



Application Note



Building materials

Help reduce inventory and changeover time with digital printing

The Challenge

Many building materials companies carry a variety of flexible films for their bagging lines. Companies can use different films on the same line for different product types and sizes, customers, and potentially, different countries and languages. Managing these differences usually leads to additional cost for the company. Thermal Transfer Overprinters (TTO) can be used to reduce the need for so many varieties of pre-printed film.

The Videojet Advantage

Building materials companies look to Videojet to provide innovative printing solutions backed by the leading experts in TTO technology.

- With state-of-the-art sample labs, Videojet helps you make the right coding decision for your applications
- The Videojet patented clutchless ribbon drive minimises maintenance-related downtime and maximises ribbon efficiency
- Videojet works directly with most of the major packaging machinery manufacturers to integrate printers seamlessly into your existing lines

What issues can arise from using multiple pre-printed films on the same packaging line?

Pre-printed film management

Managing inventory levels of many film types can be challenging, especially for products that do not run very often. Regardless of run rates, many building materials companies will have to carry safety or excess stock for each film. More film on hand leads to more money tied up in inventory, more storage space, and additional time and labor dedicated to inventory management.

Additionally, any changes to packaging may require disposal of the old film inventory and significant time and money to create and purchase new packaging.

Line changeover

The activities required to changeover a packaging machine range from cleaning the machine to making adjustments based on the size of the new product. Typically, the film also has to be changed. This requires identifying the film needed, bringing the new film to the machine, replacing the old film in the machine, and returning the old film to its original storage location. The time required to modify the printer message is only a fraction of the film changeover time.

Changeovers are particularly important for smaller companies and co-packers who change products or packages multiple times per day.

How can TTO help deliver higher line productivity?

TTO printers deliver high resolution images on flexible packaging without the need for solvents. They are capable of printing variable information such as product name, logos, marketing information, bar codes, lot number, pricing and dates in different languages directly onto flexible film. A building materials company can benefit greatly by using generic standard film on its products and differentiating each product using the information printed with TTO instead of using pre-printed film.

Pros:

Reduced changeover time. Changeover time can be dramatically reduced by using generic film. Instead of finding, replacing and returning multiple stock films, you can simply change the code on the printer, and immediately start running the new product. Digital printers have the capability to store content for each product right on the line.

Quick packaging changes. Whether a design change or new product introduction, changes to packaging could be dramatically easier and cheaper with use of a generic film with a TTO printer. If using pre-printed film for specific products, changes to pre-printed information requires ordering new film and potentially throwing away the old film still in inventory. With generic film and a TTO printer, all that is usually required is a simple adjustment to the content of the code.

Reduction in film inventory. By using generic film on some or all of its products, building materials companies can often eliminate safety stock for multiple films. The amount of film in the facility could be drastically reduced, leading to less warehousing space, inventory management requirements and money tied up in inventory. Additionally, by buying fewer types of film in larger quantities, a company could potentially receive volume discounts from its packaging suppliers.

Cons:

Multicolored graphics. A TTO printer has the ability to print logos and other marketing information. However, while ribbons are available in more than 10 colors, a printer can only use one ribbon at a time, and thus, the content on the package will not be in multiple colors unless multiple printers are used, each with a different colored ribbon. Therefore, one should carefully consider which content to pre-print on the package and which to print with the printer. For instance, it may make sense to pre-print standard marketing content on the film (such as the logo) and print product-specific information (such as product name, bar code and image) with the TTO printer.

Print area. When purchasing a TTO printer, customers have the option of determining the width of both the printhead and ribbon. The width determines the size of the print area on the package. If the print area is not large enough for all of the required content, it may be worthwhile to focus on a part of the package where the content varies the most from product to product and to pre-print the remaining information.



The Bottom Line

Using TTO to print on generic packaging film presents unique benefits and tradeoffs that should be carefully considered. Building materials companies can save money, improve inventory management, reduce changeover time, and simplify packaging changes with a TTO printing solution. Customers need to weigh these benefits against the color limitations and print width options inherent in TTO technology.



Solutions are available for your unique application, but the key is finding the right one. Ask your Videojet representative for more guidance, a production line audit or sample testing on your substrate.

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