



# THE LIGHTNING FLASH

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The newsletter from Lightning Labels, the leader in digital label printing

[WWW.LIGHTNINGLABELS.COM](http://WWW.LIGHTNINGLABELS.COM)

## Testing, proofing make your labels stand ‘test of time’

When Coca-Cola® introduced New Coke® decades ago, they quickly learned the lesson of inadequate testing. Ultimately, they added the original Coca-Cola formula back into the equation — a very costly undertaking on many fronts.

While the consequences of inadequate label testing — and proofing — may not match up to the Coke® catastrophe, there’s no dispute that upfront testing leads to better products, happier customers and increased cost-efficiency.

Testing has both obvious and lesser-known protocols. For example, most people look at the printing quality to make sure it’s up to par. But how many double-check the quality of barcode printing to ensure that scanning will be reliable and accurate?

Lightning Labels’ Customer Service Manager Tammie MacLachlan has seen it all when it comes to the emotions customers experience as they view their newly-printed labels, from the ecstasy of receiving ultra-high-quality labels that weather the elements to the agony of realizing there’s a typo on thousands of labels.

American aerospace engineer Burt Rutan, whose achievements include designing the sub-orbital space plane SpaceShip One, said, “Testing leads to failure, and failure leads to

understanding.” Applying that understanding to label testing, MacLachlan noted that, “Customers often change the size of labels, sometimes more than once, before they approve an order for production.”

MacLachlan weighed in on the importance of finding the flaws before launch, noting, “One of the worst scenarios is when a label has been applied to the container, only to discover the label does not fit properly, the barcode does not scan or there is a typo. Proofreading is just as important as testing!

“Some options at this point include attempting to remove the label and cleaning the container, throwing the product away and starting over, attempting to cover up a particular part of the label or to ‘use as is.’” None of these options lead to great outcomes. Yet, it all can be avoided with minimal expenditures of time and money before the final labels are printed.

Other problems that may occur when new labels are not thoroughly tested upfront include printed colors that don’t match what the customer visualized, labels ill-suited to the type of environmental stresses put upon them (e.g., essential oils smudging or soiling the label’s beauty), and ending up with adhesives that are unsuitable for the

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## From the Desk of James Lowry



### *‘What environment will my labels live in?’ & other questions to ask yourself when testing new product labels*

In the world of labels, we often use the phrase “test, test, test” when we are talking with new customers about creating new labels. “A simple label?” you might ask. “How can it be so complicated that you would need to test it?”

After all, there are hundreds of pressure sensitive label options to choose from, created with different face stocks, adhesives, printing methods, liners, laminates, die cuts, and varnishes (i.e., laminates). However, if you study your options and know what to look out for when testing your new designs with different material combinations, containers, and environmental conditions, testing and ordering custom printed labels for the first time becomes a much easier process.

Here are just a few questions you should ask yourself when creating and testing a new product label:

- What will be the general temperature of the environment where you apply the label? (e.g., room temperature, cold, hot)
- What temperatures will the label be expected to withstand after it is applied? Will it be expected to stick to a box in a warehouse in the Arctic? That is cold!

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# Testing, proofing make your labels stand ‘test of time’

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intended application. “These issues have occurred not only when the customer does not request a printed proof, but also when the printed proof is not cut to size and tested,” MacLachlan pointed out.

She recommended key testing and proofing steps that new customers should follow before committing to having the finished product printed:

## 1. Conduct general testing.

Lightning Labels provides many tools and services that make testing new label projects easier, including: emailing die lines that can be cut to size and applied to the container before digital files are created, sending material samples with different adhesives (e.g., permanent, removable, lip balm), and providing color charts printed on various materials.

In the heat of testing, adhesion issues can get lost in the shuffle. The time to discover if lip balm labels are peeling or coming off is not when a customer lets you know about it. Conversely, if labels need to be changed out, as happens in the case of beer tap handles when new products get stocked, you don’t want customers having to scrape and peel pieces off with their Swiss Army knives.

**2. Get a concept proof.** For \$50 plus shipping, customers get 10 versions of art on any number of label sizes, printed on different materials including laminate. While not cut to size, a die line can be included for easy scissor cutting.

