



An overview: THE LABEL MARKET

In order to find out what the latest trends in the label market are, we reached out to Canadian printers, who see firsthand the changes and strides being made in the industry.

We spoke with Alex Medd, partner at the Label Factory; Vinod Sharma, vice president, sales and marketing at Metro Labels Inc.; Jeff Sommer, vice president business development at Lorpon Labels and Lloyd Taylor, founder of Taylor Label.

THE TRENDS

According to Medd at the Label Factory, for flexo, he's seeing label quality increase, as well as the number of colours required for a label. Labels are also becoming more complex.

Metro Labels', Sharma said there's been a shift towards flexible packaging like shrink sleeves, roll-to-roll and more film. People are investing in pressure sensitive or cut and stack technology. He's also noted that some of his clients in the marketing industry prefer the billboard effect of the shrink sleeve as opposed to a one-up label.

Sommer at Lorpon Labels says one of the biggest trends that has remained present over the last several years is sku proliferation. "Many Consumer Packaged Goods (CPG) companies want to dominate the shelf space in the retail environment and one way of doing that is to offer consumers a lot of choice in terms of flavours, colours, package size, etc...The main goal for the CPG company is to Own the Shelf," he said.

He also noticed a trend around personalization and customization right down to the individual package, stating as millennials move towards becoming a consumer powerhouse, CPGs are aiming to take advantage of that with their branding and messaging. The younger generation use social media to talk about their experiences and brands need to tap into that, "by creating and growing the emotional connection consumers have with their brand."

For Taylor at Taylor Labels, a noticeable

trend in the market is that lead times have gotten shorter. He said that customers are no longer holding as much inventory and they need to be able to respond more quickly when orders are placed. He's also noticed that the products that they are being asked to produce are

more complex than in the past. "More colours, more variables data and more material options," he said.

WHERE'S THE GROWTH?

Specializing in the production of narrow web flexible packaging solutions, Lorpon Labels sees potential areas for growth in the single serve flexible packaging market—specifically in the convenience market, single serve portioned fresh packaging, and bar wraps.

"One of the main advantages we have is the ability to run small custom runs, both flexo or digital, with very low start up costs when compared to wide web flexo or gravure, which have been the tradi-



Crown Shaving, a provider of luxury men's grooming products in Toronto, worked with Lorpon Labels on the label design for its product line. Lorpon recommended a metalized film product with tactile printing and a waterproof matte varnish. Since low volumes were required, they used a digital press, which also kept prices down.



"This is an extremely exciting time to be in the label and packaging industry ..."

JEFF SOMMER

Vice president business development
Lorpon Labels

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COVERSTORY

tional print methods for this type of packaging," Sommer said. "We are able to produce any type of single serve pouch or bar wrap flexo or digital."

For Taylor Label growth comes from being responsive. Taylor says everything from their order entry system, to production equipment, inventory management to product knowledge—everything is part of a strategy to meet their customer's timelines. "There are new opportunities every day for a company with the range of production capabilities that Taylor Label has," Taylor said. "Business is booming."

DIGITAL LABEL EQUIPMENT'S IMPACT ON THE INDUSTRY

When it comes to digital equipment, the experts have varying opinions. While they all tend to believe it's a costly addition, some believe its rise and prevalence will come sooner than others.

"The initial costs and the running costs are still quite high," Medd said. "We actually have a digital machine on our press but you have to pick the jobs to run for it. It's not quite as useful as everyone thinks. But

*** "It's growing leaps and bounds, the presses are getting faster, wider and more cost efficiencies are coming on board in digital..."**

VINOD SHARMA

Vice president, sales and marketing
Metro Labels Inc.



Government agencies are getting tough on the pharmaceutical and nutraceutical industry. There is now a need for cost-effective printing of multiple SKUs with sequentially numbered labels.



* “We actually have a digital machine on our press but you have to pick the jobs to run for it...”

ALEX MEDD
Partner, The Label Factory

if it keeps going the way it is...we'll see.” Medd said he doesn't see digital presses running jobs that are 100,000 ft., in the near future. While smaller machines can be up and running inexpensively—and they would be saving money on plates—Medd said the toners and inks are very expensive.

Sharma said digital label equipment is on the uptrend. “It's growing leaps and bounds, the presses are getting faster, wider and more cost efficiencies are coming on board in digital,” he said. Sharma notes that it's still costly to invest in the equipment, but in a couple of years digital will explode in the marketplace, even

beating the traditional presses normally bought today.

According to Taylor, the company's digital equipment is part of its strategy enabling them to provide the needed product with a short turnaround time.

Clarifying that not all digital print technology is the same in terms of price and quality, Sommer said at Lorpon the HP Indigo is what works for them. “We are able to print the exact same materials that we print flexo, with the highest resolution, and the absolute best colour matching available,” he said. “In labels and flexible packaging there are a lot of PMS spot colours used. Colour accuracy and consis-

tency is one of the most important issues for brands considering a move to digital labels or packaging.”

Sommer believes digital has had a positive impact on flexo printing, stating that the improvements in quality and speed in digital, pushes flexo manufacturers to improve their technology. Input component technologies for flexo such as anilox rolls, plate materials and inks continue to improve. The improvements lead Sommer to believe flexo is still a great option and will continue to be a strong force in label and packaging.

“This is an extremely exciting time to be in the label and packaging industry,” Sommer said. “We see the continued growth of digital and the improvement in flexo over the next few years. I think in the next 5-7 years we will see some new types of digital print technology hit the market that could shake up the industry again. Nothing stands still for long in this world.”

Leslie Emmons is the managing editor of Graphic Monthly Canada. She can be reached at leslie@graphicmonthly.ca

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