



The Lightning Flash

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

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From the Desk of Steve Smith

When will it end?

I'm referring to the recession – the most challenging economic period since the Great Depression. Already some pundits are claiming the recession is behind us, but I suggest that only an economist



could find that claim plausible—and then only based on esoteric measures that the average person would glean little comfort from. The National Bureau of Economic Research defines a recession as “a significant decline in economic activity spread across the country, lasting more than a few months, normally visible in real GDP growth, real personal income, employment (non-farm payrolls), industrial production, and wholesale-retail sales”. Quite a mouthful, and probably unintelligible to the vast majority of people.

If indeed the recession is about to end in an official sense, I suggest that the constraining effects on most of us will last for quite some time. In the meantime, we need to remain focused on good business fundamentals and quality of service—and take the opportunity to re-examine our basic principles—things that made us successful in the first place.

Good luck!

Steve

Steve Smith

5 Labeling Ideas for Boosting Holiday Sales

Even though it is still shorts weather in most parts of the country, now is the time to craft your plan for maximizing your 2009 holiday sales. Are you aware that the holiday shopping season, which spans three months, kicks off at the beginning of October? That is coming up fast! To jumpstart your planning, we have compiled some ideas for boosting your holiday sales that are not only effective, but easy and affordable to implement.

1. Offer Limited Edition Holiday Items

Offering limited edition items during the holiday season can increase your sales two ways. First of all, offering any product as a “limited edition” item adds perceived value. By definition, limited edition items are only available for a short amount of time in finite quantities. Therefore, people who purchase limited edition items (or receive them as gifts) become part of an exclusive group. They have something that is not readily available to everyone.

Secondly, selling limited edition items speeds up the buying cycle. Shoppers don't have the luxury of spending months comparison shopping for limited edition items. Instead, they think in terms of “now or never”—if they really want to buy that perfect gift for their loved ones, they better do it now ... because it might be sold out later.

Another great thing about this type of sales incentive is that you don't have to create a line of brand new products in order to offer limited holiday edition items to your customers. Simply dress up a few of your best-selling

products in holiday-themed packaging. This may be as simple as changing out the graphics and colors in your standard label designs, or as complex as creating label designs from scratch that are printed in eye-catching holiday themes. If you keep the size of these holiday-themed labels the same as your regular labels, then you can add them to a regular label order for very little extra cost.

There are several websites that offer professional quality holiday graphics at very reasonable prices, including istockphoto.com and shutterfly.com. If you have the time to do the digging, you can also find free holiday graphics with Creative Commons licensing using the advanced search feature available at both Flickr (<http://www.flickr.com/search/advanced/>) and Google Image Search (http://images.google.com/advanced_image_search).

2. Repackage Slow-Moving Inventory as Special Holiday Buy, Gift with Purchase

Everyone loves to get a deal. This holiday season, give your customers what they want. Consider repackaging products that are collecting dust on your inventory shelves as special holiday buys and update their look with beautiful holiday-themed labels. An even simpler alternative would be to have small labels printed that advertise your products as special holiday buys and affix them atop the original packaging.

The only thing shoppers like more than getting a great deal on a purchase is getting

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5 Labeling Ideas for Boosting Holiday Sales

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something for free. Why not also think about repurposing some of some of your slower moving products as a free gift with purchase? Using custom printed labels makes it simple and affordable to do this.

3. Leverage Variable Label Printing to Create Personalized Gifts

Digital label printing makes it affordable for you to offer your customers personalized gifts for their loved ones and business associates. With variable label printing, you can personalize practically any item you sell that has a product label on it with images, text, or both.

For instance, you could send a promotional email to your customers offering to personalize that product you sell that just happens to make “the perfect holiday gift” with the name of the intended gift recipient. As new orders come in for the personalized gift product, you could collect the personalized information in an Excel spreadsheet.

Offering gifts personalized with variable label printing is even easier to coordinate if you run a website with a shopping cart because it automates most of the ordering process. For inspiration, check out the website my-JONES at www.myjones.com. For just \$30 (plus shipping), you can upload your own photo to the website and order a 12-pack of Jones Soda bottles featuring your chosen image. Heinz Ketchup offers a similar service at www.myheinz.com that lets you personalize a bottle of ketchup with three lines of text for \$6 (plus shipping).

