
THE CONVERGENCE OF SUSTAINABILITY AND PRODUCTIVITY IN LABEL PRINTING



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WELCOME!

There are lots of benefits of moving into the digital labels market in terms of cost saving, efficiency and productivity and time control. But, is there also an environmental saving?

If you are a packaging printer already producing longer runs, or a digital or offset printer already working in other markets, who is looking to add value but not yet tried labels, or even a brand owner who is looking to bring label production in-house, then read on, and we will help you explore the world of digital labels – weighing up the issues and looking at how digital production can help to not only add value and aid the production of short run labels, but also help with the sustainability of your business too.

This handbook will help you to a better understanding of the market and the possibilities for your business, as well as providing an insight into what other industry experts think about the issues.

I hope you find this handbook useful!

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THE LABELS' MARKET TODAY

A hugely dynamic and burgeoning market, the production of labels comes in many guises.

Super long runs produced by flexo are still required by some brands, yet these are becoming fewer and fewer, with mid to shorter runs now the norm. Offset is still used to produce many of these, but increasingly digital print is becoming more mainstream. For short runs, digital is at the forefront.

And, brands are changing – there are now many more 'artisan' brands who are much smaller than the high street giants, who are looking for a flexible way to label their products in super short runs.

The big names too are looking to emulate these artisan brands, with premium ranges,

or speciality based products that are produced in much smaller batches and need high quality labels that are not runs of millions as was traditional.

The capacity of digital print to personalise each and every label, and the ability to cost effectively produce a truly unique one-off labels, is also opening up opportunities for brands and e-commerce companies alike to 'craft' products specifically aimed at one individual – and here again a flexible, cost effective approach to the label needs to be taken – and here digital shines.

Yet, whilst digital offers a strong argument in the short run sector, it is also increasingly capable of handling longer runs too.

No other printing technology works in the same way as digital, and as such, it allows

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users to grasp new opportunities and win new customers.

THE GROWTH OF DIGITAL

There is no doubt that digital print is growing in all market sectors.

In the Smithers report on the general commercial print market, it forecasts that by 2029 the digital market globally will reach just over three trillion A4 print equivalents with a value of \$225 billion, up substantially from \$103 billion in 2014 at an average CAGR of 5.3% in value over 2014 to 2029.

Digital print accounted for 13.5% of total market output in 2014, this has risen to 17.4% in 2019. Smithers estimates that 'technical innovations and shift in market demands will further support this trend through to 2024, pushing digital's share to 21.1%'. It continues, 'this will see digital colonise new spaces in key markets, such as packaging; increase its competitiveness at longer runs with a new generation of high throughput machinery; and offer new revenue streams for print service providers'.

Smithers has also recently launched a report *The Future of Label Printing to 2024*. Here it states, 'The global market for label printing has been growing steadily from 2014 to 2019, at rates of 4.8% in value and of 5.2% in volume'. The market will continue to increase up to 2024, at an annual average rate of 4.0% in value to \$49.90 billion, and by 5.5% in volume to 1.59 trillion A4 prints or equivalent.

The report also looks at the trends in

label printing technology too, stating that the most commonly used print process for labels in 2019 is flexography, 'used to print 403 billion A4 prints or equivalent with a value of \$13.3 billion'. 'However, with annual growth of 3.1% in value and 4.4% in volume over 2014 to 2019, flexo is not keeping pace with overall market growth, primarily as a result of the rise of digital printing processes. Inkjet has been growing at a much faster rate since 2014, and will continue high growth overtaking electrophotography in volume before 2024.

Mordor Intelligence, in its print label market growth forecast (2019 to 2024), agrees with this upward shift in digital labels, stating: 'The rapid rise of digital print technology has made the print labels market more sophisticated and increased the adoption of print labels globally. Their versatility and flexibility, combined with the high graphics standards are the key growth features', whilst Future Market Insights – looking forward to 2026 – states, 'The digital label printing market is expected to have a significantly high growth rate as the global packaging and labelling industry growing at a rapid CAGR'.

And, the FINAT Radar saw European digital label press installations overtake conventional press sales for the first time in 2017.

This is a trend that is set to continue, with 45% of FINAT converters indicating that they would be purchasing a digital press over the next 18 months, with inkjet projection volumes surpassing toner based and hybrid system projections.

CHANGES IN OTHER TECHNOLOGY

The increase in digital print is also inspiring other areas of technology such as front end software, converting, finishing, special effects and substrates.

Digital is driving innovation in many of these areas. For instance, most manufacturers offer either a single digital front end or a choice of drivers depending on the level of data you mean to handle. Usually, the standard front end is bundled with the machine, but you can upgrade if the one offered is not robust enough. If you are going to use very high levels of sophisticated variable data, you may need to look at a high level RIP to handle the data.

The very nature of digital means that you will be handling multiple small run jobs in an environment that may have been more used to running the same job on press all day. Here, workflow options have been enhanced – or built from the ground up – that will assist users to be more automated and cope with the singular demands of digital – everything from automatic imposition to auto ganging, from colour management to editing.

Having a management information system is not essential, but it is a very good

way to ensure that production processes are kept flowing in the best possible way.

In finishing and substrates too, huge leaps in technology advancement have allowed products specific to the production of digitally printed labels and increasingly manufacturers are looking at bringing to market in line tools to offer ‘all in one’ lines from reel to finished label.

DIGITAL IS THE FUTURE

Major trends in this market? Well, price squeezes not only in label production, but also from marketing budgets, have made marketers look for more return on investment and more transparency from their supply chain – and this is a real opportunity for digital print. The environment is increasingly important – no longer a nicety but an absolute necessity for printers large and small.

Smart packaging and interactive labels, as well as AR coding and non contact technologies are bringing higher levels of added value to the sector.

Private labels and own brands are becoming the biggest product ranges in the world, whilst others try to keep up by producing ever more exciting and dynamic packaging and labels to attract back custom.

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Setting new standards
in industrial label
printing

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THE EPSON COLORWORKS C6000 SERIES



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW...

Model	CW-C6000Ae	CW-C6000Pe	CW-C6500Ae	CW-C6500Pe
Technology	PrecisionCore printhead	PrecisionCore printhead	PrecisionCore printhead	PrecisionCore printhead
Resolution	1200 x 1200dpi	1200 x 1200dpi	1200 x 1200dpi	1200 x 1200dpi
Colours	Four	Four	Four	Four
Ink capacity	80 ml	80 ml	80 ml	80 ml
Label length	609.6 mm	609.6 mm	609.6 mm	609.6 mm
Print speeds (full width)	19 mm/s (Max Speed 300 x 600dpi) 75 mm/s (Speed 600 x 600dpi) 48 mm/s (Normal 600 x 600dpi) 18 mm/s (Quality 600 x 1200dpi) 8 mm/s (Max Quality 1200 x 1200dpi)	119 mm/s (Max Speed 300 x 600dpi) 75 mm/s (Speed 600 x 600dpi) 48 mm/s (Normal 600 x 600dpi) 18 mm/s (Quality 600 x 1200dpi) 8 mm/s (Max Quality 1200 x 1200dpi)	85 mm/s (Max Speed 300 x 600dpi) 49 mm/s (Speed 600 x 600dpi) 34 mm/s (Normal 600 x 600dpi) 13 mm/s (Quality 600 x 1200dpi) 6 mm/s (Max Quality 1200 x 1200dpi)	85 mm/s (Max Speed 300 x 600dpi) 49 mm/s (Speed 600 x 600dpi) 34 mm/s (Normal 600 x 600dpi) 13 mm/s (Quality 600 x 1200dpi) 6 mm/s (Max Quality 1200 x 1200dpi)
Paper width	25.4 to 112 mm	25.4 to 112 mm	25.4 to 215.9 mm	25.4 to 215.9 mm
Print width	Up to 108 mm	Up to 108 mm	Up to 211.9 mm	Up to 211.9 mm
Size (W x D x H)	340 x 565 x 326 mm; weight 55 kg	340 x 565 x 326 mm; weight 55 kg	444 x 512 x 326 mm; weight 55 kg	444 x 512 x 326 mm; weight 55 kg

Note: 'Ae' designates auto cutter models; 'Pe' designates auto peeler models.

