

New plans for cans

Marvin Foreman, Sales Manager at Tonejet explores the benefits of digital print for packaging and how Quebec-based printer, Solucan is utilising its direct-to-pack technology to revolutionise beverage can production and provide a future-proof solution to the market.

The beverage industry continues to experience significant change and the push for sustainable packaging alternatives grows stronger and stronger. Fortunately, large global brands and small businesses alike are hearing this call to action loud and clear and are already answering back with a much greener drinks packaging solution: the aluminium can. With a much wider recycling rate, a vastly more efficient recycling process, and direct-to-can printing eliminating the need for additional wraps and shrink sleeves, it is not surprising that so many are making the switch. Even water is now being packaged in 100% recyclable lightweight aluminium, too.

Why digital print for beverage cans?

Digitally printing directly onto cans is very cost-effective, allowing brands of any size to capitalise on short run packaging for

limited editions or special promotions. Products can be printed exactly as required, in the exact quantity needed, without any of the set-up costs or time required for traditional printing formats.

We have already seen many of the larger brands using digitally printed shrink sleeves to create marketing hype and increase consumer focus on traditional products or products variations. The same approach has routinely been taken by craft beer companies and small batch beverage producers. However, this was primarily to overcome the minimum order boundaries set by can suppliers and decreases environmental integrity of the final product. This is where direct-to-can digital printing really comes in.

The true advantage of digital print is that every single can could be produced with a different image, creating virtually limitless design possibilities. Long lead

times and minimum order constraints are eliminated. So, essentially, a digital can printing solution removes one of the most expensive and restrictive parts of beverage can production today.

New digital printing technologies can print several batches a day, decreasing product time-to-market. This means that larger brands can leverage digital print to respond to market or seasonal trends quickly and produce limited edition versions for events and social media campaigns much more easily.

But brands should start to look beyond digital print for customisation and limited-edition products and start to take full advantage of this technology for its economic advantages for mainstream packaging decoration - on any scale.

'Interactive' packaging design is also becoming more commonplace as brands adopt methods to engage with customers



company to offer this market a complete digital printing solution in flexible quantities and at a lower cost per can than traditional methods. Digital printing direct to the can offers a future proof solution and anticipates new government regulations enforcing the elimination of single use plastics, rendering some beverage containers obsolete.

Solucan is producing hundreds and thousands of cans in production runs from 48 cans to 165,000 for a growing number of customers including the use of AR and interactive packaging campaigns. The use of food quality inks further minimizes the environmental impact of these digitally printed cans avoiding the use of plastics or adhesives and results in cans having the same look and feel to those produced traditionally, and all at a lower cost per can. It's easy to see why the orders are rolling in.

At Tonejet, we are also working with local, Cambridge based craft beer producer BrewBoard on a number of highly customised campaigns, further expanding their range of exclusive and

original craft beer can designs. BrewBoard prides itself on producing craft beers with distinctive and characterful branding and Tonejet's solution gives them an edge in the highly competitive world of craft beer, affordably.

The Tonejet Cyclone gives craft beverage brewers, contract fillers, packaging suppliers and large brand owners the ability to create bespoke packaging for short-run product variations at much lower running costs than those associated with shrink sleeves or pressure sensitive labels, and without compromise on print quality. By eliminating the need to procure, stock, apply and recycle labels a brand owner saves money and makes their product more sustainable.

Direct-to-can printing technology benefits both the environment and the bottom line for manufacturers, by reducing time to market and making workflow quicker, simpler, more energy efficient and more cost-effective. It seems entirely possible that moving away from plastic bottles and wraps, committing to greener packaging solutions, and embracing pioneering technologies such as direct-to-can printing will become more than a clever marketing strategy or tick-box for corporate social responsibility, but could in fact become integral for brand survival in this increasingly competitive climate.

Aluminium cans produced using the Tonejet Cyclone system remain 100% recyclable. No plastics, no adhesives, no waste! ■

For more information contact Marvin Foreman, Sales Manager at Tonejet marvin.foreman@tonejet.com

through content such as how-to videos and promotions which can be accessed on a smartphone or device via a printed code or augmented reality (AR) app. This will also have a significant impact on the kinds of data that brands are able to collect about the consumers that are interacting with their packaging.

Let's face it, there is a huge opportunity for brands to engage, entertain, and educate consumers in real time, opening the door for brands to capitalise on specific packaging features for local markets. The same digital print technology is also empowering smaller beverage producers to access global markets. A true revolution in beverage packaging production

Doing it well

Leading this revolution in North America is Trois-Rivieres based Solucan, as the first



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