4. Give Away Free Labels

We all know that kids love labels and stickers. I am sure many of your customers would really appreciate having some super fun holiday stickers to give to the special kids in their lives. Why not consider having some of

these stickers printed up to give to your customers? When your customers see their kids' faces light up at the sight of the stickers you gave them, you can be sure they will make a mental note to call on your company the next time they need something you offer, including holiday gifts. The idea of free giveaways is to associate your company with goodwill and positive outcomes. And I can't think of a more positive outcome than bringing joy to children during the holiday season.

Another idea for a free sticker giveaway is gift tag stickers. These simple To-From stickers not only make a great alternative to cumbersome tie-on gift tags, but make great giveaways as well. You could design To-From labels that discretely incorporate your company logo into the design.

You might also consider turning your most recognizable product (or your company mascot, if you have one) into a cartoon dressed in holiday garb. If you were the Hershey Company, for example, you could feature an illustration of a Chocolate Kiss dressed in a Santa Clause hat on your To-From labels.

5. Create a Branded Holiday Label

Even though we are almost a decade into the 21st twenty-first century, virtually all companies still mail envelopes and ship boxes on a daily basis. Yet we rarely think of these activities as marketing opportunities. The holiday season provides us with an opportunity to turn every outgoing package into a customer relationship-building tool. How? By using your own branded holiday label.

To illustrate how this would work, let's say you have a company that sells coffee to both individual customers through your website and to coffee shop and retail site distributors via your sales force. You ship 50 to 100 boxes of coffee a day. Af-

ter reading this article, you design a special holiday label featuring your logo and a special holiday message to your customers. You then stick this branded holiday label on all outgoing shipments during November and December.

After seeing how successful this marketing technique is, you then decide to put your branded holiday label on newsletters and holiday cards, too.

Like many of the ideas mentioned in this article, having your own branded holiday labels printed is an especially affordable way to celebrate the holidays with your customers. You just need to remember that your holiday labels must be the same size as one of the labels in your regular label order in order to gang them together in the same press run.

If you are unsure what impact this will have on your pricing, then please speak with one of our customer service representatives at 1-888-685-2235; they will be happy to provide you with a quote for your special holiday label order.

~ Christy Correll

Lightning Labels News

Graphic Designer on Maternity Leave

Cari Goldman, our Graphic Designer, is currently on maternity leave. In her absence, Jessica Leber will be handling all graphic design projects for Lightning Labels. Jessica graduated with a BFA in Communication Design from Metropolitan State College of Denver last year. You may contact Jessica at jessica@lightninglabels.com; or 1-888-685-2235, ext. 214.

New Production Manager Joins LL Team

James Lowry brings 22 years of printing industry experience to his new position as Production Manager at Lightning Labels. James has held operations and management positions at RR Donnelly and Ward/Kraft. Most recently, James was the Operations Manager for Print and Cohesive Operations at Stoffel Seals in Tallapoosa, Ga. We welcome James to Lightning Labels and Colorado.

Customer Focus

Lela Raine Barker
Bella Luccè
Columbia, SC



Lela pictured atop the Citadel mosque in Cairo, Egypt during a business trip for Bella Luccè.

When Lela Rain Barker founded Bella Luccè in her kitchen in 2003, she could not have envisioned that her scrumptious, all-natural skincare products would end up being sought after by movie stars and the world's finest spas. Neither could she imagine that she would soon be taking international business trips that give her fantastic opportunities to immerse herself in other cultures—opportunities such as having dinner with Bedouins in the desert of Jordan and watching them make beauty products using ancient techniques. Instead, the newly single mother was completely focused on turning her hobby into a viable business that would allow her to stay home with her two young daughters.

Lela's interest in making natural beauty products was sparked when her older sister had a breast cancer scare in her 20s. After learning that some 90% of cosmetics and skin care products being sold at the time contained the potentially cancer-causing

chemicals known as parabens, Lela cleaned out her bathroom cabinets and set out on a mission to refill them with natural, healthy beauty products. Although she found several products on the market she felt safe using, she was less than impressed by their quality. Not long after, Lela started concocting her own beauty products that were natural, safe, and luxuriously pampering.

When Lela launched her business a few years later, she printed her product labels at home with a black and white printer. Following her intuition, however, soon made it necessary have full-color product labels professionally printed.

"I thought there had to be a market out there for beauty products you can feel good about and still have beautiful packaging—products that you could leave out on your vanity," Lela recalled.