The convergence of sustainability and productivity in label printing

Developed as a direct result of customer feedback, and launched at Labelexpo Europe in September 2019, Epson's ColorWorksC6000 series provides a solution to answer the short to medium run needs of customers looking for high colour, high quality, on-demand digital labels.

The series consists of four versatile printers – the ColorWorks CW-C6000Ae, CW-C6000Pe, CW-C6500Ae, and CW-C6500Pe. The 'Ae' designated devices are auto cutter models, whilst the 'Pe' models are time saving auto peelers, which automatically remove the backing paper from the label substrate and can be integrated seamlessly into existing print and apply production line systems.

The CW-C6000Ae and CW-C6000Pe can support media widths of 25.4 to 112 mm, and the CW-C6500Ae and CW-C6500Pe from 25.4 to 215.9 mm, and thanks to an

innovative movable sensor, users can print on any shape of label without a second die cut. This means that realistically, the printers can produce labels for anything from small delicate items right the way through to durable labels for chemical drums.

With a resolution of 1200 dpi, based on PrecisionCore TFP technology, quality is assured, with sharp text and precise coding. High density ink cartridges expand productivity.

There is also plenty of flexibility when it comes to substrates. The printers can ably handle inkjet coated matte paper, gloss paper, high gloss synthetics, fine papers, PET film, and continuous labels.

The compact size of the printers, along with their ease of use makes them suitable for a wide range of environments including printers, converters, designers and brand owners. The printers are also suitable for in-store applications or for production within manufacturing companies.



The convergence of sustainability and productivity in label printing

SETTING NEW STANDARDS IN INDUSTRIAL LABEL PRINTING



ColorWorks C7500

The ColorWorks C7500 raises the bar in high-speed colour label printing. It contains the new PrecisionCore printhead, which has been developed for use in the commercial-grade, industrial labelling market. The ColorWorks C7500 offers significant cost savings thanks to its permanent printhead, and guaranteed peace of mind as none of its major components will need replacing for at least 500km worth of printing¹. It also allows for fast printing without compromising on quality, while the nozzle verification technology (NVT) ensures consistent prints.

To find out more visit www.epson.co.uk/colour-label-printer

¹Any repairs to be carried out by Epson are also dependent on your warranty package.

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EPSON'S GREEN ETHIC

As well as providing high quality, productive and reliable solutions that can answer your labelling needs, Epson also has an enviable reputation for sustainability in all it does.

In December of 2019, Epson made two announcements, which fit soundly with its strong sustainability ethic. First, the company was awarded a Gold rating for CSR by independent assessors EcoVadis for the third year in succession. The top rating reflects the company's commitment to achieving the highest possible international CSR standards, and also acknowledges Epson as being 'Outstanding' in Sustainable Procurement, highlighting its excellent achievement in Labour and Human Rights and for its actions to preserve the Environment.

Further, the company reaffirmed its commitment to decarbonisation (reducing greenhouse gas emissions) in advance of the 25th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP25).

These latest announcements complement the wider commitment Epson makes to environmental care.

Epson also joined the Responsible Business Alliance in 2019 committing to comply with its Code of Conduct, which outlines a clear set of social, environmental and ethical industry standards.

towards a series of targets set for 2025 to address climate change as part of its Environmental Vision 2050. This encompasses everything with 'life cycle thinking' when it comes to products, thereby designing with the environment in mind from the very first stages.

Epson also set targets for reducing, by 2025, its scope 1 and scope 2 greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 19% compared to 2017. In the 2018 fiscal year ended March 2019, Epson made large strides toward achieving the target with a 15% reduction in its GHG emissions.

The company has also pledged to remove single use plastics internally, and add electric and hybrid cars where possible to its fleet.

Going forward, Epson plans to achieve its target through energy saving initiatives focused primarily on production innovations and the use of renewable electricity. It will also continue to work towards restoring and protecting biodiversity, increasing recycling and reducing the environmental impacts of its manufacturing processes, products and services.

You can find out more about Epson's sustainability ethic at www.epson.co.uk/about/environment

ENVIRONMENTAL VISION

The company is continuously working

The convergence of sustainability and productivity in label printing

WHY GO DIGITAL?

The first thing that you need to decide along the digital path is whether the technology is right for your business.

Whether it is something that can really enhance what you already do, and allow you to offer more to your customers in terms of service. Whether it is something that can help you to make more money.

Obviously, every single business is different – in requirements, in abilities, in potential, in ideas and inspiration and in your business strategies. But there are some very general questions that will help to outline whether digital is a process you should seriously consider, or whether it is not.

It also has some very specific benefits – some of which cannot be achieved with any other form of print technology.

So, why go digital?

SHORT RUN

In every sector of print, run lengths are coming down and you as a printer or brand owner must be able to cost effectively handle this. If you are currently using flexo or offset, outsourcing or printing in-house, you may find that you are turning away jobs or not using your labels to full potential, because, although you could happily produce the run, it is just not cost effective or time constructive to go through the process of making plates, setting up the press, and taking time to produce these applications. This is where digital excels, but equally, it is also capable of handling longer run, higher volume jobs too.

Runs as low as one, single label, or multiple different individual labels, or runs of ten, 20, 30, 45, 67, 103 – or whatever you need, are easily achievable.

As more packaging owners look at specialist labels, own labels, and improved shelf stand out, digital can really help.

FASTER MAKE READIES

With digital there are no plates to make. This not only does away with the time it takes to produce these, but also the expense, labour, and use of consumables.

This means that jobs onto a digital press can be instant. No waiting time – vastly reducing make readies and vastly reducing the cost to the printer.

All you need is a digital file, a digital front end (RIP, colour management and workflow) and you can be up and running with a job in minutes.

This also makes it very quick and convenient to change over jobs, and jobs can run one after the other with very little stoppage time – dramatically less than for any other process, so downtime is much less.

FASTER TURNAROUND

Because make readies are so short, you can guarantee faster turnarounds. Productivity on most digital presses is very good too, and with on-demand printing you can output what the customer needs in very short timescales. Certainly faster than a longer run on another process.

PROOF AND PROTOTYPE

The ability to print one-offs, cost effectively, means that you can run exact proofs on the press that the final product will come from. This means the customer sees exactly what the final job will look like rather than a proof that might not be exact.

The ability to run one-offs also means that you can very easily produce prototypes, so you can even produce a product, say in several colours or designs, to take to the consultation with the prospective customer and have an eye catching print example ready to show them, rather than relaying on words! Or, it allows brand owners to immediately see what their finished label would look like.

Of course, you can do this with other processes, but it is very costly and time consuming, whereas with digital it is quick, simple and inexpensive.

VARIABLE DATA

Variable data is a benefit that you cannot achieve with any other printing process or technology in a sophisticated and cost efficient way.

