

FROZEN AND REFRIGERATED PRODUCT NEWS

Frozen FOODAGE

CATEGORY ANALYSIS AND CONSUMER TRENDS FOR RETAIL

Brand Solutions Age

The Advantages of Digital Printing



The Digital Difference

A highly respected conference speaker, Bob Scherer is a 25-year veteran in the printing and packaging industries. In 1995, along with two partners, he established CL&D Digital as one of the first packaging printers to use Hewlett-Packard (HP)/Indigo digital printing technology. He says digital printing offers suppliers the opportunity to get their new products to market faster. His take:

What's the biggest misconception about digital printing?

When people look at costs and don't consider usage. Take a company that paid five cents a label for 100,000 of them through conventional printing, but only used half of them. Their actual cost was a dime each and now they have a warehouse full of labels to manage. With digital, you get what you need when you need it, and fast. So that company would have paid the 10 cents upfront, but saved on the cost of managing and storing the waste.

On the flip side, digital is not the right fit for all applications. You have to be upfront with customers and say, "Here's when I fit, and when I'm a good value."

What can digital printing mean for new product launches?

Again, looking at the cost of a digital label that can be a penny or two more, but then getting to market weeks ahead of the competition can mean a substantial amount of dollars. CL&D Digital is much like an overnight courier service. You can mail a letter for 37 cents, or overnight it for \$10. But if you absolutely need it there tomorrow morning, the \$10 is a huge value, too.

This is especially true in the case of new products. Imagine showing Wal-Mart or Target a product that looks and feels like a conventional one (and you actually only have 2, 10, or 100 of them). If you get the orders, great, but if you don't, there are not hundreds or thousands of products sitting on your shelf and you haven't paid the costs associated with conventional package printing. Digital is like an insurance policy; you get the orders before moving to full-scale production.

The same holds true if Wal-Mart says they want the word "new" on your package, while Target requests that you make a small change on it. You have the capability to show different versions digitally. It's all about building products to meet the needs of your customers, not building products and hoping your customers will buy them.

What are the big trends in printing today?

Getting closer to your customer—having products that "speak" to them—is a huge trend, since 70 percent of the buying decision is made in front of the package. Bilingual packaging is an example. Another is tailoring packaging and printing smaller runs for different geographic market appeal.

There's also an increasing demand for personalized products. A cosmetics company's website, for example, can offer personalized foundations designed by the customer. As a bonus, this serves as an on-going focus group that allows the manufacturer to capitalize on trends. There has been a definite shift away from someone coming up with a new idea, say adding aloe to a product, and then determining if the market likes it. Now the consumer is driving the new ideas by saying, "I want aloe," so you can start talking about it in your core product line, and edge out your competitor.