Cosmetics, Personal & Home Care
Considering coding technology during package design

The challenge

Package design is an essential part of brand identity, and a well-designed package can make the difference between a market leader product that stands out and just another product. Significant work goes into package design, but codes are often an afterthought in this process. However, a misplaced, distorted, or messy code on your package can ruin an otherwise beautifully executed design. Unattractive codes are difficult for customers to read, and diminish the desired pristine look of a well-designed package. Considering coding technology during package design can reduce the risk of an ugly code and enhance your package and image.

The Videojet advantage

Videojet partners with customers to evaluate and test packaging in our internal sample labs before recommending the ideal coding solution for your package. Our advanced coding technologies include:

- **Continuous Inkjet (CIJ) non-contact printing with specialized inks for most substrates**

- **Thermal Inkjet (TIJ) ink-based printing on paper and porous substrates**

- **Laser marking systems for permanent codes on many different package types**

- **Thermal Transfer Overprinting (TTO) ribbon-based technology for flexible films**

Don't let a bad code ruin a great package. Optimize your code to match your package design.

The package is a critical marketing tool for cosmetics, personal and home care brands and an immediately familiar sight for consumers. Consumers rely on eye-catching packaging to find their favorite products on store shelves, and a particularly interesting packaging design can draw in first-time buyers with the image it conveys. Cosmetics, personal and home care companies spend considerable time and money developing and implementing their packaging vision. Coding, however, is often not considered during the process, even though it can have a substantial impact on the look and feel of the finished product.

Misplaced, distorted, or unattractive lot, batch, and expiration codes can make an otherwise smartly designed package look cheap, and might even push consumers away from your product. Considering code content and coding technology during the package design process can help ensure that the final package looks as good as possible and prevent a bad code from ruining an otherwise excellent design. Understanding the different coding technologies available for package marking enables you to leverage the manufacturing process instead of fighting against it.

Consider the following questions when beginning your package design process.

1. What material will your package be made out of?

Package substrate type is mostly driven by product form, features and use. The type of package material however, also directly impacts code quality and durability. The look and durability of a code is a function of the coding technology used to apply it, and package type is the most important factor in determining which coding technology is optimal for your package substrate. For example, certain types of plastics can create coding challenges due to poor ink adhesion or lack of contrast.

To help ensure an optimal code, evaluate different variable coding technology capabilities on your desired substrate. If a particular type of packaging material is required for your product, consider adding a special area in which a particular coding technology will work. For example, cartons can often include small areas in which a difficult-to-code overlay or varnish is removed so that ink-based coding solutions will adhere better to the surface. These are often called "knock-out" boxes and can also be created on labels or areas of highly patterned surfaces. Similar print windows, where a segment of the package or label color is changed, can be created on almost any package type to increase code readability.

The color of the packaging material can also impact code quality. For example, if a cleaning product requires HDPE plastic, but a high-contrast code is also required for easy customer legibility, consider using lighter plastic colors to achieve highest code contrast. Another option is to include special additives to packaging at the converter to help ensure variable coding technologies are optimized. For example, DataLase® is a product that can be added to packaging or labels which enables a laser beam to place a dark, clear mark on the package surface, creating a pre-printed code look.

2. What content is included on the package?

The content on the outside of a package is important to inform consumers and adhere to regulatory requirements. However, packaging content can be difficult to keep up-to-date and accurate. Considering what content is printed and what technology is used to print it can help optimize package design and efficiency. Often, almost all content is printed at the package converter, not at the product manufacturing site. This reduces manufacturing flexibility, creates additional inventory management costs, and leaves room for potential packaging errors such as mislabeled products.

If your product changes frequently, you have many scents or colors, or if you offer seasonal package designs, consider pre-printing less information and use variable coding solutions during product manufacturing for package customization.

Advanced coding technology can often print much of the same pre-printed information inline at the manufacturing site. Variable, inline printing enables you to print icons, bar codes, text and other information directly on to your package during manufacturing, which can reduce pre-printed inventory and the complexities of having many different package types. It also provides the flexibility to easily customize products with seasonal, promotional or regional-specific information with the touch of a button and with almost no additional costs.

3. How do your customers and consumers use your codes?

Providing codes that consumers actually read post-purchase can increase brand loyalty, ensure product authenticity, and provide invaluable marketing data. However, the logistics of consumer interactions can be difficult. Variable coding enables unique codes on each package, which retailers are increasingly using to track and authenticate products. This product unit identification when combined with mobile or on-line applications and websites can also be used to start a consumer conversation and can help encourage brand interaction through promotional games, scannable bar codes and registration numbers. For example, unique codes can be added to shampoo or detergents which when entered online provide loyalty points. These types of programs engage consumers and can provide rich purchasing and consumer data.
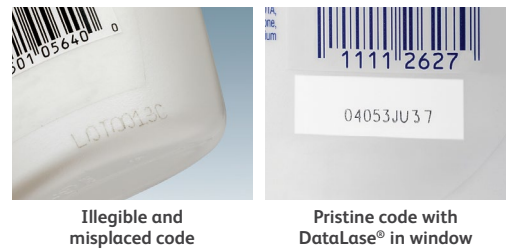
Illegible and misplaced code

Pristine code with DataLase® in window

The bottom line

Videojet can help you use variable coding technology to fit seamlessly into your packaging designs and reduce the need for pre-printed code content. Our experienced sales team will partner with you to discuss the advantages of different coding technologies and create code samples to aid in packaging design. With a wide range of advanced coding technologies and over 640 application-unique fluids and supplies, Videojet has a coding solution for nearly any packaging.

Let Videojet help you select the right solution to meet your production objectives and performance needs.

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