

Digital printing is helping small manufacturers gain big advantages

Digital label and packaging solutions are opening up new opportunities for small manufacturers, says *Donald Allred, VP of packaging at Memjet.*

Customer connection

Regardless of whether products are sold online or in person, the relationship between consumers and the products they purchase has never been closer. More than ever, consumers want a product experience that targets their interests and creates a connection with the brands they buy.

The importance of this connection is especially clear when it comes to labels and packaging. The label is the metaphorical face of the product, whether it is used on the product or on the shipping package.

To ensure their labels can create this level of connection, many manufacturers now produce their own labels. Making label production part of their operation not only gives these manufacturers control of the message and product information included on the label, it does so at an affordable cost.

One such food manufacturer is speciality food company Glenoaks, which produces a variety of beef jerky products marketed under different brand names. They need labels for over 900 SKUs.

To produce this wide range of labels on demand, the company purchased the Memjet-powered Colordyne 1600 Series C.

Printing these labels on demand has given the company the flexibility it needs to produce this wide range of SKUs and meet the demands of their customers for local, event driven label content. Labels that used to take six weeks to produce can now be printed in hours. The company can easily make changes to the label to reflect the brand and the location where the product is distributed, connecting with their target customer at a much higher rate.

Moreover, the Colordyne 1600 Series C enables Glenoaks to better comply with government regulations or any ingredient changes; if a label needs to be updated, it can be easily changed without tearing up or throwing away thousands of dollars worth of stock.



Expanding the opportunity

The capabilities of inkjet-powered solutions and the results they produce have translated into huge adoption rates for digital label solutions. Research shows that packaging is now the next area of growth for digital printing.

Inkjet technology powers a wide range of affordable solutions that make high-quality colour package production a reality and enable manufacturers to better balance the demands of their growing businesses.

These package printing solutions are available at a low cost of ownership. Their small footprint and ease of use means that they can be easily incorporated into the manufacturers' operations. Due to the flexibility of the technology, inkjet solutions can be integrated further down in the supply chain and allow for late stage differentiation.

Once installed, this technology allows manufacturers to produce

the type of packaging that advances their business goals. Manufacturers can easily produce short runs of customised packaging in high-quality colour. Each package that gets printed – no matter what the quantity – promotes a consistent, enhanced look for the brand's image. Furthermore, this type of colourful, customised packaging creates a connection with the consumer that plain, unbranded, or minimally branded packaging can never achieve.

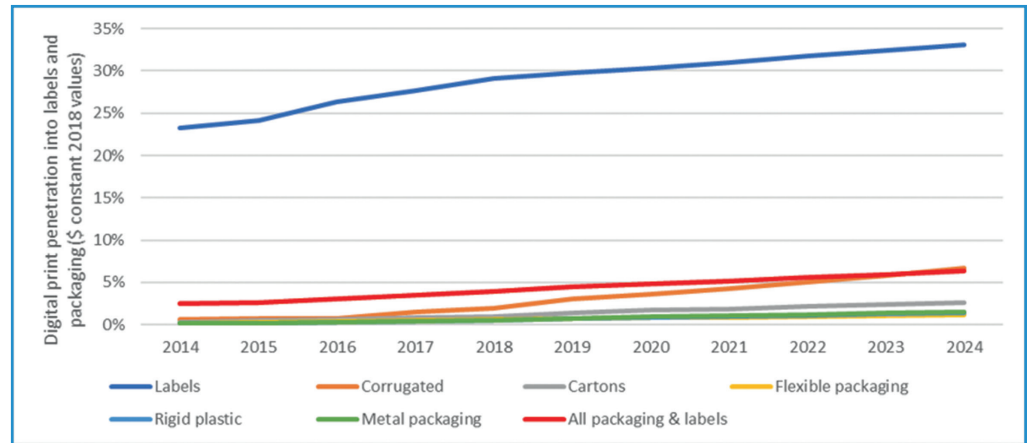
Inkjet package printing also makes financial sense for the manufacturer. Using inkjet to print packaging on demand means manufacturers can do away with costly, high-volume pre-printed packaging. This not only saves money, it also reduces waste and gives manufacturers better control of their inventory.

The power of choice

Having both inkjet-powered label and packaging printing solutions means manufacturers always have the right solution for creating colourful branded packaging.

For many manufacturers, printing labels gives them the look they need to customise both the products and the shipment package. These manufacturers simply print a label for the product and then print a similar label for the shipping box. In doing so, they can leverage the same print solution and create the same look and feel between the product label and the package label. This is an easy, consistent way to leverage the look of the brand.

The downside of this approach, however, is cost. On a printed label, the labelstock itself makes up 80 percent of the cost. This means



that producing large labels to cover an entire side of a box can be expensive and may still leave a lot of blank, unbranded space. In addition, printing and applying labels is a two-step manual process that is prone to errors.

So, for some manufacturers, it makes sense to print directly onto the package. Starting with a plain box, manufacturers can easily print larger images on all sides in a single-step process. The output is more visually appealing, more impactful, and less expensive than covering multiple sides of the box with labels.

Direct to success

Next-generation single-pass digital colour inkjet technology, as developed by Memjet, transforms the label and package printing process, making it faster, easier, and more cost efficient than outsourcing production.

These gains are thanks to inkjet printheads that fire millions of ink drops per second. Using solutions that include these printheads, manufacturers can produce packages and labels faster and at a higher level of quality than the thermal transfer, laser, or scanning inkjet technologies of the past.

Moreover, this technology enables a low capital cost, small footprint and ease of use that make short run colour label and packaging production a reality, giving manufacturers greater flexibility and creativity in the types and quantities of labels and packaging they produce. Whether it's a batch size of one or 1000s, the inkjet printheads ensure the manufacturer can print quality labels and packaging each and every time, on-demand.

These printheads can be configured to print different package widths and on different package types and thicknesses. As a result, a variety of affordable, right-sized systems have been developed to enable manufacturers to easily make package and label production part of their operation, no matter what type of packaging they need.

Combining package production with label printing capabilities gives manufacturers a competitive advantage both in terms of operational efficiency and customer relations. Combining solutions in your operation makes it easier than ever to produce customised, colourful packaging. •

