Printing in the Dairy Industry

Case Study

What is the best way to print on dairy products?

THE BACKGROUND

Pensworth Dairies started off as a family-run business back in 1975, with a modest herd of 200 Friesian dairy cattle. Today, they are one of the biggest distributors of milk in the UK, covering most of the South of England and South Wales.

THE STORY

The company has seen many changes since its early days when in 1988, they made the bold decision to leave the Milk Marketing Board, and started their own on-farm milk processing, selling their milk to local households. This evolved over the next 10 years, to include 10 doorstep delivery rounds and 12 wholesale lorry routes, which serviced many local shops and catering businesses in the area.

Today, they deliver to a mind-boggling 100,000 doorsteps every week and the product range now includes yoghurts, butter, cream and bread. Daily deliveries are made to some 5,000 food service customers, across the south of England, South Wales and East Anglia. Pensworth now have 3 major distribution centres at Watford, Aylesbury and Cheshunt.

With a turnover of £40 m, their doorstep deliveries have now widened to include such customers as the NHS, schools and the public sector.

Such expansion is not without its challenges. The processing plant at Pensworth, produces some 100 m

pints of UK farm milk, every year. At the Southampton site, this means the speeds of the filling lines are extremely quick, with speeds of up to 175 units per minute.

THE PROBLEM

Their previous printers were the old, hot foil systems which were both unreliable and uneconomical. Not only that, there were customer complaints every week, about the poor print quality and legibility. It was clear that a better solution was needed, to ensure production targets could be met.

THE SOLUTION

Phil Poole, Site Engineering Manager takes up the story: "Allen Coding recommended the Hitachi UX printers to replace our old hot foil systems, which were no longer cost-effective."

THE SOLUTION

The answer was to install 5 new Hitachi UX inkjet printers, onsite. Installation was speedy, only taking two days and they were operational as soon as Allen Coding had completed the staff training.

Phil Poole comments: "The UX models look better, are more cost-effective, offer superior quality and are easier to use than the old hot foil units."

The switch to the UX printers bought further benefits. There is now less downtime and faster operating speeds, and the UX printers have also helped increase production efficiency.

There is also the added advantage that the company does not have to invest in foils.

The Hitachi UX printer is easy to install, operate and clean and comes in three models: Basic, Flexible and Premium. It also features a new cartridge system which makes ink replacement clean and simple.

The CIJ printer systems offer such benefits as:

- **An easy to use** interface. It is very simple and quick to change marks, numbers and text.
- **Smart consumable cartridge system** – easily replaced, even when the printer is running
- **Simple and quick to maintain** -very reliable

- **Robust** – performs very well in challenging environments (IP class)
- **Waste-free** – the ink and make-up cartridge bottles can be used right up until the last drop

THE OUTCOME

The staff has found the UX printer very easy to control from the touch screen and it gives the ability to have all the information at the user's fingertips. Errors are avoided since the user can check the finished image on the screen, before printing thus avoiding costly wastage.

It also means that the icons on-screen will warn the user of low ink levels as well as the correct time to replace cartridges.

The whole printing process is also speedier because of the UX's ability to print up to 6 lines of print from a single printhead.

"With less downtime and faster operating speeds, we can say that the UX printers have helped increase production efficiencies by 10%." adds Phil.

Another bonus is the printing machine's high IP65 rating which means it is perfect for dusty environments as it can be washed down with pressured water and industrial detergent. It is ideal for the meat and dairy sectors.

Phil concludes: "The overall service provided by Allen Coding was excellent. Their sales engineer was highly professional and could not do enough for us. I would definitely recommend both the company and its printers to other food and drink manufacturers."

And that is a tale worth telling until the cows come home.