



FLEXIBLE PACKAGING

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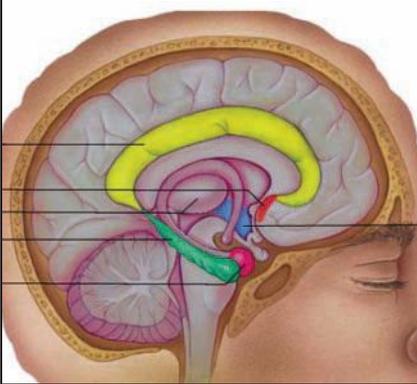
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Nirav Desai is the director of operations at Haremar Plastic Manufacturing Ltd. He has been working with the company for 10 years.

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SHRINK SLEEVE GROWTH FUELS TECHNOLOGIES

By Felipe Sixto, Contributing writer

The average supermarket shopping list usually includes a product type rather than specific brands. Although, many consumers enter retail outlets with a predisposition to a certain brand, many times the final decision is made in the aisle. Many factors come into play during that split second decision. Brand name recognition and brand loyalty, and past experiences, are among the top factors.

However eye-catching products with uniquely shaped bottles or brightly colored labels are difficult for consumers to ignore. Furthermore, a dramatically differentiated product with enhanced shelf presence can significantly sway consumers, regardless of brand.

In the 1990s, Consumer Product Good companies (CPGs) had little selection in the shape and design of their products' packages. Typical, cylindrical bottles and jars with pressure sensitive labels was the norm. However, with the development and exponential growth of shrink sleeves, brand owners have been able to differentiate products by using compelling contoured shapes that in turn attract shelf attention and allow for more ergonomic packaging designs.

Many of the benefits of shrink sleeves for CPGs include a huge display area, virtually a 360° coverage

Accraply's recently-launched Accraseam is designed for today's demanding market and is designed to improve setup times, minimize waste and according to Accraply, "Provide a first in class monitoring and reporting system for QC." The machine boasts speeds up to 600 meters per minute.



of the entire package that allows CPGs to advertise their products with eye-catching graphics.

Though shrink-sleeve labels expand package aesthetics and design potential, many consumers may perceive them as a relatively expensive label type, causing them to suspect an unnecessarily heightened product cost. On the contrary, shrink sleeve labels provide secondary, unseen savings by allowing brand owners to eliminate tamper-evident drop bands, remove colorant from closures and bottles, and reduce or eliminate UV inhibitors in the package. Furthermore, even when compared to the advertising area/cost of label, sleeves can represent 150 percent more container coverage for only an approximate 25 percent cost increase over conventional labels.

North America made up about 25 percent of global shrink sleeve sales

in 2011. According to presentations at the AWA International Shrink Sleeve Conference in Cincinnati, Ohio last April, although shrink sleeve adoption slowed in the second half of 2011, shrink sleeves achieved 6.5 percent growth globally in 2011 and 5 percent growth in North America and Europe. It is expected that shrink sleeves will continue to grow at 5 percent to 5.5 percent annually for the next few years. Furthermore, in a recent poll of CPG brand owners, over 40 percent responded that they are actively investing in shrink sleeve labeling application systems.

Converting Technologies Allow for Shorter Runs

With this increased demand, North American label and flexible packaging converters have found a need to invest and improve on current shrink sleeve converting equipment. New technologies from Accraply, Karlville, and Hewlett Packard have opened new doors for shrink sleeve converters.

According to a representative from Accraply, a manufacturer of shrink sleeve converting equipment, "Accraply/Stanford sees steady growth for the



The K5 Compact from Karlville is equipped with ergonomic unwind and rewind turret stations and running speeds up to 400 meters per minute.

We have developed a wick system attachment for the needle to spread the solvent bead prior to the nip. This, along with our segment roller for soft folding with PLC controlled Oscillation, gives the best roll appearance in the industry,” says Matos.

In terms of quality control, the machine comes with a QC package for the measurement of lay flat, the detection of splices and open seams. The integrated QC package with labeler uses a servo motor to automatically attach a label at 400 meters per minute when the machine detects an open seam with UV detector or splice or lay flat issue via the lay flat monitoring system.

The improvements in set up time, seaming time, and quality control systems in shrink sleeve converting equipment coupled with the proliferation of digital print technology for shrink sleeves, particularly from the HP line of Indigo digital presses, has allowed for shorter press runs. This allows CPGs to customize product decoration for special promotions, samples, multiple SKUs, serialization and localization. Although significantly more expensive than flexo and gravure per sleeve, with digital printing, there are no plate costs, perfect registration and unmatched print quality, allowing for prototypes and short batch print production trials.

Along with digital printing technology, the Karville Steambox has allowed for full product prototyping to ensure proper lay-flat, distortion, and CPGs product designations. “The Steambox is designed to ensure the feasibility of shrink-sleeve projects by simulating the shrinkage process of full-size steam tunnels. Prototyping tests made by the Steambox allows for sleeve material validation, and shapes,” says Matos. **FP**

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Felipe E. Sixto is the director of sales & marketing at Sixto Packaging, and can be reached at Felipe@sixtopack.com. Sixto Packaging is a family owned and operated flexible packaging converter. Sixto's capabilities include up to 8 color flexographic printing; solventless laminations of films, paper, and foil; shrink sleeves for bottles; in addition to manufacturing bags and pouches in many sizes and styles; packaging structure R&D and marketing services.

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