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Label Application Techniques

Skin Care, Sauce Makers Share Label Application Experiences

Label application techniques have been a topic of discussion since ancient times. Even the early-day Egyptians required truthful labeling of their wine. The vintner's name, quality assessment, and date of vintage all were required, among other label contents.

Of course, with labels comes the discussion of how to affix them to applicable products. Ancient Egyptians evidently used some type of glue. In this country's earlier days, orchard owners used labels affixed with gum to advertise their produce. By the 1930s, self-adhesive (pressure-sensitive) labels began being manufactured—leading to a more efficient labeling process.

Keeping Label Application Well in Hand

A discussion with Lightning Labels customers Danny Cash Hot Sauce, Lemongrass Spa Products and La Ishá Natural Skin Care confirms that the old adage, "the more things change, the more they stay the same" applies to current label application techniques and technologies. While machine application use is growing, good old-fashioned affixing by hand is still a mainstay.

In 2002, Danny Cash started making hot sauce in his church kitchen in Wheat Ridge, Colorado. The do-it-yourselfer and hot sauce devotee started marketing sauces to

churches, youth groups, fundraisers, schools, restaurants and event planners.

Now a major hot sauce force in Colorado, Danny Cash continues to market products under the Danny Cash name as well as private label for a variety of ventures. The firm uses both manual and machine label application methods. As relationships have grown with partners and customers needing small quantities of sauce at any given time, Danny Cash actually is trending more toward hand application.

For Lemongrass, hand application is a long-time habit. The Pine, Colorado-based manufacturer of a complete line of natural skin products for face, body and feet, launched operations from a home basement in 2001. Back then, labels were inkjet printer-generated, cut out and applied one at a time. Then, founder Heidi Leist realized that higher-quality waterproof labels were in order, which led to working with Lightning Labels.

Three years ago, Lemongrass moved to a 3,000-plus square-foot commercial facility, where they continue to apply labels by hand—only the number of hands doing the applying has grown over the years to accommodate demand for 150 different products.

La Ishá's safe and effective natural skin care for women offers anti-aging, dry skin, sun damage and breast health products.

Continued on page 2

In this issue:

Label Application Techniques.....	1-2
From the Desk of James Lowry.....	1
Customer Focus.....	3
Learning About Labels.....	4

From the Desk of James Lowry



Is How the Label Applied Important?

Having high-quality labels custom printed is a great first step toward successfully presenting your product, but what happens when it's time to apply them? The quality on the outside represents the quality on the inside. Right? Unfortunately, whether we want to believe it or not,

that is the perception of many consumers. This reality can be especially concerning to product makers that apply their labels by hand themselves.

Fortunately, a little creativity and a lot of patience will go a long way to limiting frustration when it comes to applying labels by hand.

I once had the opportunity to work with a notable spirits customer that needed to hand-apply their custom printed labels. This customer wanted its metal labels applied to their product bottles one at a time. The label was very expensive, and placement was critical. We were allowed some margin of error, but it was tight.

Productivity and quality were very poor until a jig was made of plexiglass to hold the bottle stationary. The jig also had a window so that the label could only be applied one way. Productivity increased, and the misplaced labels virtually disappeared. The customer and I had found a solution that created success for both of us.

To learn more of James' label application tricks, see page 2

Label Application Tricks

Here are a couple of simple tricks from LL General Manager James Lowry for preventing frustration when applying labels by hand

- First, design your label so that it won't glare at you like a neon sign if it is slightly misaligned when applied to your product. Let's look at the example of a label that is going to wrap around a container and either meet very closely to the other end of the label or overlap. This type of label can be a label application nightmare if it incorporates a line or bar across the label that has to match up end-to-end wrapped around the product container. However, if you avoid incorporating such design elements into your label design, you will save yourself a headache. Also, designing your label to look different from end to end or identical in color hides label application mistakes with these types of labels very effectively.
- Second, create a simple jig to guide how and where you hand-apply your label. The jig should hold the container in place and include a limited window that only allows you to apply the label in a specific place. A jig like this can usually be made from materials you already have on hand such as cardboard, heavy paper, or card stock.

Label Application Techniques

Continued from page 1

The company launched in 2008, three years after founder Sharon Gnatt Epel witnessed firsthand the amazing ability of essential oils to heal chemical burns suffered by her son.

