Personalised products

Katrin Hoffmann explores personalised labels and on demand label printing for the confectionery industry

What kind of confectionery would mean more to you? One that everyone has or one that is unique and comes with a personal message?

According to the Oxford Dictionary 'to personalise' means 'to make (something) identifiable as belonging to a particular person.' However, as simple as the description behind this concept may sound, the implementation is very diverse, especially when it comes to product personalisation. The ever growing desire for exclusivity through uniqueness is a market development that encompasses many industries, including cosmetics, drinks and foods in general, but particularly confectionery.

Probably the easiest way to make a product more unique, is by personalising its label – either by offering a selection of name variations, different colour and design templates, personalised messages or by including individual photos. The possibilities are almost endless. Nevertheless, every company should decide carefully how much room for individuality it is willing to offer to customers without risking that the label production turns into a money pit.

As a business, you can either offer personalised labels as an additional service through a company's website or the business can decide to go for an instore on demand printing solution, which allows customers to personalise. For example, a praline box or a selection of sweets with a label that contains a photo or individual text before having it printed live at the point of sale (POS) to

take away. The main advantage of such POS live printing solutions is exactly that – it doesn't take days or even weeks until you receive your personalised product. You just wait a few moments and then receive it directly.

Since space in stores is limited and expensive, the required space for such instore solutions must be as small as possible. If this is the case, using live printing services at sales promotions such as road shows, festivals and concerts are also possible. In addition, the print quality has to mirror the quality of the product and the solution itself must be as maintenance-free as possible.

So what kind of printing technology should be chosen?

One company focused in this area is Primera Technology. The developer and manufacturer of speciality printing equipment has developed short to medium run label solutions such as its inkjet-based LX-Series label printers. Meeting the requirement for a compact solution suitable to place at POS, Primera's LX500e Color Label Printer has a footprint of just 26.4 x 38.9cm and a height of only 18cm high when the printer is closed.

Another aspect to keep in mind is a possible downtime of the printing hardware, for example, during cartridge changes, should be as minimal as possible. Nothing is more frustrating for customers than having to wait

for their individual label longer than planned. The LX500e features the latest in inkjet printing technology, which uses only one colour cartridge with integrated print head realising photo realistic printouts. The high yield tri-colour cartridge simplifies operation and ongoing maintenance, eliminates problems caused by fixed print heads and minimises downtimes during ink replacement. Not to mention that keeping just one SKU in stock, instead of multiple cartridges and replacement print heads, saves money and simplifies inventory management. Operation should be intuitively, easy and fast not only for the customer when printing the personalised label but also for the staff maintaining the printer or replacing cartridges without great effort.

No matter which hardware and software is used to print personalised product labels, you should keep in mind that only a minimum number of labels are produced at once. In fact, most times customers using instore printing service will just print one or two labels for the confectionery product they would like to purchase. Particularly when small label runs are needed, inkjet label printers are more cost-effective and cost significantly less compared to offset and flexo printing. ♦

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