

# Stick to it there's money in it!

by Michael B Halley FAIP



**T**he now traditional joint meeting for the benefit of members of the Australian Institute of Packaging (AIP) and the Surface Coating Australia Association (SCAA) was held at Box Hill in July. Two presenters Mike Profenna, Applications Manager at Labelmakers Group and Carl Pimentel Regional Director Asia Pacific-South, H.B.Fuller attended to enlighten the audience of eighty members and guests.

The nuts and bolts of labels was the title of Mike Profenna's address which was a run through the intricacies of labels and the application of same. Underpinning the theory of labels and their application is to ensure that customers do not complain that labels are not sticking to the product.

There are three main types of labels, self adhesive, wet glue and wrap which by the descriptor is reasonably self explanatory. Self adhesive better known as pressure sensitive as implied needs pressure to complete the adhesion. Wet glue is applied to the label by a machine at room temperature and can be completed at very high speed. Wrap labels have solid adhesive applied at manufacture and are stuck onto the container by the application of heat.

Selection of the type of label has many more considerations than "I like that one"! End use considerations include permanent adhesion, removability, recyclability and in keeping with public perception and increasing demand, if it biodegrades. Examples of the use of the different labels were given and are logical. Permanent adhesion would be needed for wine that will be cellared for some years; removable labels (secondary) will be seen on products that are on promotion that ends before the product use by date. Recyclability is important in trades where the bottle is reused, whilst repositionable labels are slowly becoming old technology. Newer re-closable labels are being developed to cater for the food packages such as those for cheese or meats that contain multiple serves in a convenience pack.

To apply labels successfully the supplier needs to check that the substrate of the label is compatible with the container to be labelled around such areas as the surface, the energy expended during application, the roughness of the surface and if it is flat or otherwise shaped. Mr Profenna gave an example that a wine bottle may be labelled on the body and the neck both of which need different considerations and also that it will have a scuff resistant coating.

Like our lifestyles speed is the essence of the job and whereas a decade ago labels were being applied at the rate of 100-150 a minute today it is around 800 as an average. Some applications to bottles at 1400 a minute are noted and according to Mike are about the edge of current technology. With increased speed come other considerations such as temperature and other climatic issues and container material response. Hot filled bottles distend and can later shrink whilst HDPE bottles blown in line, shrink by up to 2% over the 24 hours after application, giving need for careful post application checking.

Many other considerations were expanded upon including the end user and marketing wants as well as the current push for the no label look seen on beer as the breweries compete for a clientele that are somewhat programmed on style and looks.

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Carl Pimentel had a corporate message embedded in his presentation 'see beyond- using today to see tomorrow' which as his presentation unfolded became an obvious principle for companies in the supply of adhesives, not only for labelling but generally.

Much of his message was delivered using graphics to explain the machines used and the methods of application all of which reinforced the previous presentation. He explained how labels are presented to the user and the technical and performance checks that are required of the adhesive before it will be recommended for a specific label use.

Hot melt for Self Adhesive consists of rubber, additives, oil and resin with the latter being the area of most expertise and consideration particularly as there is a developing trend toward

'purpose built' formulations. Wet glue adhesives have four basic formulates, casein, modified starch, resin and blends that are casein free. In order typical uses for would be reusable bottles, sauces and liquor that do not require ice water resistance, plastic containers and non returnable glass containers.

Product selection will be determined by knowing all there is to know about the machine applying the labels. Carefully checking the product to which they are applied and its container is vital as are the running conditions including the environment and climatic issues.

Hot melt adhesive for wrap around labels gives the end user a lot more flexibility in both labels and the container selection. To get the optimum result you need to match the adhesive to the machine and substrate, that can sometimes be adhesive picking the label, or the label being applied with adhesive or in other cases the adhesive direct to a bottle and then the label.

It is quite obvious from both presentations that flexibility is the most important deliberation when thinking about labelling. Both speakers in answer to a question indicated that their industry is deliberating long and hard on the demands coming from consumers concerned about global warming and the possible effects. This sort of reinforces 'see beyond- using today to see tomorrow'.

Adrian Thomas, on behalf of SCAA members, thanked Mike and Carl whilst Ralph Moyle the chair of the AIP made a presentation of some labelled product.



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