According to Epel, hand applying likely will change soon to machine application. She notes, "There are two determining factors—one is quantity, second is manpower. A small boutique company can't afford to hire a lot of help. We're at the stage where we're hiring out. It's an okay way to go until you hit the "magic number" when hand application gives way to machine-based solutions.

Mixing & Matching Methods

Cash points out, "We do a lot by hand, and use a Primera AP362 labeling machine." As his company processes more small orders, the majority of the labels are done by hand.

Given use of both manual and machine technologies, Cash has adopted policies to ensure consistency and quality control. He suggests defaulting to "what the machine wants to do" in terms of unwind direction and other considerations, regardless of whether a particular order will be hand or machine applied.

Leist notes, "Everything is hand applied in our office, two or three people four days a week labeling all day long. Some products require two, some require one. Several hundred items are labeled every day. We've created a few templates using a white sheet of paper, then we lay the bottle on a table that has the template on it, and guide the individual who is labeling to the top and bottom of the label in relationship to the bottle."

As the business has grown, Leist simply has added more people to fulfill hand labeling requirements, and in several cases has made the move from two labels to one larger label. "That's really helped us a lot," she says.

Leist acknowledges, "At some point in time, we'll have to look at machine applied," both because of cost-effectiveness and accuracy. She notes, "When you start to figure out how many people it takes to hand label, the investment [in equipment] is well worth the payoff. And quality control is a piece. The machine will be more accurate every time."

Be Clear, Be Organized

As the hot sauce business has proliferated, Cash is focused on "keeping everything organized

so we can grab an order, label it quickly, and throw the labels back on the wall. We have 500 different rolls of labels on the wall."

Getting and staying organized is a major consideration for Leist as well. She points out that in the past it sometimes has been dicey trying to figure out adequate label quantities for a product launch. "Sometimes, we went too conservative and ran out of labels pretty quickly," Leist says. Now, she focuses on being more accurate in projections, and aims to maintain 6-9 months worth of labels for any particular product.

Epel emphasizes the importance of providing explicit instructions about how to apply the label. She asserts, "If you wait for people to figure it out on their own, you will waste a lot of labels. Figure out guidelines for labels beforehand, all those little tricks when you're applying them yourself, then put it in an operations manual so people can see it in black and white."

The Jig's Up ... & Running

Leist recommends allowing plenty of time for a prototype process to address positioning and label material issues. "Sometimes you can get into trouble with a particular material. On those rare occasions where one type of

material worked better than others, Lightning Labels offered recommendations," she points out.

Epel points out that getting labels on evenly has been a challenge. She suggests employing people with good eye-hand coordination and who have a good eye for making sure labels appear straight and meet evenly. To help, she recommends constructing a jig for consistent placement.

Cash concurs that jigs that can hold bottles are a good idea. "Draw lines, make sure they're straight. It's usually just fine-tuning," he notes.

When all is said and done, successful labeling—whether by hand, by machine, or a combination of the two—hinges on consistency of method and clarity of thought.



Customer Focus

Sharon Gnatt Epel, Founder of La Ishá Natural Skin Care (Denver, CO)

From Panama to Pomegranate: Saga of a Cure for Chemical Burns



Sharon Gnatt Epel

When Sharon Gnatt Epel's teenage son, Aaron, journeyed to a Costa Rica Rainforest Program in June 2005, chemical contamination was not top of mind. While on a white water rafting expedition on the Panama border, Aaron was exposed to extremely toxic agricultural chemicals. Small blisters developed on Aaron's hands within two hours of exposure and swelled to the size of big water balloons four hours later.

After initial conventional treatment to combat Aaron's burned and blistered skin, Sharon consulted with an integrative physician who recommended medical-grade essential oils be applied. Worried that traditional burn therapies would leave scars and scar tissue—both aesthetically and functionally debilitating—Sharon opted for essential oil treatment.

One month later, little trace of the injury remained. Now, he's fully healed—with no scarring.

Sharon, a former concert pianist and graduate of the prestigious Juilliard School, began studying essential oils and their holistic use internationally. Reasoning that relatively minor problems like wrinkles, age spots and sun damage could be helped by these oils, Sharon founded La Ishá Natural Skin Care. She bills it as, "the only natural anti-aging skin care line developed exclusively for women 'who refuse to be defined

by their age!'" Products focus on anti-aging, dry skin, sun damage and breast health.