Variable data allows you to do so much more, and offer so much more, than static print, but importantly, it will also offer greater return on investment.

MARGIN RICH APPLICATIONS

If you add variable data to one off production you can produce truly margin rich jobs. Digital should not be sold on price, it is not a commodity, but rather on what it can do for the customer and how much reaction it will generate, so coming up with creative and inspirational ideas is easy and if you use it wisely, it will start to win you new customers who see the benefits. Unfortunately, there is

ASK YOURSELF...

1. Am I seeing the need for shorter runs?
2. Am I looking for faster turnarounds?
3. Do I need to cost effectively produce mock ups or prototypes of labels?
4. Could I offer more in terms of creativity for special products?
5. Do I want to make more money?
6. Do I want to take cost out of my production process?
7. Do I want more control over my production chain?
8. Do I want to compete in the label market of the future?
9. Do I want to make exciting and dynamic labels?
10. Do I need more flexibility?

If the answer is yes to any – or all – of the questions above, then digital is certainly worth investigating.



much print that is produced today that is seen as a commodity, and labels can very easily fall into that trap. Digital will help you to add new revenue streams and to charge a good price for the products you produce.

LOWER INVESTMENT COST

The cost of investing in a new digital press – even a high end, high volume one – is considerably less than buying flexo or offset machines. There is also no investment needed in platemaking equipment or the on-going cost of plates.

COST SAVINGS, WASTE SAVINGS

Digital as a whole can offer you cost savings, whilst giving you something to differentiate

your business from competitors and to add margin. It will also help you to cut waste and streamline your production processes.

As you can see, digital has many benefits, and whilst there are applications that it will not be suitable for, it is quietly making its march into the mainstream of labels and packaging production.

It is unique in its benefits. It is an added value process. It can help you to solve problems for customers. It is an essential part of the print world of tomorrow.

To not at least think about going digital is to get left behind, and in an already competitive market with over production rife, those who cannot offer more will not survive. Digital is one answer to this.

WHAT SHOULD I BUY?

There is certainly no one answer to this question. It will depend on what kind of labels you want to produce, what the particular products need, how you are going to use your digital press/printer, whether you are contemplating variable data or not, and how it is going to complement your existing business?

A quick check on the websites of the major suppliers of digital technology will show you what is available. I know they would all be happy to discuss exactly what your requirements are and to provide help and advice.

Do make sure that you work with a supplier though who is willing to do more for you than just sell you a 'box'. Ensure that they provide lots of support, ideas and inspiration after you have invested in their machine.

Most manufacturers will provide you, or your operators, with some training, and nearly all of them provide 'tools' that will enable you to make a business out of your digital device. This covers things such as getting into new markets, promoting your company, getting involved with variable data – and much more.

LABELS: SUSTAINABILITY IS THE KEY

Bringing together brand owners, producers and suppliers of short run labels, our latest Packaging Solutions round table, sponsored by Epson, looked at the convergence of productivity and sustainability in today's labels market.

As always, our latest round table was a huge source of information and inspiration, developing not only the topic of productivity and sustainability in labels, but also highlighting surrounding topics and showing not only that the labels market is one of dynamism, but also the sheer breadth and creativity of the work that is being done today.

In this exciting sector, European digital label press installations overtook conventional press sales for the first time in 2017, and this is an area that not only adds value through personalisation and clever techniques but brings benefits of speed of time to market, less waste, and more flexibility.

Supported by Epson, the latest of our round table discussions opened up the conversation to digital labels and the convergence of productivity and sustainability,

as well as the importance of creativity within this market.

THE BIG ISSUE

No matter what you do today, the biggest issue by far, and the one that is most talked about, is the environment – no matter what your business. It has engaged the senses of consumers, been focused on by the international media, talked about in government circles, and is something of which brands simply have to take notice. Importantly, the 'environment' influences everything we do in labels and packaging. But, we wanted to break that down a little further and find out exactly what the 'environment' meant to different people and where this was affecting them in business. Was it simply a matter of reducing waste and working to higher sustainability standards, or are there

The convergence of sustainability and productivity in label printing



other influences that help to cut our impacts? Is the environment something that helps enhance productivity or hinders it? Are there other factors to be taken into consideration? And indeed, as a manufacturing process, the production of labels has to cause some sort of environmental impact, so how can this be minimised?

From the label buying brands, we also wanted to find out just how much sustainability matters when it comes to buying decisions and was it really impacting on those decisions. Where did the green influence start and stop? Was it a matter of cost? Was it to justify the brand in the eye of the consumer? Was there an element of doing the right thing for the right reasons? Or was it simply to not fall behind the competition?

Tamara Thomas, who is a packaging and supply chain consultant who has worked with many of the biggest brands in the UK, said that with these sorts of organisations 'it simply has to be about sustainability today. The biggest discussions used to be about cost, but sustainability is being demanded by consumers, so brands have to be sustainability led.'

Simon Smith of CS Labels explained that digital is helping his company to save on environmental impact. He said, 'Digital is a great way of ensuring that we manufacture to

requirement, rather than using a huge amount of stock to get the volume. So, you avoid a lot of the waste. And, digital is good when changes have to be made quickly.'

He gave some interesting insight, when he continued, 'Unfortunately, there are still technical challenges and a lack of knowledge when it comes to sustainability, and a lot of the problem is that many of the green solutions that are available are not yet really commercially viable.

'Certainly, over the next two years or so we are going to have to spend an increasing amount of time re-educating our customers on sustainability as to what is achievable as there are some unrealistic expectations within the marketplace as to what small businesses can do.'

Simon explained that although there were new materials that could be sourced that were 'environmentally friendly' it was often the case that there were quality issues and the commercial price was too high – the premium is sometimes up to 50%. He said, 'We can't convince small business customers to absorb that cost, and sometimes the quality can be poor with these materials. But, these are just the first steps in the change and there will be progress.'

Simon explained that the environment was definitely something that customers were talking about and they were asking

ColorWorks C6000 series colour label printer

Inspired labelling to take your business further

Developed as a result of direct feedback from customers, the ColorWorks C6000 series label printer offers speed, control, efficiency and flexibility, allowing you to produce high quality, custom labels, time after time.

The ColorWorks C6000 series comes in either 4" or 8" print-widths, and each size model is also available with an optional, built-in peeler to optimise workflows.

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many questions of their suppliers.

He said, 'We talk to a number of large marketing departments who are asking these sustainability questions. They foresee that some 30% of their labels need to be on a recyclable material over the next two to three years.'

RECYCLING ISN'T JUST ABOUT PUTTING IT IN THE RIGHT BIN

Simon went on to say, 'We can offer a 100% recyclable PE, but it is a huge education process. You have to know what is post consumer waste, what is pre-consumer waste. Recycling is a real challenge for businesses, and the way we collect waste in the UK is significantly behind many other countries.'

'Plastic can actually be a very good product, but we need to know how to dispose of it responsibly.'

'For us, sustainability is a big challenge as we want to help our customers with their own environmental footprints, but we need to come up with a solution that is a) workable and b) actually saves the environment.'

'We get lots of brands asking us to print on a compostable material, but it is not that simple. You have to help them understand where that is going to decompose. It will have to go into the ground somewhere, and it will do what it says it will do, but it will create an enormous amount of CO₂ while it does that, and there will be other elements such as adhesives and inks that might decompose at a different rate to the material.'

'You can't just throw it in the back of your garden, these materials have to go to an industrial facility and there are very few of those around.'

