CODING SOLUTION YIELDS GROWTH

VIDEOJET
Uptime Peace of Mind®

Nonprofit co-packer increases business with help from intuitive printer

Co-packers provide supplemental personnel, production space and project management for manufacturers that need expert help for quick-turnaround projects, short runs or overflow packaging projects. This expertise may include having access to special equipment or experience with a new packaging application or challenge. Illinois Growth Enterprises, Inc. (IGE), a co-packer in Rockford, Ill., has 39 years of industry experience in contract packaging and assembly services. It is a nonprofit organization that provides vocational training to people with disabilities, tailoring programs to meet the needs of each worker. Today, IGE employs more than 200 individuals with disabilities, helping them build work habits and skills that enable them to be successful in their careers.

In October 2008, IGE received a packaging assignment from Berner Foods, a market-leading supplier of quality food products, including natural cheese, specialty performance cheese and processed cheese in Dakota, Ill. Berner required IGE's services for packaging individual bowls of cheese dip into chipboard packaging, and then replicating freshness dates from the bowls onto the chipboard. The initial project had to be completed by December 2008. However, for IGE to accept the project, the company needed to invest in variable data coding equipment. Based on its positive experiences with equipment from Videojet Technologies Inc., Berner recommended that IGE consult with Videojet, which subsequently supplied a small character ink jet printer that enabled IGE to take on the project and meet its customer's needs.

Easy-to-use printer speeds setup

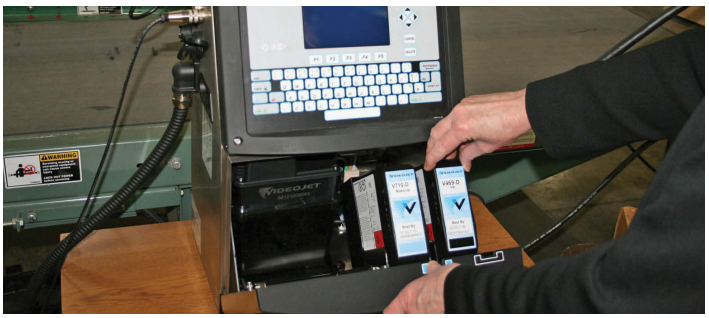
For the cheese dip project, IGE needed a reliable small character ink jet printer that was flexible, produced consistently clear codes and could keep up with production line speeds of 30 packages per minute. In addition, IGE had only five days to set up a production line, including installation of the new printer and employee training, for the Berner project to meet the customer's deadline. Consultants from Videojet recommended the Videojet® 1510 small character continuous ink jet printer to meet IGE's and Berner's coding requirements.

"Our business relies on meeting customer demands, so we pride ourselves on being flexible in terms of acquiring new equipment or organizing staff to accomplish our customer's projects," says Mike Miller, IGE vice president of operations. "Videojet worked to get us our printer within four days and trained our staff so we could begin packaging the cheese dip by the fifth day. Without the quick turnaround, we would not have been able to accept the packaging assignment from Berner."

IGE production managers set up the production lines and, thus, are responsible for setting up the printer for each coding project. Despite having little experience with coding equipment previously, the production managers quickly realized the Videojet 1510 printer is easy to use, with an intuitive interface that clearly displays what is being printed and notifies the managers if there is a fault code for troubleshooting. The printer's intuitive design helped ensure IGE could get started on Berner's packaging project in the short time frame.

"We had never done any kind of coding before, but Videojet's technical support team was always available when we had questions," Miller says. "The printer's screen makes it easy for our production managers to set up projects. Also, changing the ink and make-up fluids is a quick process."

The Videojet 1510 Smart Cartridge™ fluid containers feature an embedded microchip that identifies whether compatible fluid has been installed. This technology eliminates mistakes



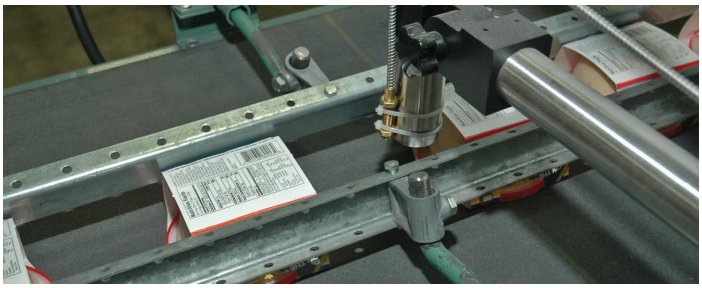
related to incompatible ink or make-up fluids, which can require a service call to fix. Miller says changing the ink and make-up fluids is "just like changing an ink cartridge in an office printer," which makes it simple for the production managers. Plus, if the printhead requires any cleaning, the printer's self-diagnostic and self-cleaning process takes only three to four minutes, minimizing downtime on the production line.

New equipment meets customer demand

Within IGE's 175,500-square-foot facility, the company has two 10-foot assembly lines to package two bowls of cheese dip into a double-pack chipboard box. The individual bowls of cheese shipped from the Berner facility were already coded with the freshness date. Then IGE used the Videojet 1510 printer to place identical freshness dates on the chipboard packaging. Since each bowl displays a freshness date, the chipboard packaging must display both dates, requiring two lines of code if the dates are different on each bowl. The dates needed to be visible on the box because they are used to track the cheese dip throughout the supply chain, and to indicate the expiration date to the consumer.

After the bowls of cheese dip were packaged and coded, they were checked for accuracy and placed on pallets. Because IGE had set up two assembly lines, they were able to package the bowls of cheese twice as fast, and the single Videojet 1510 printer kept up with product traveling down a conveyor from both assembly stations. To meet Berner's deadline, IGE ran the assembly line and the printer throughout multiple shifts per day, six days per week.

Within three weeks, Berner increased demand and assigned IGE another cheese dip packaging project, so IGE installed a second Videojet 1510 printer. For the new project, Berner asked IGE to assist in packaging and coding for single bowls of cheese dip.



"Initially, we switched our single Videojet printer to different lines to keep up with the demand created by the two packaging assignments," Miller says. "The printer is compact and convenient to move, so when we used one printer to accommodate both lines, changeover took only three or four minutes — which is really important to eliminate downtime. Eventually, we decided to get a second Videojet printer so we could run both the single and double packaging projects simultaneously."

Great results, future goals

Between the two packaging assignments, IGE used the Videojet 1510 printers to print codes on more than 750,000 packages within three months. Miller says the printers provided clear, accurate codes throughout the projects, regardless of how many hours they ran. If any of the codes on the chipboard had been unreadable or did not match the freshness date on the individual bowls, IGE's staff would have rerun the packages, resulting in unnecessary added costs. Uptime is critical for IGE, and if any equipment on the production line is down for any unplanned maintenance, the entire line must shut down, leading to lost productivity. The Videojet printers were able to keep up with IGE's production lines, helping to ensure IGE could meet Berner's deadlines.

"Right now, we have a waiting list of people with disabilities who need jobs, and our strategic plan is to help reduce that list," Miller says. "With the Videojet 1510 printer, we were able to grow our business by securing the Berner contract. Technology like the Videojet 1510 positions us to create new jobs for people on the waiting list."

IGE plans to leverage its new ability to provide marking and coding services to uncover new opportunities with existing customers and prospects. With the new capabilities afforded by the Videojet 1510 printer, IGE looks forward to continued growth and meeting new requirements as a co-packing partner.

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