

Downsizing Label Printing

Small thermal inkjet printers have become so advanced that they can replace large coding and marking systems and still achieve more for less. Rotech Machines explains how this technology is marking a new era in label printing.

Look at most products and you will see that they carry some kind of code. From simple batch and date codes on food products, through to serialisation on pharmaceuticals for tracking and tracing, codes and marks can provide vital information for customers and end users, as well as allowing companies to authenticate goods.

Thermal inkjet (TIJ) is rising in popularity due to its ability to print a diverse range of data in different colours and formats onto virtually any substrate – they even print UV ink.

So small that they can be handheld, TIJ printers are replacing more traditional label printing methods such as continuous inkjet or thermal transfer, because they free up space and require far less user interaction, therefore freeing up valuable resources.

ELIMINATING MAINTENANCE

Essex based African food distributor, MacPhilips Foods, was applying batch and date codes to bottles of palm oil using a continuous inkjet printer. However, it was becoming troublesome and expensive; the company had issues with missing codes which resulted in product recalls and having to re-ship goods back from Holland at great cost. This led it to ask Rotech for help.

The company needed a more reliable and cost effective labelling solution that it could apply to any product, particularly the bottles of oil – the code had to stay in place if oil came into contact with it.

To solve all of these problems, Rotech installed a small X1Jet printer directly onto the labeller, and set it to print the 'best before' date and batch number in the 3 mm area.

The results were instantaneous – each full reel of labels can be precisely coded in a matter of minutes, clearly marked and still firmly in place when wiped with oil.

The printer can also be simply moved to any line or labeller, and it has eliminated all of the problems and excess costs.

NO MORE HAND LABELLING

TIJ can also make hand labelling obsolete – one small printer can do in a few minutes what one person can do by hand in a day.

Premium car care company Autoglym was printing and applying batch and date code labels to bottles by hand using a ticket gun. The additional labour and the slow rate of production was a concern, so too was the issue with some printed labels not always enduring harsh environments.

Autoglym was printing black and red text in standard English,

and Chinese characters for the Asian market. It needed to find an automated solution that was quicker, more reliable and more cost efficient – one that would not interrupt the conveyor line.

Rotech installed an Integra thermal inkjet printer onto the side of the existing conveyor to fully automate the coding process. It automatically prints batch numbers and date codes directly onto the chosen position on each bottle label as it passes the printer. And, being fully adjustable, the height of the printer can be quickly positioned to print on each bottle size.

Since installing the Integra printer, Autoglym has seen cost savings of around 33% on the coding process.

COST SAVING

Payne's Dairies produces around 360,000 cartons of milk per day, across six lines. One recurring issue was the frequent breakdown of the bottle label printing system which was used to date and code each milk carton. Not only was it interrupting production, it was also costing around £1000 to repair each breakdown and another £6000 a year to replace the printer sensors on six lines.

The old system was large, expensive to run and maintain.

Rotech installed six new Integra TIJ printers onto the existing labellers, set to create best before dates, times and line numbers. The printers are protected by a Perspex screen, engineered by Rotech to protect the printers from any moisture or spray.

The new printers have freed up space around the labellers, allowing users to simply replace depleted cartridges as required. As well as making significant savings on maintenance, repairs, spare parts and downtime, the new printers produce crisp, clear markings on various size milk cartons, day in, day out.

These examples are just a few of many different types of labelling applications and problems that Rotech's thermal inkjet printing technology has solved, helping businesses to save time, reduce costs and free up valuable space. **PS.**



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