'To simply say 'we will supply a compostable material' is not good enough, you have to think about the whole cycle. This really is a question of educating the customer and the consumer and how we can support them to make the right decisions.'

Ian Russell of Codeway agreed, saying: 'Recycling currently is a real problem. It is not just the labels and packaging that is a problem either, it is the printing equipment itself. We are just not set up to handle recycling properly.'

The UK is simply not equipped to cope with the waste streams that we create. According to the Environmental Services Association (ESA), the voice for the UK's resource and waste management industry, the capacity gap for the disposal of this waste is such that some six million tonnes of UK waste will be without a home by 2030.

Boosting recycling rates above the waste industry's expected range of 50 to 55% is likely to cost at least £1.5 billion and will require significant government intervention to support markets for recycled materials.

Simon went on to explain that many brands are still buying labels in bulk and may order three to six months worth to be printed at one time, the bulk of which remained on the shelf and then became obsolete, meaning that they become waste and need to be disposed of. Simon said, 'The waste can be enormous.'



By using in-house digital print technology, this waste can be cut dramatically, because brands are printing what they need.

Tamara Thomas said that the problem was that recycling information on labels could be very confusing and complex. She commented, 'Labelling in general is not easy for consumers to understand, especially when it comes to recycling. There are so many mixed messages, so many different logos, that people just become too confused.'

A CHANGING MARKET

Ian Russell raised the issue that labels usually have to be applied to something, and it was not necessarily the label that was the whole problem, but the product on which it comes, and any sustainability decisions need to encompass the whole of the packaging supply chain, which led on to a wider discussion.

In Epson's case, the packaging and materials on which its products are made are designed with sustainability in mind, so every component, including the label, can be recycled.

Amongst the brand guests at the round table, it was interesting to hear how they were currently sourcing labels and packaging and how things were changing.

Jorge Figueira of Pasante Healthcare explained that his company outsourced the production of labels, but tended to buy in from other countries, rather than source in the UK. This was influenced by where the actual products were produced, so labels tended to

be sourced from the same country as the product and packaging.

Whilst Ellen Tomlinson of Jubylee Bakes explained that as a small artisan business, her company tended to outsource production of the main labels on the products, but ingredient's labels, which can change frequently, are produced in-house.

Although the labels and most of the packaging currently used by Jubylee Bakes is recyclable, Ellen said that as the company grows, she would like to learn more about how to make the packaging even more sustainable – and to make it 'obvious' to customers that it was environmentally friendly.

Because of the short run and changing nature of the labels market, Ellen was asked if she would prefer to fully produce the labels in-house, but she cited cost of equipment and quality as barriers, saying: 'I think I would struggle, with the sorts of budgets that we have, to get equipment that would produce the quality that I get from outsourced labels.'

Although this was Ellen's initial impression, she later said that investing in hardware to produce her labels was something she was very keen to do.

There are tax benefits in small businesses investing in IT hardware to be more autonomous. Purchasing tooling for outsourced label production had no financial benefit. It is a bottom line cost to the business.

Steve Gibbons of ERS explained that there are options available, and the guests were able to see examples of digitally printed labels produced with Epson technology which



were of extremely high quality. He said, 'A large number of the customers that we deal with, especially with Epson equipment, are smaller companies who have historically had to buy 10,000 labels, pay for those and keep them on the shelf.

'With new legislation and regulations coming through, which mean label changes and updates are needed with allergens and ingredients having to be listed, we are finding these sorts of customers are buying a printer to produce labels themselves.

'Many of those customers will ask about the recyclability of the materials, but as soon as you start talking 'price' they lose interest in sustainability.'

Steve explained that this seemed a typical trend – especially with SME brands.

MORE CLEVER LABELS

The conversation then moved on to the need for more colour on a label.

Olushola Elugbaiye of Luxuria Botanicals explained that although there were many brands moving to colour, she had made the decision to keep her labels black and white, which lends a clean, minimalist and stylish approach to the brand, reflecting the natural ingredients of her products.

Yet, whilst many labels have tended to carry black and white, there is a growing trend

towards using more colourful labels as shelf stand out in a crowded market becomes increasingly important.

Ian Russell also made a good point when he said, 'Companies like Epson are helping to move brands from black and white to colour labels, but it can be difficult for users to go from one to the other – making sure that they get the colours right.'

'If people want to produce labels in-house they need it to be easy,' he said.

It isn't just colour that is becoming more popular either. Sophisticated personalisation, smart labels, applications through augmented reality, and more, are driving increasingly intelligent labels.

It was interesting to note that our brand guests knew very little about clever applications such as augmented reality (AR), and they were interested to hear more about intelligent labels. Ellen Tomlinson explained, 'This is not something we have really come across before', initiating a discussion about the many opportunities for label providers to help customers understand just what is achievable in today's market and how they can add value for brands through interactive labels.

Dayle Guy said, 'These are very powerful tools and some of the big brands have been experimenting with this for a number of years.



They are a real differentiator. Dynamic and personalised labels are where the value comes in.'

If you are running much shorter runs of labels, it is important that they can also do more. Clever labels are not just about gimmicks. Rich content, interaction, and personalisation, are great, but intelligent labels allow you to gather information on the consumer and what and why they buy. More than this, they also engender loyalty and help consumers to have a perceived 'one to one' link with the brand, which also helps e-commerce companies to have a closer link with their customers, as there can often be a disconnect with these types of business.

SAVING TIME

Craig Hamilton of Natures Creations CBD Ltd explained that his company has just invested in a digital printer to bring label printing in-house. He said, 'This helps to speed things up in our label production.

'We don't need to print thousands of labels – especially for those products that are still being tested. Initially, we would just get our commercial printer who does other work for us, to also print a few labels. This, however, was costing more per label and we were having to apply the labels ourselves from a flat sheet.

'Now, we have the colour label printer it really speeds things up and we can print exactly what we need. There is no minimum or maximum order and we don't waste as many labels. And, the machine is easy enough to be run by our existing staff.'

Digital really helps brands to get products to market more quickly, and to speed up the development of new applications by making prototyping much easier.

Simon Smith explained that over the years he has seen some big changes in the way brands are bringing products to market. He referenced one customer who used to have a seasonal design which would only update a few times a year – and then it was a reprint of a similar design. 'Now,' he said, 'the designs have a shelf life of less than six weeks and they often change completely.

The season used to be six months, that is now cut to less than six weeks, and so the label has to be designed and manufactured within two weeks. Digital print enables us to meet the customer's expectations.

'It also helps at the proofing stage, as brands go to their customers and they don't just want one design, but maybe six or seven options – bespoke to their customer's range – that they can offer as a choice.'

He added that his company also works a lot in the beverage market and he said, 'Sometimes there is as much thought and



energy put into creating the label as goes into producing the product, as it is the label that makes the product stand out.

‘It is about using digital technology and things like foiling to really add value. Digital enables us to react quickly, bring down lead times and turnaround designs for new products speedily.’

BUYING AN EXPERIENCE

The quality of colour labels that can be produced by Epson printers is now so good that it means label manufacturers have to specialise and focus on adding more packaging value – brands want greater variable content which can’t be delivered by bulk printing presses.

Consumers too are demanding greater variation and personalisation in the products they order and how they look and are labelled.

On-demand colour label printers are supporting the consumer demand for the next delivered bespoke product.

Both Simon Smith and Craig Hamilton then referenced case studies of how intelligent and beautiful labelling can actually add this value and cited times where a standard product has been enhanced simply by clever packaging and labelling, and where brands have been able to charge double, treble and more just because the label is enhanced.

