms, **ask vendors to demonstrate the features tied to your real use cases.**

Examples:

"Show me how you handle version comparison on multi-market assortments."

"Can I share a packaging file with an external printer — without requiring them to create an account?"

"How does your tool help us avoid using the wrong version in a fast-moving launch?"

If they can't demonstrate it, or if the solution doesn't clearly add value, then it's not the right fit for your company.

WAY®

4.

The Proofing Platform Evaluation Test

Map Your Needs → Find Your Fit

Welcome to Your Evaluation Checklist

Before you look at vendors, take 15–20 minutes to go through this section with your team. Print it out, share it in a meeting, or go through it on your own.

The checklist consists of:

1: Your Packaging Workflow Reality

2: Score Your Process

3: What Your Next Tool Must Have

4: Questions to Ask Vendors

5: Success Metrics to Track

This checklist will help you:

◆ **Assess your current approval challenges**

◆ **Identify the must-have features your tool needs**

◆ **Gather internal input before you contact vendors**

Create a scorecard you can use during demos

Let's get started! ➡ ➡ ➡

1: Your Packaging Workflow Reality

Check all that apply to get a quick picture of your reality:

We manage a high volume of artwork projects (10+ per month) ☐

We work with multi-language packaging ☐

Several teams (e.g. legal, marketing, QA) are involved in reviews ☐

We rely heavily on email to share and approve files ☐

We've lost track of versions or worked on outdated files ☐

We've sent the wrong file to print — or come close ☐

We spend time chasing feedback and consolidating comments ☐

We struggle to access old files or understand who approved what ☐

👉 **If you checked 4 boxes or more:**

You need a centralized system for artwork collaboration and version control. Tools like Cway® are built for exactly these scenarios.

2: Score Your Process

On a scale of 1–5, how would you rate the following aspects of your current artwork process?

1   5

I know exactly where to find the latest version of every file ☐☐☐☐☐

Feedback from all stakeholders is visible and traceable ☐☐☐☐☐

We avoid duplicate or conflicting feedback ☐☐☐☐☐

I can easily see what was changed between versions ☐☐☐☐☐

External partners (agencies, printers) can access files easily ☐☐☐☐☐

We have a smooth, consistent approval flow across teams ☐☐☐☐☐

Files are archived and searchable after launch ☐☐☐☐☐

We're ready for an audit with full version + approval history ☐☐☐☐☐

👉 **Total your score**

30+ points →
Great! You're ready to fine-tune your process and scale.

20–29 points →
Time to optimize. A proofing platform will make a real difference.

< 20 points →
Your current process is a risk. You urgently need better tooling.

3: What Your Next Tool Must Have

Use this to create your vendor scorecard. Add checkmarks and notes for each must-have during demos.

	Must have	Nice to have		Must have	Nice to have
Central hub for all packaging files and revisions	☐	☐	Secure sharing with external partners (no login needed)	☐	☐
Role-based review workflows (e.g. legal, marketing, printer)	☐	☐	Automated status updates and notifications	☐	☐
Version comparison (visual + side-by-side)	☐	☐	Multi-language or market-version handling	☐	☐
Annotation and measurement tools for artwork proofing	☐	☐	3D packaging viewing or GS1 compliance	☐	☐
Approval logs (who approved what and when)	☐	☐	Final asset archive with audit-ready access	☐	☐

4: Questions to Ask Vendors

Ask every vendor these questions and let them demonstrate how each solution works.

How do you handle packaging files (PDF, AI, INDD)?

Can we review 3D packshots or use GS1 views?

How do you prevent version mix-ups during approval?

Can we easily collaborate with external printers and agencies?

Can I trace back what was approved and by whom — even 2 years later?

What tools help us spot changes quickly between versions?

How do you support audit-readiness and regulatory traceability?

Can you show how your platform would support our typical packaging process?

👉 **Add more questions**

Use your earlier scores and weak spots to add questions that help you cover and optimize every part of your process.

