

A NEW FACE FOR AN OLD CASE

Easily removable sticky labels offer more flexibility in the design of bottle cases

The drinks crate, made of durable plastic, has ensured safe and efficient transport of bottled drinks of all kinds for more than 50 years. This invention has demonstrated that packaging sustainability and re-usability have been around for a while. But what if the package design no longer meets one's needs? The labelcompetence network, consisting of Nopar International of Bremen, Märkische Etiketten of Berlin and Carl Hirsch of Munich – offers a real alternative. BREWING AND BEVERAGE INDUSTRY INTERNATIONAL spoke with Stefan Schmitt, Managing Director of Nopar International, about labelcompetence, sticky labels and their applications.

BREWING AND BEVERAGE INDUSTRY INTERNATIONAL:

Although the classic drinks crate has become less popular lately, according to GfK, it is still the most widely used beer-bottle packaging and transport device. Mr. Schmitt, what do you like about the traditional crate?

Stefan Schmitt: Well, I think a lot of the crate. I most appreciate the sustainability of this packaging. It is robust, versatile and reusable.



Permanently branded cases are difficult or impossible to adapt to ever-changing market conditions."

BBI: What are some disadvantages of a permanently branded drinks crate?

Schmitt: Permanently branded cases are difficult or impossible to adapt to ever-changing market conditions. To give this type of packaging a new face is a challenge. When it comes to introducing new brands or displaying alternate versions of one's corporate ID, a permanently branded (imprinted) case is not particularly adaptable for a fresh presentation.



BBI: You offer an alternative ...

Schmitt: Yes, this alternative is called Tacklite Stick&Go 4.0. A unique label medium suitable for short, medium and long-term crate labeling. An washable label can be used at the POS to make it easier for the customer

to find and make a decision, or as an event label to highlight special events or seasonal events.

The special thing about it is the adhesive technology. Equipped with a special adhesive based on synthetic rubber, our adhesive

material is 100 percent removable or washable at any time and leaves no residue.

In addition, we also offer a solution for branded crates. So if a brewer wants to use older crates with outdated labels, the old branding can be covered with Strong Tack, a permanent adhesive label film. Strong Tack is probably the strongest label film currently on the market.

BBil: *Are these new types of adhesive labels for beverage crates finding acceptance by breweries and beverage manufacturers?*

Schmitt: Feedback from the industry has been quite positive, as a matter of fact. Due our proven success thus far, the market is actually being stimulated by our presence, not least at the drinktec in Munich. You have to understand that this technology has to capture the minds of brand owners, buyers and technical staff. Anyone who has tried our system, however, tends to return. We are now expanding our activities to the whole of Europe.

” One of the most popular applications for our Tacklite labels involves longer-term use, for up to five years.”

BBil: *What are some applications for your labels?*

Schmitt: As I mentioned earlier, there are many applications. On the one hand, large breweries or beverage producers with many varieties and a very large purchase volume stand out solely by the fact that they can afford to decorate their boxes individually. On the other hand, smaller companies that use leftover crates often do not have the opportunity to differentiate themselves from the competition at the POS by designing their own or branding the crate. This is where Tacklite Stick & Go comes in.



Stefan Schmitt, Managing Director of Nopar International, one of three firms in the labelcompetence network

BBil: *Are there technical challenges in printing the labels? Can every design idea be implemented?*

Schmitt: Basically, yes. Let me illustrate this with some existing printing techniques. For example, with engraving, our medium can be used without any concerns. The surface is equipped with a dye-receiving layer, which is 100 percent compatible. With intaglio printing, it only makes sense to place very large orders, otherwise it's not worth the cost. The most common variant is HD flexo printing. Flexo printing has caught up with incredible quality in recent years. HD flexo printing represents the lion's share of label production in this sector.

Screen printing is also still in the running, especially when it comes to incorporating more unusual design elements, such as reliefs, structures or embossed prints. This is a more expensive option, but, depending on the application, it should not be ignored.

Since we offer our label films not only by the roll but also as sheets, UV offset printing is also an option. So if the required quantities are not enough to justify the cost of HD Flexo printing, offset printing can be used.

Last, but not least, there is the extremely ambitious digital printing option. Again, it is possible to work with all existing systems – UV-curing systems, for example. Digital printing enables prototype production as well as printing in smaller batches. Printing systems based on toner-based printers or indigo will soon be added to the Tacklite palette.

BBil: *Could you give an example of an application using adhesive labels for crates?*

Schmitt: One of the most popular applications for our Tacklite labels involves longer-term use, for up to five years. We've worked with a large-scale brewing conglomerate for many years. The crates used by this consortium have labeling surfaces on all four sides, either rectangular or round. Where the labels are affixed, they are protected by a peripheral edge so they don't peel off under the pressure of cleaning nozzles in the breweries' washing systems.

The advantage is that this enterprise can re-label individual brands as the corporate design changes, drastically reducing its investment (new labels instead of new crates).

More important is that damaged crate labels can be readily replaced, making them more attractive. We're all familiar with the problem of beverage crate presentation at the point of purchase due to repeated use, rough handling by the logistics firm, by the consumer or in the shop. The consumer usually prefers a presentable crate to an unsightly one.

” The consumer usually prefers a presentable crate to an unsightly one.”

BBil: *If the labels are affixed for a longer period, aren't there problems with removal?*

Schmitt: No, absolutely not. This type of adhesive has been in use for many years in the automotive sector as a transport protection film. I was introduced to this application with a former employer. It's always important to have the right composition of Tacklite media. Adhesive and film form a unit with



Closeup of the application procedure



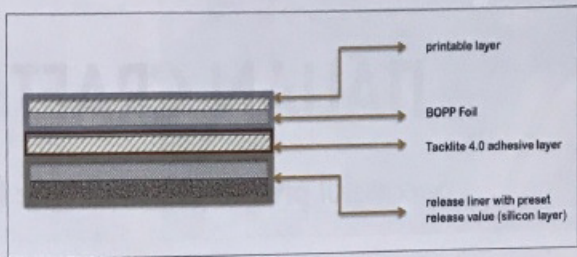
Kege can also have removable labels applied.

the dye-receiving layer. Further processing during the printing phase and final finishing with UV protective lacquers – better yet: UV-inhibiting PET laminate films – adds further value, making our product unique and safe.

” Even smaller craft breweries can now label their barrels with Tacklite, as they can be produced in small batches.”

BBII: Is the use limited to beverage crates or is it also possible to label barrels and thus extend corporate branding to these larger containers?

Schmitt: Yes, labeling of barrels has already been done with Tacklite. The long strips can be easily removed before washing the barrels, so that nothing stands in the way of further aseptic cleaning. Even smaller craft breweries can now label their barrels with Tacklite, as they can be produced in small batches.



Schematic image of the Tacklite adhesive film

BBII: Which companies are behind “labelcompetence”? What synergies are used in this network?

Schmitt: If we want to start from the outset of the process, I have to mention our own company first: Nopar International of Bremen. We make the films and also like to be involved in coordinating target markets with our partners.

Märkische Etiketten of Berlin is our very reliable printing partner, offering top-quality services. Together, we have developed easily removable labels. By applying a so-called glue neutralization

process, the adhesion of washable labels on the crate can be controlled more precisely. The Carl Hirsch company of Munich is responsible for logistics. In other words, application of labels onto crates or label-bands onto barrels using appropriate machine technology. The company already delivers a wide selection of products to the beverage industry, such as bottles, packaging, sleeves and much more – for both small and larger enterprises.

BBII: Many thanks for the interview. (bm) □