Simon said, ‘Millennials are looking to buy an experience. They can be anti-brand. They are looking for something different.

‘For brands, it is about how they engage and interact with their customers, it is about how they get over their brand message. It is about finding a unique way to develop a brand – and the label tells that story.’

‘People are prepared to buy a brand and pay a premium for it if they think it is unique and bespoke,’ he added.

Tamara Thomas also pointed out that as well as looking good, labels had a huge role to play in informing the consumer. She said, ‘The most important thing is that the key information is clear and understandable.’

This is something that has been highlighted in the media recently with a number of problems associated with products and their ingredients that are not labelled correctly.

Digital print allows smaller brands to change ingredients or the make up of their products, yet be flexible enough to change their labels as is needed. In today’s market, especially with foods and consumables, a product that is wrongly labelled simply cannot go on the shelf.

Jorge Figueira said that changes in the market lead to real problems when you work, as his company does, on an international level. He said, ‘It is key for us to make sure that our labels comply with regulations.

And, very often these regulations are different in every country.

‘We may have to include medical information, ingredients, instructions, logos and more and it has to be of a certain size.

‘We have to be very flexible in our labels, as we have to update them as legislation changes. This is especially important in the our market.’

The brands owners were all in agreement that this could be a complex problem.

Craig Hamilton added, ‘It is very difficult especially if the product itself is very small. You have to have all the information there, and it has to be legible, but the front still needs to look appealing.’

Simon Smith said that this was a trend he was seeing with good growth in the market. ‘We are not just printing a single label anymore, we are printing multi-labels for the same product, so that all the information can be included. This is an enormous opportunity, as each layer is different, so if a product is sold in different countries, the languages have to be different.’

WHO MAKES THE BUYING DECISION?

As technology and the market changes, so too does the requirement for print buying.

Traditionally, brands would have a ‘buyer’ who was the main contact when it came to sourcing packaging and labels. It would be he, or she, who would specify the amount,

sign off the design and decide who would print what – either outsourced to a print partner, or in-house.

Today, it is more of a ‘committee’ process with a number of different elements within a company coming together to work towards the final choice of design, print and label.

A label may be a just small part of a product, but it is actually very complex to get it right, and what is expected of the label differs in almost every case. What is demanded of them can be complicated.

Yet if you do get it right, you can develop real return on investment, differentiate in a crowded market, add margin to print and entice shoppers to choose the right product – all through getting clever with your labels.

PARTICIPANTS IN THE LABELS ROUND TABLE

- Jorge Figueira, Pasante Healthcare
- Simon Smith, CS Labels
- Ellen Tomlinson, JubyLee Bakes
- Olushola Elugbaiye, Luxuria Botanicals
- Craig Hamilton, Natures Creations CBD Ltd
- Tamara Thomas, packaging and supply chain consultant
- Steve Gibbons, ERS
- Ian Russell, Codeway
- Charlotte Nickless, Packaging Innovations/Easyfairs
- Dayle Guy, Epson
- Charlie de la Haye, Epson

SELLING POWER

If you are moving from other printing technology to digital, you may be tempted to think that 'selling' the products that you can now produce is the same. However, the unique abilities of the process mean that there are things that have to be taken into consideration when selling digital.

The first and foremost rule is to not sell at all. You can't get over the benefits of digital just by asking if your customer needs some print! You need to show how it can work for their business, how it can add clever dimensions to get them greater return on investment, how it can save them money and how it can create a real buzz about what they do. That is very hard if you are just selling it as print.

Rather you need to work as a consultant who drills down into their business and finds the real issues that need solving. Digital is about providing innovative and exciting 'solutions' rather than just putting print on to substrates. It is more about selling what the printed product can do, what it can offer, and what it can give back, rather than selling the 'print' itself – and, it should never, ever be sold on price. Charge for it. Its transparency and the ability to report back when using it as a link to online media, mean that you can prove your results.

Selling digital is a completely different skill to selling products produced with any other technology. It opens up a whole new world allowing you to do more of the really clever stuff that makes print dynamic. So, don't just

take orders, find ways to solve problems.

Before you can provide that solution for your customers, your sales people really need to understand exactly what digital can do – especially its benefits. Talk to your machine manufacturer. Most provide a set of tools that will help to define your digital offer, and many are also now offering courses specifically focused on digital selling.

Once they are up to speed, it is not a sell to the print buyer. All decision makers within your customer's organisation must be on board. That may mean talking to finance, creative, promotions, even the board, but once you can show the results, and once they get that, they will understand the potential for far higher return on investment – which is what you should be 'selling' rather than just print.

- **Don't sell – consult.**
- **Don't just sell to the print buyer.**
- **Convince the marketing director, financial director and PR people of its potential.**
- **Understand exactly what it can do.**
- **Don't give it away – it is added value for your customer and should be added value for you too.**
- **Blend print with electronic media for best results.**

THE ENVIRONMENTAL CASE

Going digital can help you if you are an environmentally friendly printer. The point of this article is not to put other processes in a derogatory light when it comes to being green, but rather to show what benefits you can accrue specifically from digital. After all, it is impossible to measure one process against another, simply because they are so different and there are so many variables, which makes any like for like comparison worthless!

Here, we are focusing on the main areas of eco benefits pertinent to digital.

DEMAND THE BEST

One of the best features of digital is its on-demand capabilities. This means that you can print what you want, when you want, and in the exact number you want – even down to one. It also means that there is virtually no overmatter, no having to store unwanted labels, and no having to recycle unused stock – or worse still, send it to landfill.

CUTTING YOUR WASTE LINE

The ability to print on-demand really saves on waste, but as well as this, digital also saves because there is very little throughput of sheets in make ready – machines are ready to produce sellable print in a couple of sheets.

I HAVE THE POWER!

Power consumption is generally fairly low for digital by comparison to other processes.

Improvements in digital technology have also led to lower fusing temperatures leading to reduced power consumption.

CHEMICAL BROTHERS

Digital files go straight to press, so there are no plates to make. This means a huge reduction of chemicals in the production chain. It also means that you do not have to store these substances or pay to have used chemicals removed.

There is also no water used in the process, which is another environmental saving.

CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

Digital manufacturers have worked hard to ensure that their machines and the toners/inks that are used have as little impact on the environment as possible.

Their research and development departments, chemists and scientists continue to work to make these even more eco friendly. For instance, many now make use of recycled or bio based plastics in construction of the machines, whilst others reuse reconditioned recycled parts, which have been brought back up to new standard, in their devices.

WHAT GOES ROUND

Lifecycle analysis is stringently carried out by

The convergence of sustainability and productivity in label printing



many digital suppliers. It is not just about the machine and how you print, but also about how it is built in the first place and how it can be disposed of afterwards. Now, I know this is not a feature not just relevant to digital print, but in this sector, the manufacturers have really worked to ensure that lifecycles are taken into consideration.

As we have already said, many components of used machines can be recycled, remanufactured and reused, and this is done to a much greater degree than in many other processes.

CLEAN ROOM

Digital is a very 'clean' technology too. If you haven't any experience in this sector, then it is worth seeing if you can have a look at a company that is already using digital to produce labels. If you are a serious customer, then most suppliers will be able to help you with this. The technology can happily sit in the corner of a design studio or agency, just as well as a printer or convertor, so has to be 'clean' and enclosed and emission free, rather than 'inky'.

GETTING THE BALANCE RIGHT

Carbon balancing has also become a crucial tool within printing, and whilst all processes are now working to make carbon emissions as low as possible, it is

something that digital has been championing for some time.

