



S. Spitz GmbH
Case study



Austrian food producer Spitz enjoys enhanced code quality and reduced costs with Videojet coding solutions

Since 1857, awareness of tradition and the uncompromising commitment to quality are the cornerstones on which the Spitz has built its expertise in the production and marketing of food.

Whether Jagertee, Spitz Frizzante, or Orange Punch; baked goods, fruit jams, or mayonnaise, the 700-employee company not only belongs to the "Most Trusted Brands" on the Austrian domestic market, but also has long exported its products with increasing radius and success to countries all around the world.

The Austrian food manufacturer chose Videojet Technologies coding solutions because they are highly reliable and offer top-quality coding, coupled with an integrated operating and service concept.



“From the design and installation phases to the after-sales supply, Videojet has delivered first-class consultancy and support. “

Günter Heimbuchner,
Head of Logistics and Technical Purchasing, S. Spitz



Spitz's central business units precisely represent the company's brand orientation. The “Beverages” portfolio includes both alcoholic drinks as well as fruit juices, sodas, sports drinks, and children's drinks. The “Confectionery and Baked Goods” product range includes long-life as well as fresh baked goods. The “Sweet and Sour” division boasts an even larger range of products. It consists of fruit jams, jellies and fruit snacks, as well as mustard, ketchup, mayonnaise, and (salad) sauces. Most recently, Spitz's food sector generated a turnover of around EUR 250 million, with an export share of just under 50 percent.



Left to right: Markus Pihan, Günter Heimbuchner, Hubert Doppelhofer, Bernhard Halbartschlager, Martin Dvorak

Because of the amount and variety of products offered by Spitz, the company's packaging and labelling costs are very high. The number of recent printing operations across divisions (with peak values in the beverages and bakery divisions) was 800 to 900 million codes per year.

Especially in the sensitive food segment, both the code quality and the associated back and forward traceability of products are of central importance. Accordingly, printers and their interfaces with the respective product lines need to be designed as efficiently as possible. Here, Spitz recently faced problems meeting its own high standards.

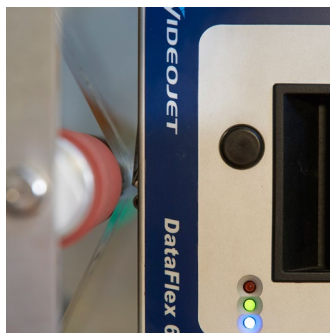
Above all, this was due to the age and composition of the printer fleet — which, for a large part, had been operating for well over ten years. Most recently, around ten different types of labelling devices were used at the production facilities. This overall situation was lagging behind current demands in terms of specification and technical equipment. Also, the company's maintenance and servicing requirements no longer corresponded with its ideal of a perfectly organised process flow.

The reasons for realigning and re-equipping the coding area became increasingly important in 2012 and 2013. The need was making itself felt more and more urgently to reduce the complexity of the entire system and its growing maintenance and service effort. The requirements for the new coding concept eventually emerged from the existing, less than satisfactory situation and from the new technical opportunities (e.g. improved networking in terms of Industry 4.0).

For Spitz, this meant that:

- 1. The new printer generation had to be technologically updated to the current status. This included not only printer and printing quality but also the consumption of the devices (which had to be as economical as possible), as well as their technical, optimally networked features.**
- 2. Ideally, the new range of labelling devices, in accordance with printer types and printer models, was to be composed so as to meet the entire spectrum of coding requirements made by Spitz products on a high quality level.**





3. The idea was to enable operators to complete maintenance and (smaller) repair jobs occurring in the context of print operations by themselves as far as possible, thus saving valuable technician time.

4. What mattered was the fast and easy interchangeability and replacement of printers in any situation. At Spitz, production lines are in some cases operated in different shifts. This, too, had to be taken into account when replacing the printers.

5. In general, the optimal supply in the maintenance and service areas played a prominent role for Spitz. The key factor here was the (highest possible) availability of the entire equipment, i.e. keeping restrictions caused by the coding devices, their replacement or repair, as low as possible.

6. Despite the high specification of the installed printer types and models, the maximum standardization of user interfaces was to make the operation of the different coding devices as easy as possible.

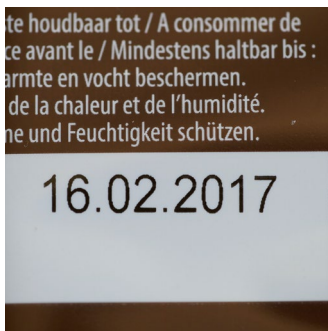
The requirements of a standardized operating concept played an especially vital role in the evaluation of tenders submitted for the new coding concept. Günter Heimbuchner, Head of Logistics and Technical Purchasing at Spitz, explains: "From past experience, we knew that singular coding units designed with regard to the particular features of individual lines did not get us much further. What we needed, instead, was a comprehensive concept covering all product requirements, enabling us to work flexibly and to satisfy future demands."