Concept proofs help customers decide which label material and finish will serve them best.

Remarked MacLachlan, “Our most cost effective combination is a white BOPP material with a gloss overlamine which makes

the label water and oil resistant. In fact, all but two of our materials require an overlamine. Because of our material offerings, waterproofing and smudging are usually not issues. Even with our two paper materials, although not laminated, there is no smudging unless the labels are scraped against rough surfaces.”

Concept proofs can be subjected to customer use (and abuse) to see just how well they will stand up on product and customer shelves.

Concept proofs also allow the customer to test colors before creating all of their digital files: simply create files with a variety of colors and then choose the ones you like from the concept proof.

## 3. Proofread, Proofread, Proofread.

A typo or grammatical error on a product label can seriously undermine consumer confidence in the product. While product quality is a completely separate issue, people who notice mistakes on a product label will often question the integrity of everything associated with the product.

Noted MacLachlan, “It may not be classified as true testing, but proofing is so important. We have more customers with labels they cannot use because of a typo and other mistakes than due to the label not fitting. We encourage customers to review files before they are sent to us for proofing, but to also closely review the proofs we provide, either printed or emailed proof, before approving the order for production.”

## 4. Get a free printed proof (also known as a press proof).

For only the cost of shipping, you can receive a printed proof for review prior to placing your final order. MacLachlan emphasized that this type of proof, which is printed on the same printer your final labels will be printed on, can answer several critical questions: “Are colors what the customer envisioned? Does the printing on clear labels show sufficiently on the containers? Does the size of the label fit the shape and size of the container? Is white ink printed where it should be on clear and chrome labels? The printed proof is the only way for the customer to know how the label will look once printed. An emailed PDF proof will not provide the same information. As part of this review process, double-check barcodes to ensure that they will scan correctly.”

## 5. Use the printed proof as a final label content check.

For example, while Lightning Labels cannot provide direction about such issues as government labeling regulations for nutraceuticals or food, the printed proof stage is a logical time to recheck that the content is acceptable (as well as free of spelling or

grammar errors).

However, we do recommend that you review content before placing your order and requesting the proof.

In addition to these testing and proofing procedures, it’s always beneficial for customers to think about special circumstances that may impact their labels. Storage is one such issue. If labels are likely to be stored for a long period of time or subjected to extremes in humidity, temperature, light or other potential environmental stressors while stored, it’s worth checking out endurance levels. Knowledge in this area may lead to an upfront fix, or at least let people know tolerances in advance.

Finally, try to work far enough ahead that quality control, not looming deadlines, is the primary consideration in your testing procedures. There’s a reason why the adage, “Haste makes waste” has endured for so long.

For more information on label testing and proofing, contact our customer service team at 1.888.685.2235, or at [info@lightninglabels.com](mailto:info@lightninglabels.com).

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## From the Desk of James Lowry

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### **‘What environment will my labels live in?’ & other questions to ask yourself when testing new product labels**

- What size and shape of container will the label be applied to? Will it be flat, have a very tight circumference, or fall somewhere in between?
- Will the label be exposed to wet conditions after it is applied? (e.g., a shampoo bottle in the shower)
- Will the label likely be exposed to oils or other chemicals after it is applied? Lotion labels are a good example of these types of labels.

One of the most critical questions you should ask during the creation and testing phase, however, is “What is my application for this label and how do I expect it to perform?”

Furthermore, you should know that we have simplified the aspect of choosing label materials for you by offering basic label constructions. Our materials are designed to serve many applications, which will allow you not to worry too much. I would be remiss, though, if I did not close this column with the phrase we love reciting to our new customers over and over again: “We encourage you to test your label to ensure it will work for your application.” You might get tired of hearing us repeatedly offer this piece of advice, but you will thank us later when your customers end up raving about the beautiful full color, custom printed labels on your products.

# Customer Focus

## Joshua Tree salves and saves outdoor enthusiasts' skin, lips

When Dave Lawrence says his business is going to the dogs, that's a good sign. Torrent, his Australian Shepherd, is a trade show and expo goodwill ambassador for Joshua Tree Skin Care (JTree).