Not only are machines made to lessen carbon impacts but manufacturers are also providing calculation tools to help their customers measure their own carbon in production and minimise this.

PROMISING PAPER

There are lots of environmental options when it comes to substrates too, and where once it might have been true to say that choices were limited, this is no longer the case.

There is a green choice in paper and films, self-ahesives and speciality labelstocks now available for the production of digital labels, and a wide selection of suppliers to approach including all the major merchants.

TRANSPORT CUTS

The ability to make proofs and prototypes quickly and easily means that a customer can visit once and see and approve quickly. There are no couriers bustling backwards and forwards carrying examples of print.

If a brand owner is printing in-house, there are no transport costs at all.

AND, FINALLY...

Most environmental benefits also have a cost saving implication, so you will find that you are not only helping the environment, but also helping your bottom line too. This is, of course, just sound business sense, so anything that can help your company to save has got to be good for you.

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MAKING DIGITAL LABEL PRINTING MORE COLOUR EFFICIENT

Many label printers have incorporated a digital element into their print set up to add versatility and customisation to their production. However, there is still plenty of appetite for traditional, long run print; and when label printers are utilising more than one print process, or even just different digital devices for the same print run, inconsistencies in colour can occur without reliable colour management.

Amy Young, marketing manager at GMG Color, explained: 'We work with label print customers who require colours to match across their digital devices, as well as with traditional print methods like flexo, no matter what the substrate.'

GMG does this using the best in class conversion tool GMG ColorServer, which incorporates the company's proprietary MX technology for smoother separations than an ICC workflow and repeatable colour results. Amy explained, 'With ColorServer, the integrity of the black channel is preserved, and spot colours can accurately be converted to process colours, using the maximum gamut of the CMYK colour space.'

In addition, the GMG SmartProfiler module allows users to easily calibrate, recalibrate and profile digital printing systems step by step.

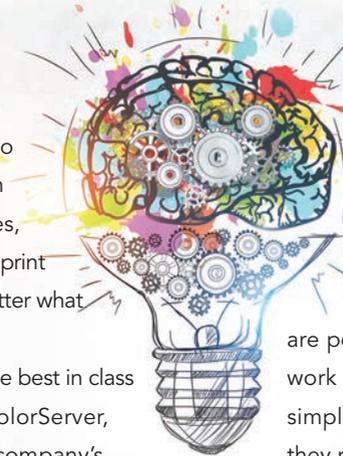
Digital label printers can also reap financial benefits from installing colour control. 'With GMG InkOptimizer, not only is image colour quality improved – particularly seen in the grey balance – return on investment is typically obtained within six months,' said Amy. This is achieved through grey component replacement whereby C/M/Y ink is replaced with less expensive black ink, reducing the overall ink usage while optimising

the image. GMG InkOptimizer enables the press to run at higher speeds, and raw material costs are cut through reduced wear and tear on printheads and less substrate waste. Amy stated, 'At GMG, we are perhaps best known for our work off press, with many brands simply asking for 'a GMG', when they require a colour accurate contract or certified proof.'

ColorProof enables the proofing of even challenging colour and material combinations, so is ideal for label printing. It ensures that chosen printers, anywhere worldwide with a GMG system, will deliver the expected colour output, achieving all industry or in-house standards.

Meet GMG Color at Packaging Innovations 2020, on stand F14 in the Label&Print area.

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CUSTOMISED PRINTING SOLUTIONS

Medium sized businesses, organisations and big companies have very particular demands on printing solutions. The right answers are often just around the corner.

DTM Print is an international OEM and solution provider based in Germany with years of experience in developing individual printing services. Beside own products, the company works closely with well known manufacturers like Primera Technology and Oki Europe to provide the best possible printing solution for label, point of sale and retail applications. Established in 1986, DTM Print now has more than 40 employees who work with in excess of 150 regional partners and whose services reach way beyond the European borders.

The company provides customers everything needed to print their own labels: label printers using inkjet, colour laser or digital LED technology, customised software solutions, point of sale solutions eg label kiosks, special accessories like label applicators, foil imprinters, rewinders and unwinders and a wide selection of DTM certified Genuine Label Stock of approved inkjet and dry toner materials, available in any size or shape. 'With our passion for custom made solutions we have firmly established ourselves in the market,' explained Andreas Hoffmann, managing director operations at DTM Print.

FAST AND EASY

The company recently launched two new printers. First, the DTM CX86e Colour Tag Printer, a fast and compact printing solution for production, point of sale applications. It is the world's smallest LED label printer and helps companies to produce versatile and professional colour labels and tags that maximise advertising impact.

Whether they are vouchers, coupons, value added receipts, ID tags with photos, visitor badges, price and promotion stickers, pasted labels, sleeves, loop ribbons or labels for cardboards and boxes, the DTM CX86e makes it fast and easy to print high quality full colour labels and tags for signage and product identification that will attract customer attention and increase sales.

The second new printer in the company's product portfolio is the DTM FX810e Foil Imprinter for finishing and highlighting product labels with a width of up to 220 mm. That foil imprinting system adds brilliant shiny metallic or laminated highlights both to blank or already pre-printed labels, whether they have been produced by inkjet, laser, LED, offset or flexo printing. Fast and accurate one colour printing for either adding data like simple text or barcodes to pre-printed labels or printing single coloured labels is possible as well.



FOR INDIVIDUAL REQUIREMENTS

DTM FX810e features a robust metal housing, an intuitively to use colour touchscreen, an optional built on guillotine cutter and can be connected via USB 2.0 and Ethernet 10/100. It uses DTM Print certified thermal transfer ribbons with a maximum width of 220 mm, but it is recommended to choose the ribbon width depending on the label design. If, for example, the layout covers only

100 mm of the label customers can use a 100 mm wide ribbon roll.

The product range of DTM Print also includes the well known LX-series of inkjet colour label printers from US manufacturer Primera Technology. Primera's LX500e and LX910e are ideal solutions for fast and flexible on-demand personalised label production. Both printers deliver full colour labels in any shape, size and amount that is needed. They use only one high yield tri-colour cartridge with integrated print head simplifying operation and ongoing maintenance and minimising downtimes during ink replacement.

EXCEPTIONAL LABELS

To produce exceptional product labels for all kinds of applications you not only need advanced print technology, but you also need high quality material. To guarantee the best results DTM Print provides a wide selection of DTM certified Genuine Label Stock either for

LED/dry toner printers (such as DTM CX86e), thermo transfer printers (such as DTM FX810e) or inkjet printers (such as Primera LX910e): starting with matte and glossy papers extending to transparent, matte and glossy polyester films as well as textured, silver, gold or other coloured materials.

'True, we do have a wide variety of printing solutions on offer. This, however, does not mean that we give our clients only ready made solutions. We aim at composing an ideal combination of (print) hardware and software that perfectly matches our clients' requirements. All in all, we can look back on more than 30 years working experience in developing individual printing solutions. We and our partners therefore have the know-how needed to reach our self-set goal, ie to offer precisely those solutions that match individual demands,' stressed Andreas.

But the people at DTM Print think further: 'We are looking forward to the future!' he said. 'We plan to expand and develop our point of sale solutions to help end customers to personalise their products on a much larger scale than is currently possible. We also want to expand our volume of projects and help even more enterprises to integrate individual printing systems into their production and selling processes.'

With DTM Print customers reach a new era in flexible, on-demand label printing. With passion into the future – never did a slogan fit more than it fits the team from DTM Print.

