

Labeling flexibility

Packaging shapes, sizes and reductions impact labeling equipment

THE REVOLVING DOOR CYCLE OF THE BEVERAGE MARKETPLACE TODAY creates an interesting environment for labeling equipment, as well as other machinery used in the production process. A beverage on the shelf today may not be there a few months from now, and if the product remains on the shelf, chances are it will go through a packaging change. Labeling numerous and ever-changing product types necessitates that labeling equipment be flexible.

“There is an industry trend toward outsourcing,” says Olivier Huss, market development manager for Nordson Corp. “...Those contract packagers have to make sure their production is extremely flexible because the product they are going to run today maybe three months from now will be gone. Maybe they need to run a shrink label today, then a magazine-fed label tomorrow, and then a roll-fed label three months from now.”

The trend toward flexible machines and modular labelers is strong, and few companies buy a dedicated labeler, Huss says.

Not only does labeling equipment need to be flexible, but it needs to handle the faster production speeds accurately with new packaging challenges to deal with. The sustainability movement of the past two years has led to thinner bottles and smaller labels.

“Overall, the product that the labeler has to handle is getting lighter, more fragile, less stable and at the same time, they want it to run faster,” Huss says.

Labeling machinery is addressing these demands by using servo motors, which are extremely accurate and efficient, Huss explains. The result is shorter changeovers for beverage manufacturers.

Often these changeovers are performed by operators or utility persons instead of the maintenance group, says Rich Keenan, national sales manager for PDC International Corp., South Norwalk, Conn. The company designed a changeover process that is tool-less, installs only one way, and has a touchscreen that allows an operator to change to a new size with a touch of a button.

“We have also designed our mandrel to accommodate a wider range of shrink label cut lengths,” Keenan says. “This prevents the need to change out the mandrel for each different cut length.”

PDC International is now offering a dual in-line mandrel system on its R-series Shrink Sleeve Labelers. For example, the PDC R-500 T dual mandrel system will apply full-body shrink sleeves at speeds of more than 1,100 containers per minute. PDC International’s label separation technology on a number



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of its models allows the cutting blade to last around eight months and is easily resharpened.

The company also developed a newly designed dry heat tunnel with steam quality results on most applications. The Ambiance Tunnel offers a fully recirculated, hot-air chamber equipped with directional nozzles in ascend profile and steam-like results where actual steam cannot be used or is not available. Shrinkage is performed slowly, allowing the sleeve to take the shape of the container evenly, Keenan says.

Fullerton, Calif.-based Label-Aire, known for its pressure-sensitive labelers, now offers sleeve labeling solutions. Sleever Series Model 8300 and Sleever Series Model 8500 are single-head shrink-sleeve labeling systems that can handle most tamper-evident, overall-, middle- and full-body sleeve applications. Specifically designed for speed runs of up to 250 products per minute and 400 products per minute, respectively, the 8300 and 8500 can handle a range of container shapes and sizes.

Label-Aire also expanded its line of pressure-sensitive labeling systems with the Label-Aire Inline 5100 and Inline 6200 Labeling Systems. The Inline 5100 is a stainless steel cabinet-based labeling system that can be outfitted with the company's New Generation 3100/3000 Series applicators, which includes wipe-

on, air-blow and tamp-blow applicators. The Inline 5100 also has a smooth-running Variable Frequency Drive conveyor, which improves label placement accuracy, the company says. The 5100 automatically spaces products and has a user-friendly operator interface. The labeler is designed for full- and partial-wrap labeling at medium to high speeds in high volume, multi-shift operations.

The Inline 6200 labeling system is a stainless steel cabinet-based PLC-controlled labeling system designed for heavy-duty front/back, side panel, or wrap labeling applications. Among its standard features are a rotating control panel, a 12-foot delrin chain conveyor with stainless steel side plates and a segmented top trap hold down to keep products in place.

Label-Aire also added a high-speed, air-blow pressure-sensitive label applicator. The new Label-Aire Model 3111 HS labels up to 1,000 products per minute. The applicator uses Label-Aire's Air-Blow technology, which retains the label by vacuum on a honeycomb applicator grid. At the precise moment the product passes under the grid, the label is blown onto the product. Peel tip sensing ensures repeatable label placement accuracy, the company says.

For the beverage industry, Nordson specializes in improving hot-glue applications for labeling. Last year, the company added EcoPattern technology to

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▲ In PDC's Ambiance Tunnel, shrinkage is performed slowly, allowing the sleeve to shrink evenly.

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its PatternJet hot-melt adhesive labeling system. The EcoPattern technology allows bottlers who use the PatternJet system to gain

better control of their materials and energy use, improve recyclability and optimize operational efficiency, the company says.

Leveraging the EcoPattern technology, the PatternJet system's non-contact adhesive guns deliver tiny spirals of adhesive

onto any size container with little or no stringing, offering a raw materials savings of up to 90 percent as compared to a typical wheel-pot applicator, Nordson says. By more accurately applying adhesive at any speed, the system also enables better process control and higher production efficiency, while significantly reducing maintenance costs and scrap rates. In addition, it eliminates adhesive circulation and provides system insulation, which offers more than 50 percent energy savings as compared to a typical wheel-pot labeling system, the company says.

PALLET LABELING

Once primary labeling operations are completed, Domino, with U.S. offices in Gurnee, Ill., offers the M-Series range of print-and-apply labelers as a modular solution aimed at flexibility in labeling cases and pallets. The M-Series can apply a label with blow, tamp, tamp-blow or wide label application options, and the design of the series tamp applicator pads enables a range of labels to be applied using the same applicator pad.

At drinktec 2009 in September, Domino will showcase the M-Series Linerless, an eco-friendly print-and-apply pallet labeler. Delivering waste- and cost-cutting benefits, the M-Series Linerless eliminates the backing of self-adhesive labels, which often equate to 15 percent of their cost, the company says. Each roll of M-500 Linerless labels contains approximately 50 to 60 percent more labels than its competitors, it says. The M-Series Linerless maintains efficient workflow systems, selecting the correct label size for a job according to the amount of printed text required on each.

"Many, if not all the companies we're talking to in the beverage industry, are looking to reduce the amount of material used in their packaging," says Bill Bonaccorsi, national accounts manager at Domino. **BI**

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▲ Exal's C2C receives award

Exal Corp., Youngstown, Ohio, earned top honors at the 2009 American Business Awards in the category of Business Innovation of the Year.

Exal was presented with a Stevie Award for companies larger than 100 employees for its Coil-To-Can (C2C) aluminum container manufacturing technology. Exal's C2C technology was also a finalist in two other categories: New Product or Service of the Year – Manufacturing and People's Choice Product or Service.

C2C is a hybridized technology that marries the manufacturing speed and lightweighting of standard (drawn and ironed) beverage can technology with the shaping technology originally available only with heavier walled extruded aluminum containers. Because of their lighterweight, containers made via C2C use less fossil fuel throughout the logistics chain, producing fewer transport-related carbon dioxide emissions than heavier packaging formats, the company says. Exal's C2C process also uses post-consumer recycled aluminum, and finished C2C containers are recyclable.

FDA approval

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has given Constar, Philadelphia, approval for

its improved DiamondClear oxygen scavenging technology for PET containers. The FDA first approved Constar's oxygen

scavenging technology in 2007, and gave new approval for its enhanced barrier performance, clarity and recyclability.



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