

# EQUIPMENT LABELING/CODING

FoxJet also offers its customers printhead cleaning service to further extend the life of the unit. "The printhead has up to 256 very small nozzles, each about half the size of a human hair," Liker says, continuing: "In normal manufacturing environments with corrugated dust and glue fibers, nozzle blockage is fairly common."

Once removed, FoxJet supplies a replacement printhead while the original component is taken and ultrasonically cleaned by the equipment supplier.

"We can refurbish it without impacting the customer," Liker explains of the process. "There's nothing more important than keeping the customer online and printing; downtime is often tens of thousands of dollars an hour."

Further keeping customers operational, FoxJet offers models with automatic maintenance systems that push a small amount of cleaning fluid through the nozzles, which is then vacuumed away. This results in a two- to four-fold improvement in preventing debris issues compared with equipment without self-contained maintenance systems.

"If it is a very dusty environment, it might be set up to run a few times a day to keep dust from collecting on the nozzle plate and inadvertently being pushed into the nozzles," Liker adds.

When weighing the option between using labels and printing directly on packaging for barcodes, it's important to consider the retailer environment.

Some sellers such as Walmart Stores, Inc. are requiring the high-quality scannable codes for high-velocity goods being handled in automated warehouses. While print-and-apply technologies might be more costly, they produce the clearest results.

## 4. MATCHING EQUIPMENT TO SCALE

Benefiting small- and medium-size companies is equipment geared for shorter runs and better control over finished products through in-house production.

Amber Jechort, product development manager for Primera Technology Inc., notes that when outsourcing label printing there are minimum order requirements that present

problems when developing seasonal items and the potential for over- or under-ordering.

"Another thing is lead time. If you print in-house you can print on demand, so that helps with quicker decision making because you can see the finished product right in front of you when trying out new labels," she adds.

For small- and medium-sized manufacturers the company offers a desktop inkjet printer that can produce six to nine labels per minute.

Since the equipment uses inkjet technology, the printers require inkjet-coated stock that can absorb the ink. The company offers standard and custom material options that require a three- to four-week lead time to allow for custom die cutting.

Geared to mid-sized manufacturers is larger laser printer equipment capable of running slightly more than 16 feet of materials per minute, according to Primera. In addition to better throughput, Jechort notes the finished product from a laser system is more durable than inkjet, and when coupled with a laminate, can be nearly waterproof.

Add-on finishing systems can laminate and digitally die cut labels, as well as split, rewind and remove matrix from the material.

Developed with large- and medium-sized companies in mind, FoxJet recently introduced a 10-inch touch screen controller for print equipment that reduces errors and allows on-the-floor editing.

Designed to be integrated into both new and existing equipment, FoxJet's Liker says that for manufacturers with stored fonts and languages, the process is as simple as transferring data to the new controller.

The controllers can be configured to allow personnel to make changes on the plant floor and view a 3D rendering of the finished product on the screen. "You can hit the button and see that final image. It is very similar to what the result will be," he says.

The company also recently introduced an improved keyboard interface. Liker says this helps reduce user-input errors, explaining: "It comes down to key size. You know it from using a phone."

He adds that studies show a taller keyboard can reduce errors by as much as 25 percent, further helping reduce costs caused by running errant labels. **CST**



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