5: Success Metrics to Track

**As you evaluate tools (or onboard one), measure your impact over time:**

METRIC	BEFORE TOOL	AFTER TOOL (1 month)	AFTER TOOL (3 months)
# of feedback rounds per artwork			
Time from first draft to print-ready approval			
Rework or reprint incidents (last 3 months)			
Time spent consolidating feedback per project			
# of artworks missing approval trail			

Want to see how Cway® checks every box?

Book a walkthrough at cwaysoftware.com

YOUR IDEAL ONLINE PROOFING PLATFORM SHOULD:

- Help you find, review, and approve packaging files faster

- Support structured, multi-team approval processes

- Let external partners collaborate easily

- Reduce risk and eliminate version confusion

- Give you a clear history of everything that happened

- Adapt to your workflow—not the other way around
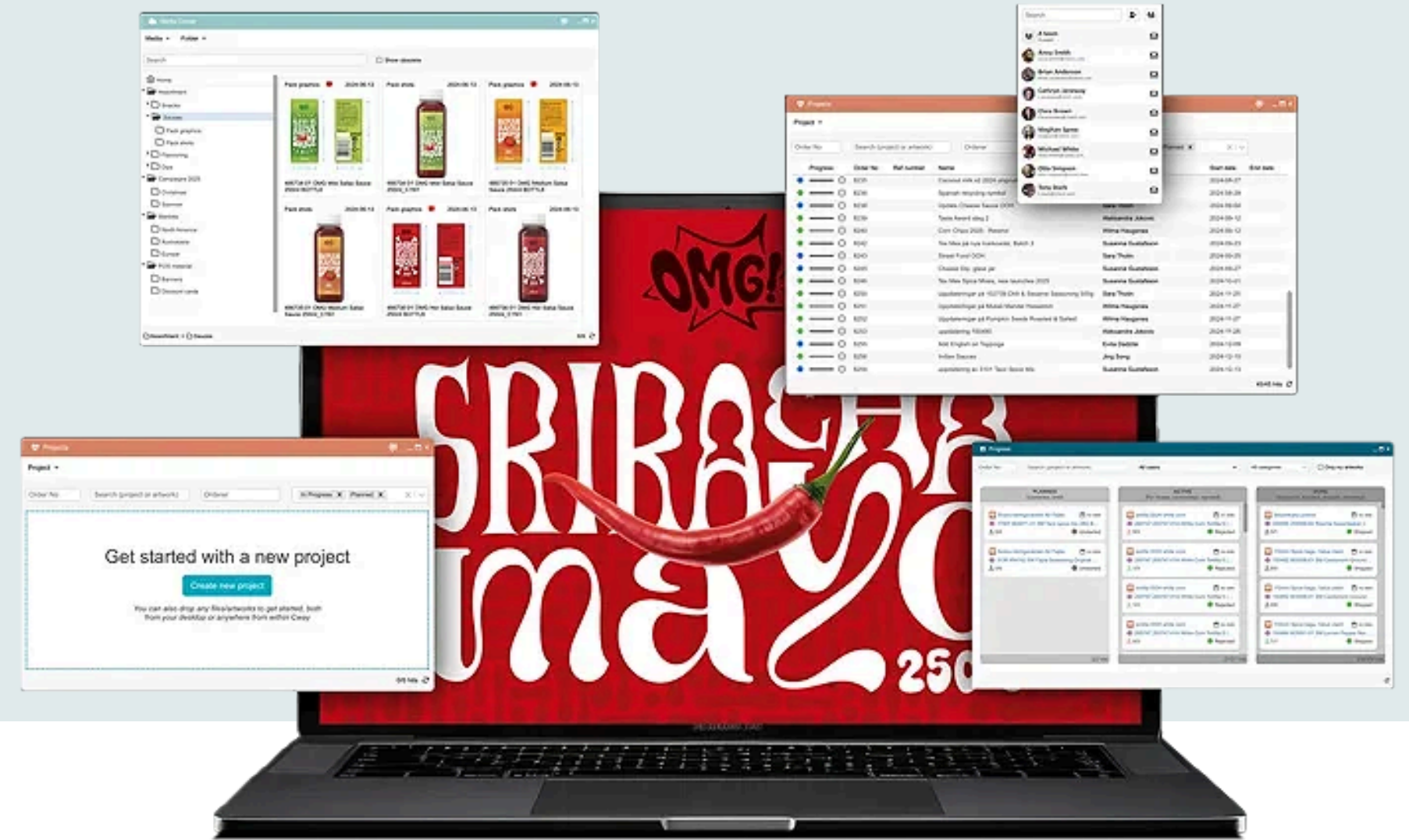
5. Real-World Results from Packaging Teams

How Top FMCG Brands Cut Errors, Gained Speed, and Took Control with Cway

Your next packaging tool isn't just about features. It's about impact.

