

Packed with relevance

With brands under increasing pressure to create compelling packaging, new developments in proofing automation and short-run label printing by **Epson** are enabling packaging designs to be turned around faster and refreshed more frequently to maximise relevance.

When it comes to selling, brands are increasingly relying on packaging rather than advertising to do the hard work. The more engaging and relevant the packaging is, the more stand-out the product has, and the faster it flies off the shelf.

To create the most stimulating packaging, it is essential to react quickly to trends, sporting events, cultural phenomena and competitor activity. The ability to be flexible and responsive helps brands stay ahead of the competition, as timing can make or break a product's success in an increasingly demanding marketplace.

With time-to-market so critical, brand owners are constantly looking for ways to reduce the time from concept to shelf. Being able to produce mock-ups easily, accurately and cost-effectively means that designs can be signed off faster and packaging put into production sooner. But, historically, this type of speedy turnaround has not been possible because of the limitations of traditional proofing methods.

Standard press proofs are not particularly time or cost-effective, as they can't be automated, and the press needs to be stopped every time a proof is created. Reproducing white on metallic and transparent substrates in particular involves lengthy, costly and time-consuming manual processes.

Faster proofing

Last year, to answer the industry's urgent need for a more efficient proofing system, large format printer leader Epson launched the Stylus Pro WT7900, a 24in inkjet printer designed specifically to provide all the features required for fast, accurate, digital packaging proofing.

Featuring the world's first water-based white ink, the WT7900 uses a nine-colour Epson UltraChrome HDR aqueous inkset with orange and green to produce a wide

colour gamut. With excellent white density, spot colour accuracy and consistency on a wide variety of media – including transparent and metallic substrates – reproducing white or any other colour is no longer a labour-intensive process.

In fact, once the WT7900 is installed and the RIP set up, it's almost as easy to use as a standard office printer. Its high level of automation and ease-of-use speeds up the proofing process, meaning that the time from the design stage to mock-up and approval can be significantly shortened.

As the compact WT7900 is so office-friendly, consuming less power than a standard press proof and needing no chemical cleaners or ventilation, it is ideal for installation in design studios and brand owners' headquarters. If the repro house, designer and brand owner each install a WT7900, they can all benefit from access to the same proofs, and the approval process becomes more efficient.

Ultimately, this shortened proofing process gives designers and brand owners the freedom and scope to be more creative, trying out concepts the same day they're designed and changing and adapting packaging designs more frequently in order to catch the consumer's eye.



The Epson Stylus Pro WT7900 features the world's first water-based white ink.

Making short runs affordable

Another printer that's changing the boundaries of what's possible in modern packaging and labelling is the Epson SurePress L-4033A.

In the past, economies of scale meant that labels had to be printed in large quantities, and often kept in storage by label converters. Stocks had to be either used up or discarded before a label design could be changed. Alternatively, short runs were possible, but the costs associated with set-up and make-ready were high.

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Epson printers streamline the production process, giving designers and brand owners the time and freedom to be more creative.

Launched last year, the SurePress L-4033A has radically changed the way labels are produced by making short label print runs financially viable to many converters and their customers for the first time. Brands are now able to refresh label designs much more frequently, or produce a greater number of versions at any one time, even in the same print run.

For example, it is now easier to customise labels for different markets by producing an individual design for each language required, rather than needing to combine multiple languages on one label. And it is much more cost-effective to produce short runs of time-sensitive designs, such as beverage labels linked to particular events in the sporting calendar.

Eliminating costly pre-treatments

Another advantage of the SurePress is its ability to print on standard label substrates, without requiring any pre-treatments or special coatings. There’s no longer a need for converters to spend time and money treating substrates



The SurePress L-4033A can print on standard label substrates that do not require costly and time-consuming treatments.

The white choice

Like many pre-press and packaging specialists, Belgian packaging trade shop Athena Graphics was struggling to find an affordable way to create high-quality colour proofs, especially those incorporating white, on transparent and metallic substrates.

“There were several time and cost-consuming steps to follow in order to get a hard copy proof of a package which simulates white ink,” explains Kenneth Hoyst, product manager proofing and online services at Athena Graphics.

Keen to reduce costs and switch to automated processes, and with demand for metallic foil proofs increasing, the company decided the Epson Stylus Pro WT7900 was the best printer to meet its needs.

“Due to the WT7900’s nine-colour inkset, which also includes orange and green inks, it is possible to achieve a wider colour gamut for more accurate spot-colour proofing. The white ink enables us to make packaging proofs with high density white and accurate overlays and transitions,” says Hoyst.

“Today, with the WT7900 it takes less than 15 minutes to produce fully-automated digital contract proofs – from sending the digital jobs by our operators, rasterising and colour-managing the jobs, to final print result,” he says. “As time-to-market becomes more important, we are very happy about this new solution that enables us to shorten the approval cycles with our clients.”

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or keeping an inventory of any special, premium cost materials, allowing much greater choice and flexibility.

By speeding up the packaging proofing process, and making it possible to change label designs frequently, the Epson Stylus Pro WT7900 and SurePress L-4033A are making seismic changes in the industry. It is easier and more affordable than ever for brands to keep packaging relevant and, ultimately, stimulate sales.

Further information

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