

The future is flexible

Versatility and flexibility combine with new technology for better labeling equipment

A bottle sits on a shelf, hoping to be picked up by a thirsty consumer. The one that gets grabbed the most isn't just the one with a tasty liquid inside; it's also the one with an eye-catching label wrapped around it. This end product is seemingly what will grab dollars and market share for beverage companies, but in reality, the race starts before that label even meets the bottle.

Labeling equipment manufacturers are meeting the demands for better production lines for beverage companies. To keep up with the fast-paced and ever-changing needs of beverage production, labeling equipment manufacturers constantly have to be on their toes with the latest machinery that will keep production running at the best capacity.

Serving up servos

These days, the latest and greatest in labeling equipment is tapping into the best technology available.

"Everybody seems to be looking for more streamlined lines," says Dan Michaelis, vice president of sales for Ontario-based Multi-Tech Systems International. "We feel that newer technology is going to be more electrical than ever before. New servos are coming out, and the newer electronics are going to be incorporated into the labeling equipment." Michaelis explains that two years haven't made a big difference in the mechanics of a machine, but electronics from two years ago are old news, and completely different than electronics today.

"Photo eyes from two years ago are completely outdated now," he says. "The electronics [for labeling equipment] are growing so much, and

we are constantly looking at how to better tie-in with the rest of the equipment [on the line]. Servos that couldn't keep up before are now phenomenal."

With new control logics and servo-controls for equipment, says George Albrecht, vice president of sales for Axon Styrotech, Raleigh, N.C., "you get much more positive cutting application of the machinery and tying into the rest of the production line. There is communication throughout the entire line, with other pieces of machinery and equipment."

Flexibility counts

Flexibility is a word often bandied about when it comes to beverage production in general, and with labeling equipment, in particular, the word crops up as an important factor in a good piece of machinery. It is nearly as important as the ever-important V-word: versatility.

"In the past year, it seems that flexibility has been the most important thing," says Tom Kauffman, vice president of sales for P.E. USA - Labelers, Cincinnati. "With new developments in marketing labeled products, cus-



KHS's Innoket SE offers cold-melt, hot-melt, adhesive-pressure and roll-fed labeling options.

tomers have to be forward thinking in regard to flexibility, label material type, speed, and more, when selecting a labeling system."

For a machine to be considered versatile, it must be set up for fast and easy changeovers. Additionally, a machine's versatility speaks to whether or not changeovers require tools, Michaelis says.

Modular machines are having a big impact on beverage production for just this reason.

Your One-Stop Source for Beverage Carriers

- Custom printed up to six colors
- 4, 6, and 8 pack baskets; 12, 24, and 30 pack can wraps
- Custom carrier sizes available
- From specialty short runs to millions
- Gang runs available
- Plain carriers in stock
- Competitive pricing and fast turnaround
- Litho labels applied to E & B flute corrugated for 12 bottle variety packs

www.nepacartons.com
saleserv@nepacartons.com
1-570-457-7711

4820 Birney Avenue
Moosic, PA 18507
fax 1-570-457-3801

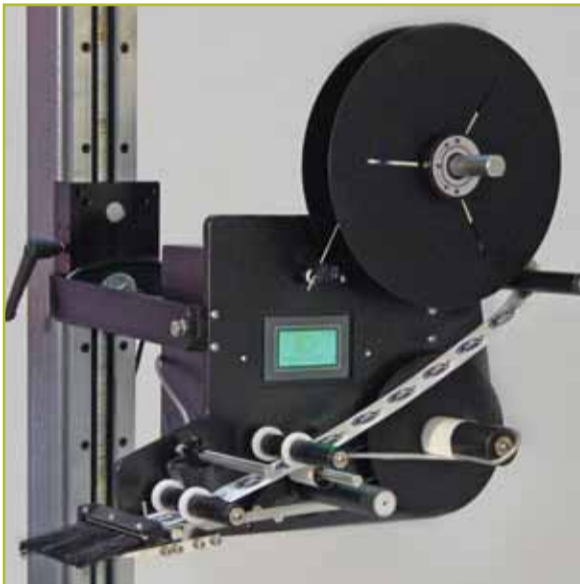
Carton & Carrier Co.

The equipment is not only more versatile in meeting the line's production needs, but on average, is much smaller than other equipment, making it easier to handle.

"A small footprint is a necessity to fit into plants," explains Nadia Vizza, marketing manager for Pinellas Park, Fla.-based Polypack. "Configuration changes are happening more often and it is important to build a system that offers easy changeovers."

"Flexible and modular labelers allow for the production of a variety of containers on the same labeler," notes Olivier Huss, marketing development manager of labeling for Duluth, Ga.-based Nordson. "One modular machine can handle magazine-fed, roll-fed, cold-glue or pressure-sensitive labels, allowing manufacturers to switch products at low conversion cost. This is particularly appealing to contract packers.

"If the company wants to change the look of its product, it doesn't have to invest in a completely new machine," Huss continues. "It just



The ID Technology Model ST1000 is a label applicator with a variable speed motor that achieves speeds up to 1,000 of label web per minute.

buys a module that allows them to produce the kind of label they need, whether it's partial labels, shrink wrap, etc. They can do it with the same machine."

Friederike Arndt, of KHS in Bonn, Germany, notes that the company's latest introduction, a modular piece of equipment called the Innoket SE, has been "deliberately kept simple," giving ease and versatility. It features a table construction and central labeling carousel matched to the system requirements specific to the line. The labeling carousel can be flexibly equipped with a wide variety of labeling stations, Arndt notes, "whether cold-melt, hot-melt, adhesive-pressure, or roll-fed labeling stations — they are all doable. The Innoket SE embodies a labeling concept with modular design, which has the advantage that all modules can be easily changed if new labeling requirements should arise within the organization."