Offering a collection of lip balms, healing salves and face sticks designed specifically for people who lead an active outdoor lifestyle, JTree just celebrated its tenth anniversary. In 2007, Lawrence bought the company, and Torrent was an important factor in making this decision.

He noted that the canine, "Is the brains of our whole operation! He is unrivaled at drawing traffic into our booth at the trade shows and expos we attend. He is one of the smartest, best-behaved dogs I have ever known. He has never left my side since he was a clumsy little ball of fur four years ago. Torrent was also a big part of the motivation for running this company, as he was not allowed at my previous engineering job."

Originally established in a small town outside of Joshua Tree National Park, JTree's healing salve immediately gained a loyal following among the rock climbing community. All products are made using a unique process of slow-roasting the finest organic herbs with other natural ingredients, including beeswax and cocoa butter. One of those enthusiasts was Lawrence, an avid rock climber who used a JTree hand salve designed for rock climbers. When he discovered that the company was for sale, Lawrence left the tech firm for which he had done product development, bought JTree, and started manufacturing in a backyard shed.

As the company has expanded into larger quarters, JTree's team of on-the-go climbers, cyclists, runners and skiers continue to research and develop potent

herbal products that heal skin after tough workouts and protect it from the effects of harsh natural elements. Besides protecting skin, JTree is invested in saving the environment, offering organic, all-natural products.

Under Lawrence's stewardship, retail distribution has increased more than 85 percent. It is available in retail locations throughout the United States and Canada and online at [www.jtreelife.com](http://www.jtreelife.com). JTree has also created successful partnerships through private label deals with such outdoor industry brands as Mountain Gear, Osprey and Sterling Ropes. Currently, the company sells 10,000-20,000 lip balms, 3,000 salves and 1,000 sunscreens per month.

Having had "great success in retailing through specialty outdoor shops and bike shops" during JTree's first decade, Lawrence added, "Our current goal is to bridge the gap into the mainstream markets with regional and national chain accounts, such as natural food stores and fitness centers."

JTree products have been touted for their ability to heal everything from diaper rash and bikini wax burns to latex chapping, stretch marks, mosquito bites and sunburns. Less conventional applications cited by users include: bike chain lubrication, makeup removal, leather waterproofing, squeaky door hinge lubrication, chain saw repair, and

entertainment for a family cat.

Lawrence noted, "We have put a lot of effort into creating a very professional brand image to support the premium products we make. Lightning Labels has been a big part of that achievement, as without their digital printing, professional labels for all of our SKUs and packaging would be cost prohibitive."

He added that, "They print the labels for all of our products, as well as the products' point-of-purchase (POP) display cases. We also rely heavily on them for our private label lip balm business. We really appreciate their vivid high-resolution printing, multitude of substrates, and the flexibility for multiple versions. The instant online quoting is also very useful when we are bidding custom jobs for our customers."

Label application is performed using a hybrid of manual machine and hand application techniques. Noted Lawrence, "We have some manual labeling machines for the regular shape jars, but for our slim fit lip balm tube, labeling is still done by hand. For our big production runs, we outsource the labeling to a variety of ladies around the lake, who take a break from knitting to do the labeling."



Joshua Tree Skin Care is salving and saving the skins and lips of the nation's outdoor enthusiasts, curing many common ailments and protecting the environment at the same time ... with a little help from Lightning Labels, of course.

## New For You? Materials!

Yes, that is right! Lightning Labels is introducing new materials that we know you will be excited about. We have heard your requests to expand our material line so that it fits your needs for creative and unique design options, and also gives you the advantages of digital printing. We are proving that exceptional print quality on smaller quantities of labels can be available on more than just a handful of materials.

Our quick list of materials being added includes:

- BioStone – A biodegradable material that makes presenting a "green" label easy. If you who have been looking for a biodegradable product, you now have a true option to choose from.
- Satin Cloth – Yes, it is cloth and it has a great appearance. It gives packaging a bold, rich appearance.
- Kraft – Is recycled from 100% post consumer waste. Packaging takes on a natural look with this material and is earth friendly.
- Vellum paper – Also a 100% recycled post consumer waste material. If the natural look is not what you want, but you want to present an earth friendly label, then this is a good paper option.
- White Squeezable – A film material that is better suited for squeezable containers. This material has proven to work well in different applications, allowing you to be confident that it will perform well for you.