What happens when teams like yours implement a structured, collaborative platform like Cway®?

In this chapter, you'll see what changed for marketing and brand teams at Fria Bröd, Doggy AB, Santa Maria, and Kavli — and how they now work faster, smarter, and with far fewer headaches.

Fria Bröd: From Email Chaos to Total Control

Challenges:

- Unstructured feedback from multiple teams
- Manual file sharing via email
- Risk of using outdated artwork

What Changed With Cway®:

- Daily use across marketing, legal, R&D, quality, and product data
- A central platform with full traceability
- Real-time commenting, measurement, and "blink" comparison tools

- **Time savings per artwork: 30–40%**
- **Number of departments using Cway daily: 5+**

"Now we save time, reduce mistakes, and everyone involved has the same information in one place."

Doggy AB: Scaling with Confidence

Challenges:

- Constant flow of minor packaging updates
- Feedback scattered across scanned printouts and emails
- Risk of approving the wrong version

What Changed With Cway®:

- All feedback centralized — one version, one thread
- Internal and external collaboration across marketing, product, and quality
- Fully integrated into daily operations

"If a project used to take 10 hours, now it might take one. That's the kind of time-saving we're talking about."

- **Email volume reduced**
- **Approval clarity across every file**
- **Hundreds of hours saved per year**

Santa Maria: A Single Source of Truth for Tex-Mex Launches

Challenges:

- Coordinating artwork and campaigns for multiple simultaneous launches
- Delayed feedback and unclear versioning
- Hard-to-find files for older products

What Changed With Cway®:

- Cross-department collaboration in one system
- Instant access to current version + full history
- Measurement tools, version compare, and review tracking

> "Before Cway, it was emails and shared folders. Now everything related to artwork — briefing, approvals, storage — lives in one place."

- **Used daily across marketing, legal, QA, and suppliers**
- **Clear record of approvals and file access**
- **10+ hours saved per launch**

Kavli AB: Reducing Risk and Scaling Smarter

Challenges:

- Files scattered across emails, Excel sheets, and folders
- Version confusion → rework and agency costs
- Manual corrections and feedback loops

What Changed With Cway®:

- Instant version tracking and file retrieval
- Built-in correction workflow and team collaboration
- Centralized asset management for internal and external teams

> "Artwork projects now take almost 50% less time. We've saved hours per project and cut design costs."

- **50% reduction in time spent per project**
- **Fewer corrections, less agency spend**
- **Cleaner onboarding for new team members**

Key Takeaways

Cway® streamlines artwork management with faster approvals, fewer emails, and clear version control. Teams across departments save time, reduce errors, and onboard smoothly—resulting in more efficient launches and better collaboration.

OUTCOME	WHAT CHANGED
Faster reviews	Time spent on approvals dropped by 30–50%
Fewer errors	Clear version control reduced costly reprints
Better collaboration	Marketing, legal, and suppliers worked together seamlessly
Full traceability	Teams could retrieve approval records years later
Scalable workflow	Cway® became a daily tool used across departments

Choose a Partner, Not Just the Tool

Last but not least, it's important to choose a true partner—not just another software tool.

When you invest in online proofing software, you're hopefully entering a **long-term, loving relationship** with a platform you'll rely on every day to support, streamline, and scale your creative workflow.

The right partner will understand your workflow, support your goals, and grow with your business, ensuring long-term success, smoother collaboration, and ongoing improvements far beyond the initial setup. It's a relationship, not just a resource.

Look for a vendor that:

- **Understands FMCG packaging**

- **Supports you beyond onboarding**

- **Has proven results with real customers**

- **Will scale with you as your brand grows**

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