No less important was the choice of the right concept, i.e. "the possibility to achieve synergies with a functioning, optimally-aligned system and to reduce expenditure along the production line. Medium and long-term savings of cost and time were more important to us in choosing our future partner than relying on the lowest possible prices for the purchase and installation of equipment," Heimbuchner says. Justifying his company's choice.

"Only the connection of high quality and availability would give us the competitive advantages in the long run," Heimbuchner continues.

**“We got exactly what we wanted:
enhanced quality in coding our products
with a long-term reduction of effort,
cost and time!”**

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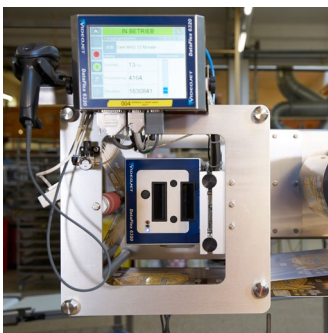
The main criterion of a “consistent overall concept” eventually tipped the scales for Videojet.

“We were particularly convinced by the standardized operating concept used by Videojet itself to connect different printer types,” says Heimbuchner.

Whether continuous inkjet (CIJs), thermal inkjet (TIJs), thermal transfer overprinters or laser printers: “Once you have grasped the operator guidance, this understanding can easily be transferred to any other Videojet or Wolke printer. In view of the frequently changing locations of our employees in the production, this is a huge advantage.”

The prerequisite for fully benefiting from the plus points of a standardized operating concept is a differentiated product range perfectly appropriate to the customer's different specifications. In the case of S. Spitz, this cross-division product range consisted of 58 devices, with a focus on “Baked Goods” and “Beverages.” Videojet proved to be a convincing partner also in this respect.

“Our yardstick was ‘The right coding for the right product’,” Heimbuchner states, “what mattered to us most of all in this context was choosing the best technology for each application.”



In practice, this meant that the company continued to use continuous inkjet (of which the previous printer fleet was exclusively made up) where they optimally perform their tasks, as in printing cans and bottles. For the printing of cardboard packaging, on the other hand, thermal inkjet printers from Wolke by Videojet were integrated into the line. The same was true for the thermal transfer overprinters which are capable of producing crisp bar codes, especially in the area of baked goods, e.g. when coding bags. Singular requirements are best met by using a single laser printer, which was employed for the (white) labelling of black lids.

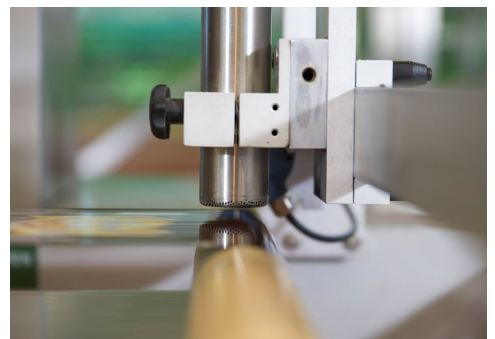
The benefits of this application-specific range of printers became obvious soon after the step-by-step installation of equipment between spring and autumn of 2015. According to Heimbuchner, the coding quality was consistently high. Since then, not a single costly recall action caused by poor print quality has occurred. In terms of quality, S. Spitz especially benefited by migrating from continuous inkjet to TIJ and TTO. Astonishingly, despite the extended range of printer types, software-caused complexity could also be reduced, as the previous 100 coding layouts have now been reduced to 70.

In parallel with the print quality, the efficiency of the labelling processes was also improved with the newly established concept. Standstill times were reduced to a minimum, and the availability of production facilities was increased.

The competences in the maintenance and service sector were also reallocated. The basis for this measure was the comprehensive relief of tasks occurring in this sector by the "all-round carefree package" which S. Spitz had secured for itself in the context of a seven-year lease-purchase contract with Videojet. In addition to the deployment of devices, it included further services as well as the supply of consumables. This was one reason why service hours could be reduced already during the first year of use. The interval of overhauls was extended from 4,500 to 14,000 working hours. To date, not a single technician hour has been spent on repair and maintenance works.

“Up to now,” says Günter Heimbuchner, “the confidence placed in using the Videojet and Wolke devices has fully paid off. From the design and installation phases to the after-sales supply, Videojet has delivered first-class consultancy and support. The service employees with whom we work together are as competent as they are motivated.

Accordingly, we are highly impressed by the results: the concept, based on maximum availability of the printers, had an indirect impact on the availability of the facilities as a whole,” states Heimbuchner. “We got exactly what we wanted: enhanced quality in coding our products with a long-term reduction of effort, cost and time!”



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