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EMBRACE THE POSSIBILITIES WITH



Today's marketplace is characterised by an extremely high complexity. Spurred by intense competition and globalisation, shorter product innovation cycles and turnaround times are critical success factors.

Digital printing offers distinct benefits that perfectly fit to the emerging requirements of the packaging value chain. It can increase the manufacturing flexibility with just in time and on-demand production. In addition, the inherent capability of digital printing to easily change content and artwork from print to print makes it a powerful tool to increase the overall communication effectiveness and drive sales with shorter time to market. Target group specific messaging from versioning down to personalisation helps to grow revenues, extend market shares and support brand building.

However, the growing acceptance of digital printing in the self-adhesive label market requires new production methods

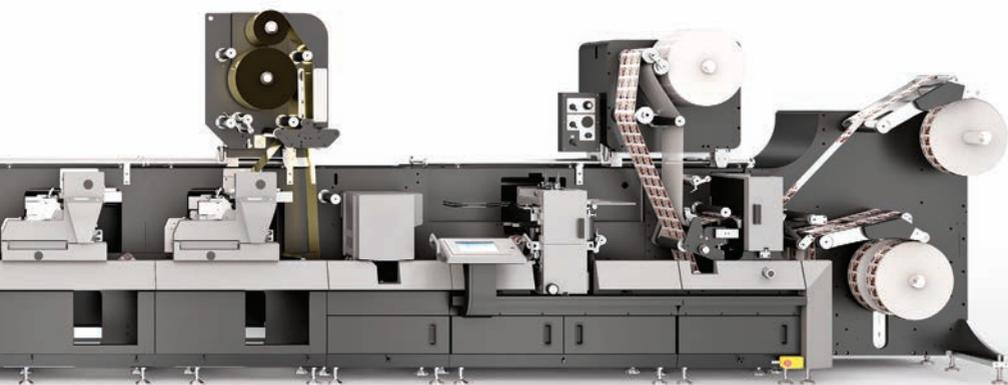
to cope with the growing demand. A new level of productivity and single pass label conversion is needed to cost efficiently produce short to medium runs on an industrial scale.

INNOVATIVE TECHNOLOGY

The LabelStream 4000 series has been designed with this requirement in mind. Building on reliable UV inkjet technology the five colour press (CMYK and White) offers print speeds of up to 75 metres per minute and two print widths of 330 mm or 410 mm, resulting in an industry leading overall output of 1845 m² per hour. Offering various digital white opacities of up to 80% in a single pass at different print speeds, allows users to balance application costs and quality for the most cost efficient production. The system can be expanded to a full hybrid configuration with a custom mix of additional flexo, embellishment and finishing units turning it into a fully integrated single pass label conversion line to meet various

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THE LABELSTREAM 4000 SERIES



demands and budgets. This mix of conventional and digital technologies enables fast and affordable production of high quality self-adhesive labels.

Although innovative technology is important, it only contributes to a profitable digital printing business. As worldwide market leader for web fed inkjet production presses with more than 1500 installations, Canon also knows about the

importance of reliability and uptime for a predictable and hassle free production to meet the tightest deadlines. Therefore, Canon offers a complete package consisting of innovative technologies integrated into comprehensive end to end solutions and supported by first class technical service business consultancy to develop and grow a sustainable and profitable digital business.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW...

- **Technology:** UV inkjet
- **Print speeds** of up to 75 metres per minute and two print widths of 330 mm or 410 mm.
- **Media handling:** A wide range of standard label stocks including PP, PE, PET plus select special substrates. From 40 to 450 microns on standard configuration.
- **Single point of operation, servo drive technology, auto registration and impression setting plus inspection cameras** enhances the usability while reducing make ready times.
- **Configure the system to your needs** – from a standalone digital press to a full hybrid configuration – custom mix of digital, flexo and finishing, seamlessly integrated.



DON'T BE AFRAID

We are all looking for ideas to be extra special. Luckily for label producers, there

Once you have printed your labels, there are many ways to make them really stand out.

Perhaps the terms 'adding value' gets used too much these days, but I guess the reason why is that it is key to success. You can't have a successful business if you don't add value to it, nor can you truly satisfy customers if what you do for them doesn't give them value.

When it comes to producing your labels, adding value is also key. Gone are the days of getting by, or producing the same old, same old, because the consumer is getting ever more discerning in his buying choices, and yet

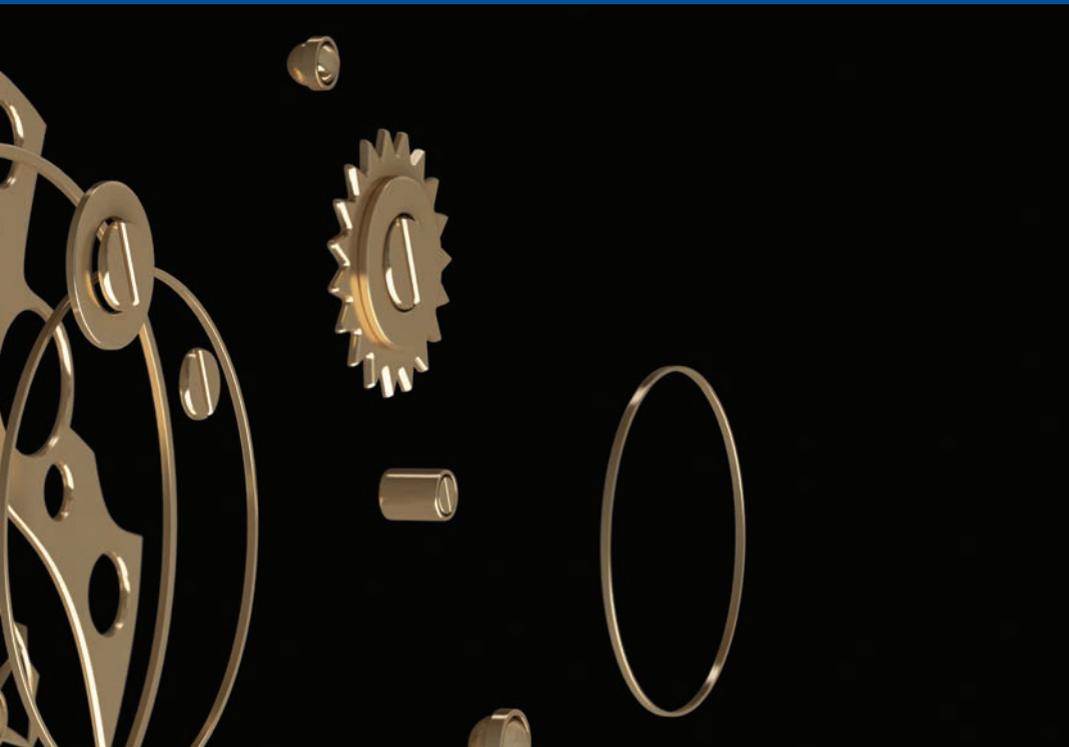
he is shorter of time, more harried, and wants everything now.

Of course, it very much depends on what you are buying, but very often the choice is made in a split second – pulling a product from the shelf without thinking too much about it. The labels and packaging of that product is a major element in differentiating it in those vital seconds – it has much more influence than the product itself.

STATUS SYMBOL

And, what if you do have time to browse? Then the label and packaging is even more

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TO GET CREATIVE

are lots of options available.

important if you are faced with time and a shelf full of products. People will buy because it looks nice, because it is unusual, because it draws the eye and is tactile, because it stands out from the crowd.