Need for speed

In the performance of labeling equipment, manufacturers will agree that they look for less downtime, more throughput and higher speed. Higher speed means more product, and more product means more bottom line.

Norwalk, Conn.-based PDC International has a line of continuous-duty shrink tunnels that process heat-shrinkable sleeve labels, tamper-evident bands and more, all at extremely high speeds.

"From a labeling standpoint, we make one of the faster, single-headed machines in the industry," says Gary Tantimonico, vice president of PDC. "We make a machine that can go up to 600 containers per minute for a single head for a full-body sleeve label. For tamper-evident, we make a machine that can produce 1,000 per minute." Combined with consistently positive placement, a higher speed machine can make the entire line of production more efficient.

"The latest and greatest labeling equipment can enable improvements in filling speeds," says Martin Wilson, president of SleeveCo Inc., Dawsonville, Ga. "Recent speed and output enhancements in machinery have been driven by high-speed filling and other production line demands. A machine's capability of handling multiple-sized containers creates cost efficient



SleeveCo's SL-3000 is designed to automatically apply poly sleeve labels to empty plastic containers.

cies. These all factor into lowering the company's overall label application cost."

Eco-labeling

Al Gore isn't the only one concerned with the environment. These days, beverage manufacturers also are looking to offer more environmentally friendly products from start to finish, including labeling.

"A lot of the [large beverage] companies are trying to show they're environmentally friendly," Nordson's Huss notes, adding that this has result-

continued on page 52

We make

SPECIALTY COFFEE INGREDIENT EXTRACT

What do you make?

The flavor and fragrance of fresh-roasted 100% Arabica is captured with our exclusive extraction process. Our beans. Your beans. Any brix. Any solids. Special formulas for proprietary projects. Please call to discuss how we can help make your next specialty coffee product a huge success.

XCafé
LLC
COFFEE EXTRACTS

www.x-cafe.com • 877-4XCAFE1 (492-2331)

PACKAGING

continued from page 51

ed in the use of lighter and thinner bottles. But because of new, environmentally friendly containers, "labeling equipment therefore has to handle more fragile label stock and containers at greater speeds without compromising on efficiency, and without damaging the end product and aesthetics," he says.

Thinner and more environmentally friendly label materials can present a challenge for labeling equipment manufacturers, notes PDC's Tantimonico. The thickness of the sleeve label is very important to the labeling process, and if the label is too thin, it can become difficult to apply.

Not only are earth-conscious products introducing a challenge for labeling equipment, so are those companies whose products are packaged in unconventional bottles. The trend toward the funky means labeling equipment must be ready to accommodate.

"The shapes of the bottles have become more of a challenge for manufacturers," Tantimonico says, "because it's not your typical 16-ounce glass or plastic bottle."

"Highly shaped containers, necessitating a wide variety of label substrates, have combined with specialty inks to increase performance demands on shrink application machinery," says SleeveCo's Wilson. "These trends will continue to accelerate demands for equipment improvements."

Additionally working toward environmentally friendly equipment and products, Alan Shipman, vice president of sales for ID Technology Corporation, Ft. Worth, Texas, says that many print engines in the printer applicators are conforming to European Rohs compliance specification that removes lead.

The future in a bottle

For labeling equipment manufacturers, the future is bright with continuing innovation, coming in the form of faster, more versatile equipment, and more high-tech equipment.

"As [companies] grow and as their requirements pick up, the speeds increase proportionally," says Axon's Albrecht. "The future of the industry, per se, is from a standpoint of sophistication of the mechanics of it, as well as the higher speeds that are being dictated in the marketplace."

"The biggest changes in labeling is focusing on the electronics of the machine," Michaelis says.

As labeling equipment continues to improve, it will also play a hand in more integrated production.

"I see more integration," Huss says. "Right now, you make the container, then later, put the



The Nordson non-contact labeling system with PatternJet guns replaces traditional open wheel pot systems in magazine, roll-fed, carousel and in-line labeling application systems.

label on it. There are some technologies that are very much in use in Southeast Asia where you put the label on when you make the container itself. It's two-in-one, and that saves a lot of money."

"In the beverage industry, labeling is here to stay," P.E. USA - Labelers' Kauffman says. "Customers today want quality performance and a high level of efficiency." Thus, he notes, the future is wide open for labeling, and the beverage industry will continue to push labeling equipment manufacturers to build accuracy, user-friendly, and efficiency into their labeling systems. *BI*



Find out more online

See more labeling equipment options by searching labeling at bevindustry.com.

SPEED-TO-SHELF

SHORTER LEAD TIMES AND QUICKER TURNAROUNDS.



Robbie understands speed-to-shelf is essential to your profitability and efficient business growth. The faster you get your products to the shelf, the faster your profits rise. For flexible timelines, projects of any size or full-line project services, Robbie offers a competitive tried and true process that creates packaging that sells!

Robbie's fundamental difference includes:

- Speed-to-shelf
- Projects of any size
- Flexible timelines
- Dedicated partnerships
- Proprietary co-extruded film for high gloss and clarity
- Technical service team with superior customer support
- Major packaging supplier of Polyolefin & Polyethylene printed films for multipack applications
- High tech solutions for demanding applications



For more information visit our website at www.robbiemfg.com or call Penny Sweeney at 1-800-255-6328.

913.492.3400 • FAX 913.492.1543 • 800.255.6328

Made in the USA