



Plastics in Packaging

Issue 235: May 2021

SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

*Why digital printing
is becoming increasingly
agile in the packaging sector*

IN THIS ISSUE:

Cellulose
Thermoforming
Resin distribution
Flexible packaging

www.plasticsinpackaging.com



Digital printing is becoming a mainstream production reality.
Photo credit: Landa Digital Printing

The DIGITAL difference

During the Covid-19 pandemic, e-commerce has become a hook where everyone can hang their hat – not just consumers. Converters and brands, too, are coming to terms with a new way of doing business, not least through creating dedicated direct-purchase websites.

These have popped up across the internet, with one case in point being a microsite launched recently by Hoffmann Neopac for its DigitAll360° digital tube decoration service. This could be a sign of things to come.

The marketplace – accessible via the company's direct sales website – walks tube customers through a process that includes downloadable design guides and templates, an initial portfolio of stock tubes from 50-200ml in volume, artwork uploads, 3D renderings and a pre-purchase artwork check.

Hoffmann Neopac claims that the service offers 360-degree decoration with no slit or overlap, and strong seam and shoulder printing, along with highly-opaque whites and glosses. On-cap decoration capabilities, it says, will be added to the DigitAll360° marketplace in the future. The company also promises impressive digital colour-matching, employing up to seven simultaneous colours with white and glossy lacquer at up to 600dpi resolution, allowing for photorealistic images.

As you would expect with digital printing, key advantages include short lead-times and

While uncertainty remains about the business outlook post-Covid, suppliers of digital printing solutions are counting on a clear vision of a future led by a platform-agnostic technology. **Steven Pacitti** reports

short runs. But Hoffmann Neopac goes further, emphasising that by offering a mono-material PE tube portfolio, digital printing also helps lower resource waste and consumption, as well as energy and chemicals usage.

“Our customer can order a test quantity of individually-printed tubes to evaluate the print quality and test the compatibility of the product with the packaging,” says Cornelia Schmid, head of marketing.

But digital printing is becoming increasingly agile in a packaging context, and such technologies are also well-placed to support a shift to new materials.

“Our technology is substrate-agnostic and we can say with great certainty that we are capable of printing on the newly-created plant-derived materials that are gradually penetrating the market as well,” explains Merav Sheffer, marketing manager for Israeli firm Velox, which manufactures industrial-grade direct-to-shape digital decoration solutions. “In line with the increasing demand to utilise more eco-friendly substrate materials such as sugarcane and post-consumer recycled material, Velox DTS-Inkjet technology achieves

the same high-quality decoration results on such substrates as it does on traditional plastics.”

What differentiates Velox from other digital technologies available is that it was developed specifically for mass production applications of up to 15,000 containers an hour. Sustainability is improved by eliminating plates and screens, setup waste and hazardous solvents, the company adds.

“With regard to inks, the Velox system includes 11 process colours, plus three embellishments, accurately matching more than 95 per cent of the Pantone Plus colour book, which removes the need for a spot-inks kitchen,” says Sheffer. “The use of an exact number of drops saves on the excess ink that is [typically] given in analogue technologies.” The Velox system also removes the need for pre- and post-coating, he adds.

One challenge associated with emerging substrates is the potential for a rough surface and a dirty-white or greyish colouring, but Sheffer argues that direct printing overcomes these issues. Velox is also counting on direct printing technology to be synergistic with the

trend for mono-materials, with the aim of easing recycling eco-systems.

As the company points out, its technology includes embellishments like digital gloss, digital matt and digital tactile embossing, while long runs of 40,000 units or more are now possible.

Another company citing a clear market need for digital decoration is fellow Israel-headquartered firm Landa Digital Printing (LDP), which made two significant managerial appointments straddling the pandemic: Asher Levy as active chairman and Arik Gordon as chief executive. Naturally, they have endured something of a baptism of fire thanks to Covid-19, with Levy saying that the pandemic created many questions, such as how does LDP communicate with customers? How does it demonstrate its presses? How does it support customers in the field? And the cancellation of major printing trade-show Drupa only added to the challenges.



Left: The Velox system matches more than 95 per cent of the Pantone Plus colour book

Right: On-cap decoration will be added to the DigitAll360® marketplace, says its developer Hoffmann Neopac



Levy says that his immediate objective for the company is to be ready for when the market fully reopens, in order to keep its customers running. "We will further strengthen our consumables model, which will undoubtedly see increased demand,"

he explains. "We will also continue to build a challenging yet reliable business plan."

One thing is becoming clear, however, and that is the way in which digital printing is becoming a mainstream production reality. HP, for example, expects the personalised

gift market to grow by 55 per cent to \$31 billion this year, which will present huge opportunities for digital printing.

That is not to mention growing concerns about security and traceability, boosting demand for brand protection software and ink solutions. There is also, as discussed, the boom in e-commerce. The increasing pressure placed on converters by brands is driving more companies towards digital print adoption. In the label market, for instance, only a relatively small percentage of pressure sensitive labels are currently printed digitally, which offers a significant opportunity for business. And the same is true for flexible packaging, with digital printing continuing to be the realm of the innovator or disrupter. That is about to change. **P**

More information from:
Hoffmann Neopac
Landa Digital Printing
Velox

hoffmann-neopac.com
landanano.com
velox-digital.com

Closing the PET loop

**Upcycle post-consumer
bottle and tray flakes
with Starlinger viscotec
rPET solutions**

viscotec.at

- Food grade
- Superclean
- High iV



viscotec
foodgrade without compromise

Starlinger Group