There are also many other trends today that work to make the type of labels used more important. No longer is it just a bearer of the contents and information. Now it is a status symbol – good enough to be shared on social media.

Here, the label and packaging is definitely the hero. Here, the high perceived value of the brand is influenced by the its look, its

style, its character – which is all driven by how the label and packaging looks. A Versace handbag in an old plastic carrier, with a white sticker label out of a pack from WH Smith, would still be a Versace handbag, but would not entice many buyers.

Labels of today have to do more than ever before. If they can talk or sing, create a smell, light up, interact, come to life through augmented reality or link to electronic media, all the better. If they just look plain beautiful, with die cutting, embossing and foiling, then all the better (and remember that a lot of these processes

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can now be done 'digitally' so costs and time to market are cut dramatically).

If you want to get your product chatted about on social media. If you want to get noticed on-shelf. If you want to start a trend, then labels can help do that for you and have countless numbers of consumers not only reaching for the product, but spreading your message further for you – influencer marketing in action if there ever was!

MORE THAN BEFORE

So, how do we do that? Adding value. By embracing every technique and every process that print and finishing allows – and perhaps throw in some beautiful substrates too.

Now, whilst this sort of thing has always been done to a certain extent for high end, luxury products, the trend now is to use it for a wider market and in more sectors. Not just the celebration Christmas bottle of whisky, but everyday craft beers; not just the wedding ring from Tiffany's, but the costume jewellery from the high street retailer; not just the elite perfume that you can never afford to wear, but every bottle on every shelf in Boots and Superdrug; not just the purchases from the food hall at Harrods, but the delicious artisan creations from every small baker, confectioner and sauce maker.

Those fleeting precious seconds that you have to impress the consumer have never

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been more important. They know they want to buy, they know they need to do it quickly. It may not be something that is bought on a whim, especially if it is more expensive, but there is a certain amount of visual and emotional choice that leads them to choose one thing over another.

Of course, the 'buying decision' is longer than those few seconds of the 'purchasing decision', but really, once you know you want to buy and have the impulse to do so, you have made it to the shop and you are looking at the display, then those few seconds of 'which one' really count – after all, our brains work on autopilot a lot of the time.

Of course, people will not buy something out of their price range – no matter how much they may want it. But, if it looks 'deluxe', they are more likely to buy a cheaper product in a luxurious package with a super brilliant label than one in a plain alternative. It makes them feel special. It makes them feel like they have bought something precious, rather than a cheaper version – it is all about creating the right kind of emotion and 'want' from the consumer, so much so that he picks up the product from the brand owner who is your customer in the packaging and with the beautiful labelling you have designed or produced. That gets results and a happy customer.



A QUICK REMINDER!

Here is a quick round up of what you need to know to go digital for labels.

Digital reacts quickly and when a brand needs to change its message – it responds instantly! There is no waiting for plates, make readies, getting up to colour and long, costly runs. There is no having to dump or recycle huge amounts of redundant stock. Digital can quickly change the message and have the label out of the door in the shortest possible turnaround time.

PRE-PRESS

- There are no plates to make.
- Time to press is extremely fast.
- Change over between jobs is swift.
- Data handling should not be complicated. Don't be afraid.
- Remember, you will have many more smaller jobs going through your pre-press. Can you handle this competently?

VARIABLE DATA

- A very efficient marketing tool.
- The ability to produce margin rich jobs.
- Measure the response with links to online.
- Get greater return on investment for customers.
- Lots of options available, depending on the

kind of variable data you wish to produce.

- Not just personalisation, but versioning or customisation depending on what the client needs.

PRESS

- Up to sellable product within a couple of sheets.
- Much less downtime.
- One operator can easily handle the workflow.
- Digital operator skills can be learned more quickly than for other processes.
- Output exactly how many labels are required – even down to one.
- Proof on the press that the job will be printed on.

FINISHING

- Many machines now come with integrated finishing.
- Have a look at the digital label printers with laser cutters – this will save you a lot of time and cost.
- No waiting hours or days for print to dry.
- Bring as much finishing as you can in-house – keep control over your workflow.

SUBSTRATES

- Lots of paper based label substrates

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now available – colours, textures, effects and more.

- Choose from a wide selection of different media including films and foils.
- Make sure the substrate is okay for the type of digital technology you are using.
- Don't forget, it is very quick, easy, and cost effective, to run a test with digital, so get creative with your substrates.

THE ECO ARGUMENT

- Printing the right amount, when you need it, means no overmatter. As a bonus, customers can source just what they need and do away with huge warehousing costs – a big benefit to them. Be the one to give them this.
- Hardly any make ready waste.
- Lower energy use than other processes.
- No water and no chemicals in platemaking.
- Very 'clean' technology.

SELLING DIGITAL

- Make sure you don't sell, but consult.
- Never try to win a job on price, but on what the print can do for the customer.
- The customer will buy the concept – not the print. They don't care how you produce it, so long as it is good quality, on time and gets a response.
- Digital allows you to do things that you never could before, and offer customers much more than you ever could before. As such it is a value added option and you should consider it as a completely new revenue stream and have a new

mindset in the way that you promote it.

- Don't just talk to the print buyer. Talk to others in the organisation as well – the creative director, the financier, the marketer.

Just remember, other brand owners, label printers and converters are seeing the benefits of digital and are increasingly working with the technology. If you don't you will be left behind. To survive, you must innovate and offer more. The clock is ticking!

THE BENEFITS

Digital is also brilliant for short run, fast turnaround labels – so even if you are not looking to use variable data it is still an options worth considering.

- Make prototypes and dummies at little cost – make your ideas a reality.
- Runs as low as one – but long runs can be handled just as well.
- Variable data content for greater return on investment.
- Quick turnaround.
- Cost savings. No plates, chemical or platemaking machinery.
- Less power in use.
- No overmatter or redundant stock.
- Cheaper initial investment than for other processes.
- Make 'wow' products doing things that other processes can't.
- Differentiate your business. Get away from commodity print and become a specialist.



WHAT NOW? LAST THOUGHTS...

So, if you have decided that you would like to find out more about how to make the most of digital label production and how it can benefit your business, what do you do now?

1. First, we would strongly recommend talking to the suppliers. They are the ones with the depth of knowledge in this field, and they will be able to help you find a system that exactly fits the needs of your business.

Ensure, as always that you work with a reputable supplier who offers plenty of after sales service and support.

2. Make sure that you only get what you need! A new press is great, but also a big investment. Depending on how many labels you need, you may not want a huge press with all the bells and whistles – a desktop version may be ideal.

3. Ask about other things you might need – design software, any finishing options available.

4. We would also suggest carrying out an informal 'audit' of your business, its customers and the applications that you presently produce, and maybe even looking at new

markets that you would like to enter in the future. This will provide you with a better overview of where your business stands today and help when it comes to investment decision making. For instance, if you have a new product that you are considering that is going to require many more labels than you presently produce, don't forget to future-proof and take that into consideration.

This audit does not have to be 'formal' nor cost you money, but something you can do internally, looking at how your production process works from job in to when it leaves the premises. Highlight strengths and weaknesses along the way, examine bottlenecks and look at how you could do things better and in a more streamlined way – a great exercise for any business even if you do not invest right now.

Then see how digital label production can enhance that.

5. Talk to other reference companies. Talk to similar companies to yours about how they produce their labels currently – in-house or outsource. Find out what works well for them, and if they produce in-house, find out what they really think about the technology and the after sales support. After all, they are the ones who are using it in real time, every day – and they are neutral!