The first printer she tried used a flexographic press. The plate fees nearly killed her. Because her product line was (and still is) constantly evolving, label designs had to be changed frequently. After learning about Lightning Labels from other beauty entrepreneurs, she soon discovered the benefits of digital label printing. She was also thrilled at the personal attention she received from Lightning Labels.

Just six years after its founding, Bella Luccè's natural spa products can be found in some of the finest spas and beauty boutiques around the world. The company currently has approximately 150 distributors in Europe and the Middle East; and 500 in the US. Approximately 90 percent of Bella Luccè's business is wholesale, while the other 10 percent is sold directly to customers through the company's website, www.bellaluccè.com.

To say the company is a huge success is an understatement. Bella Luce products have been included in the celebrity gift baskets at the Billboard Music Awards, selected by the producers of the 11th Annual Screen Actors Guild Awards for inclusion in their

celebrity gift collection, and given to VIPs at the Cannes Film Festival. Mostly recently, GCI (Global Cosmetics Industry) Magazine recommended Bella Luccè in its July edition as one of five beauty industry professionals to follow on the popular microblogging site Twitter.

Despite its success, Bella Luccè has remained true to the core values Lela founded the company on, including making the product by hand using only the freshest natural ingredients. The products are made just like Lela used to make them in her kitchen, only on a larger scale. Scrubs and lotions are made 50 gallons at a time in a commercial kitchen.

Lela is quick to share the credit for Bella Luccè's success with the seven employees based at the company's Columbia, South Carolina headquarters, whom she describes as a "really fantastic group of women" that work very well together, pitching in whenever and wherever needed. On really busy days, for example, when a large batch of product is ready to be poured into containers, everyone in the office runs into the kitchen, dons lab coats, and gets to work filling the containers by hand.

At the volume of product Bella Luccè is now producing, Lela admits that continuing to make everything by hand is probably not the most profitable business strategy. But she believes the tradeoff is worth it.

"I want good ju-ju in these products. I want real people making these products in the US with their own hands," Lela explained. "There's a lot of love and attention in there."

~ Christy Correll



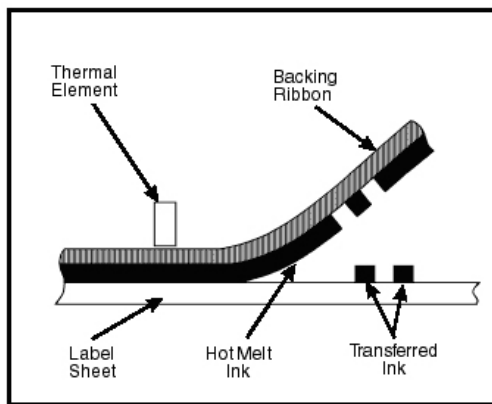


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Learning About Labels

What is Thermal Transfer Printing & When is It Useful?



Thermal Transfer Printing

Thermal transfer printing is a printing process that melts a coating of ribbon onto a receptive label face material. A thermal transfer printing head makes use of many very small resistors that are selectively heated or cooled. The heated elements come into contact with the ribbon of ink (as you can see in the diagram above) and the ink is melted onto the label material, where it dries instantly.

Thermal transfer printing is a digital printing process in that there are no printing plates used and it can easily print variable data. Print quality is not as high as other dig-

ital printing technologies, and you can only print one color at a time. It is typically used for printing barcodes and text.

The main advantage of thermal transfer printing is its cost. You can buy a small printer for just a few hundred dollars from manufacturers such as Zebra or Sato. The only consumables are ribbons (a 4" x 1000' black ribbon roll will only cost around \$12) and, of course, labels.

A thermal transfer printer can be used in conjunction with the printed labels you get from Lightning Labels. Many of our customers will order labels with a thermal transfer laminate that will allow the finished printed labels to be run through a thermal transfer printer.

For example, you may have many different flavors, but one main product label design. You can leave a blank box on your product labels and then print the flavors on the labels on an as-needed basis. This gives you flexibility, while still maintaining the high quality label printing you have come to expect from us.

~ Peter Renton

A Touch of Humor

The Shopping Criminal

It was Christmas and the judge was in a merry mood as he asked the prisoner, "What are you charged with?"

"Doing my Christmas shopping early," replied the defendant.

"That's no offense", said the judge. "How early were you doing this shopping?"

"Before the store opened."



"You do not have to be rich to be generous. If he has the spirit of true generosity, a pauper can give like a prince."

~ Corinne U. Wells