What else? We continue to work on adding other material options as well, so please check our website at [www.LightningLabels.com](http://www.LightningLabels.com) often to see what's new for you.

# Learning About Labels

## *It's a material world*

Amid the splendor of vibrant colors and provocative designs adorning labels, sometimes people don't spend enough time addressing the "background" issue of the label material itself. "If it's white, it'll do ... I want that clear look, so consumers can see right through to the product ... give me a shine so bright I gotta wear shades ..." are but a few of the opinions heard day in and day out in the digital label printing industry.

While choosing label materials may not be sexy, it's critical to the success of product appearance. For a new product release, it can be a substantial factor in determining whether feedback is favorable or unflattering.

Ever experienced the "upholstery swatch" nightmare? It's the one where the small square of material looks great. It's only when your two-piece sofa gets delivered that you discover that "muted, mellow" pattern is actually so loud it makes you dizzy.

Label material issues can have a similar impact if not carefully addressed upfront. That "perfect label" can wind up feeling like the two-piece sofa.

To avoid buyer's remorse, spend some time selecting the right label for your product. Several issues that merit consideration include:

**What look and feel should the label convey?** For many, standard white BOPP (which stands for Biaxially Oriented Polypropylene — no wonder everyone uses the acronym) will fit the bill. It's durable, chemical and liquid resistant, and has an attractive sheen. Oh, and it's inexpensive, too! This is the "default" material for those without additional requirements. Other BOPP options include clear BOPP, which offers a transparent look when applied to a product; and chrome BOPP that looks like shiny chrome.

When a high-end or gourmet appearance is desired, Estate #9 cream-colored textured material can be an elegant choice. It is a paper stock that offers a striking, rich appearance. Estate #9 can be the right fit for your wine labels if appearance is more important than durability.

**What about when durability outranks design?** White vinyl is a thick and highly durable material. At 4 mils thick, it will withstand certain outdoor conditions and other challenges requiring a tough label.

**How can I compare and contrast options?** One way is to order a free Lightning Labels sample pack featuring all the materials we offer. (Unlike that sofa swatch, we believe you will find that our samples show you everything you need to get a clear, complete picture of how our label materials will look on your finished products.)

**How do I assess how ink will interact with and appear on specific label materials?** First off, address your must-haves, which may or may not include durability, resistance to elements such as water and oils, and design. This provides a potential first round of cuts, eliminating materials that will not meet primary needs. Second, check out sample pack labels that may fit your industry, desired look and feel, or other specifications. You may find that flashy chrome BOPP is a great background by itself, but doesn't work with your particular design and color scheme. Alternatively, you may discover that by changing the

gloss printing to matte over the chrome laminate, you can achieve exactly the look you want. The closer you can approximate the appearance of your particular colors and graphics on a potential label material during the testing phase, the faster you will be able to hone in on the right label material choices for your project.

It's a material world, full of choices. By taking the time to carefully consider your options when it comes to selecting label materials, your prospects of creating a successful product image will be much higher.

## Lightning Labels News

**Save 10% through Aug. 31 with 'Summer Savings' coupon code**

From now through August 31, you can save 10% when you order your full color, custom labels and stickers through our website at [www.lightninglabels.com](http://www.lightninglabels.com). Simply enter the coupon code **Summer11** when you place your regular priced order online and start saving today! \*Free ground shipping within the continental U.S. valid for this promotion. Maximum discount of \$500 per order.

**LL's 'lightning fast service' just got faster**

Most of our orders now ship in just 2-3 days following final proof approval. In a fast-paced world, this means you will be able to spend less time waiting for your custom labels, stickers, and decals to arrive, and more time working on your own projects. Our faster turnaround time also will enable you to deliver quicker service to your customers and handle more of those last-minute orders. And if that isn't enough good news, here's some more: Our faster service won't cost an extra dime. That's right, this added benefit is free of charge.

**LL now offers free ground shipping**

In this tight economy, we know how important it is to save money wherever possible. That is why we now offer free ground shipping on all regular priced orders delivered within the continental United States. These savings will quickly add up to improve your bottom line.

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