An "antidote" to toxic chemicals in women's cosmetics linked to cancer and other maladies, La Ishá's products are made with organic, cold-pressed therapeutic grade oils. One of the most effective ingredients in the firm's anti-aging organic skin care line is pure organic pomegranate seed oil, renowned for its healing and medicinal properties since biblical times. As with so many remedies based in ancient culture, this oil is now being scientifically researched worldwide. Among its claims are antioxidant properties seven times more powerful than green tea, UV protection, and cell protection against environmental stressors.

Among dozens of testimonials on the firm's website was a comment from a woman who had spent 15 years struggling to control a skin condition. She notes, "I have had rosacea for 15 years. I've tried several different prescriptions and none of them helped me with my skin. I bought a jar of La Ishá's Orange-Coconut Skin Polish and have been using it for about a month now. My skin has cleared up completely! I love it! It leaves my skin so soft, and is a real blessing here in Colorado because it not only exfoliates but hydrates my dry skin."

The products are made fresh to order, one small batch at a time.

Because of typically low volumes and need for fast turnaround, Sharon sought out a label printer aligned with her needs. Based on recommendations about Lightning Labels providing good service, fast turnaround, top-notch customer care, and good pricing even on low quantities, she decided to give it a try when her company launched in 2008.

Two years later, Sharon rates Lightning Labels a "10" on a scale of 1-10 for product quality and customer service. She singles out her Customer Service Representative as a major factor in the top-line rating. "She's calm and reassuring even when I'm freaking out. I can't emphasize enough how important that relationship is. She is the face of the company."

Sharon singles out Lightning Labels' reliable and fast turnaround on orders, noting that she appreciates, "getting new labels done in a timely fashion. Sometimes, there's an unexpected crunch, such as a trade show. You need more product on hand than expected. I've never had them take more than a week. It can be as little as 48 hours."

For La Ishá, the future looks positively healthy and radiant.



La Ishá Natural Skin Care Products

Lightning Labels News

Plan Ahead Now for the Holiday Season

Make plans now to order the custom labels and stickers you will need for your holiday promotions. Please keep in mind that our average turnaround is three to four business days following final approval. You should also take into consideration that Lightning Labels will be closed these days:

- Friday, December 24
- Monday, January 3

Reminder Regarding Proof of Tax Exemption

In accordance with the sales tax laws and regulations, Lightning Labels requires customers who are exempt from paying sales tax to provide us with a Resale or Exemption Certificate, or equivalent documentation. This exemption typically applies to customers who resell goods, and may apply to other customers as well. Customers who do not provide proof of exemption are charged sales tax in accordance to the laws and regulations of the states where they do business.

Learning About Labels

When It Comes to Labels, Prepare to Unwind ... & Relax

Behaviorally speaking, “unwinding” connotes relaxing, de-stressing, mellowing out. When it comes to machine application of labels, paying attention to “unwind direction” upfront definitely can prevent stress when applying the labels.

According to PrintWiki, “Label unwind direction is simply the way in which a label unwinds from a roll.”

Seems simple enough, unless it doesn’t get addressed when your order is placed. That’s why your Lightning Labels customer service rep will make sure to check it out as part of the ordering process. Even if you’re applying by hand now, chances are a label applicator will be a future consideration. By paying attention to unwind direction along the way, this important issue will be top of mind when it is time for you to purchase a label applicator.

PrintWiki addresses the four label unwind direction options and provides a diagram to illustrate each: #1 shows the top of the copy dispensing first; #2 shows the bottom of the copy dispensing first; #3 shows the right side of the copy dispensing first; #4 shows the left side of the copy dispensing first.

For those of you who have been thinking about a label applicator or contracting with a firm that will machine apply labels for you, the good news is affordability and versatility. For those considering keeping the application process in-house, many options exist, from simple label dispensers costing a few hundred dollars to fully automated systems running many thousands of dollars. Label applicator systems exist for bottles, jars, lip balm canisters, lids, and just about anything else you can imagine.

When you feel the time is right to look at a label application system, we’ll be happy to talk with you about both products and

processes—and address pros and cons of a particular solution.

For example, since most labeling machines only provide one unwind direction option for a specific type of container, it’s worthwhile determining this as part of the equipment selection process.

While there is no inherent advantage or disadvantage to any particular unwind direction, you may have special requirements that make it beneficial to use one unwind direction option. The time to address this issue is before making a purchase.

By being aware of unwind direction now, you’ll better be able to unwind later.

Fast Facts About Label Unwind Direction

- There are 4 label unwind direction options
- It is important to address label unwind direction when placing a custom label order
- Most labeling machines only provide one unwind direction option for a specific container



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