

Toying with the label

LEADING SPANISH CONVERTER Germark has worked hard with its industry partners to help a shampoo manufacturer recapture lost market share. Carol Houghton reports

In tough economic times, brand owners' natural reflex is to try and cut their labeling costs. But Barcelona based label converter Germark prefers to offer them another, more creative route to profitability. Germark began to speak to facestock suppliers four years ago, when it invested in a production line to both manufacture and print its own pressure-sensitive labels. This is where its relationship with film specialist ExxonMobil Chemical, began.

Coinciding with the start of the global financial crisis in 2009, one of Germark's biggest customers, Denenes, reported it was struggling with its sales of health and beauty products. It approached Germark looking for a way to reduce labeling costs. Iban Cid, president, Germark says, 'this was not the answer.' He believed that label price was not the issue and instead proposed an innovative promotional project which would allow the company to increase its market share.

Cid outlines two routes for bringing innovation to the market. Firstly, by responding to a customer's idea – for example one customer required development of an edible pressure sensitive label (eventually abandoned because of cost). The other option is to use in-house R&D to bring new products to the market, an excellent example is the Peel Stick and Play (PSP) promotional labeling system. 'We are pushing R&D to create new solutions in the recession to help our customers,' adds Cid.

In the case of Denenes, Germark worked with ExxonMobil to develop an innovative promotional label for the HDPE (high density polyethylene) bottle Denenes used for its children's shampoo. The labels feature a three layer construction, which can all be separated during use. The first layer is peeled off to reveal a middle layer of die-cut stickers which can be removed and replaced whilst the primary brand label remains completely intact. Cid says 'ExxonMobil's Label-Lyte

OPP Films for PSL enabled us to convert the bottle of shampoo into a toy.' The mechanical strength and tear properties mean the die-cut stickers can be simply and cleanly separated and reapplied many times, providing hours of entertainment for children.

The construction provides the brand with a key differentiator from its competitors in a crowded market. and, importantly for its target audience, is fun. Cid says, 'With very little cost increase, there is a lot of value added across the value chain.' Denenes reported that the PSP label application increased sales of its shampoo by a staggering 12 percent.

THE TECHNOLOGY

The labels are printed in two steps; firstly the three layers are printed on an MPS EP-410 UV flexo press. The base layer is a 5-color job plus release varnish, the stickers are printed with three colors and the cover is printed with five colors plus pattern adhesive at 40 meters per minute. Construction and converting of the complex laminate is done offline on an ETI Cohesio machine. Both ETI and MPS machines have print widths up to 410mm. The label is applied at the brand's packaging facilities with a regular self-adhesive label applicator made by Germark.

In terms of conversion properties, Iban Cid reports that Label-Lyte provides excellent printability and adhesive receptivity, stiffness and flex resistance, very good moisture resistance and good overall converting, die-cutting and dispensing properties. The high opacity of the film allows printing on multiple layers, preserving the quality of the primary label and hiding the stickers of the second layer. The film also provides good stiffness for easy dispensing, separating and handling of labels and stickers. Cid adds, 'Stiffness was a key element of the product which is why using OPP was so important.'

Sustainability is also an element of the design, as Germark converts its PS material with a PET liner, which is fully recyclable and allows 25 percent more labels to be printed per roll.



(L-R) Kevin Frydryk, global market development manager, labels, ExxonMobil Chemical OPP films business, Michele Fiori, southern Europe manager, labels, ExxonMobil Chemical Iberia S.L. OPP films business and Iban Cid, managing director, Germark