

Case study

Hilco Vision simplifies packaging coding and marking with thermal inkjet solution



HP Bulk Solvent Ink System increases uptime, reduces costs, and improves the working environment

Challenge

- Find a simple, cost-effective alternative for coding and marking packaging
- Improve uptime and productivity
- Reduce maintenance, operator intervention, and ordering cycles

Solution

- Partner with inc.jet to create a tailor-made system to meet specific conditions/product requirements
- Convert to HP Thermal Inkjet (TIJ) technology with solvent ink
- Install an HP Bulk Solvent Ink System to achieve uninterrupted printing

Results

- No downtime, resulting in greater productivity and cost savings
- Full integration with overall quality control process
- Greater capability for adding variable data
- User-friendly solution, resulting in minimal operator intervention



“We saw the HP Bulk Solvent Ink System as a way of increasing uptime, extending print head life, and reducing the number of times we need to order ink. Overall, we’re saving money, have uninterrupted production, and operators can concentrate on their core jobs.”

— Robert Levesque Jr., manufacturing supervisor, Hilco Vision

HILCO VISION

inc.jet
PROBLEM SOLVED

inc.jet designs software and hardware solutions for coding and marking applications using HP Thermal Inkjet (TIJ) technology. New solvent ink and the HP Bulk Solvent Ink System make it possible to print on a wide range of substrates, and expand the further adoption of the technology into the packaging industry. Hilco Vision, a user of inc.jet’s products, has installed multiple systems, reducing downtime, simplifying production, and increasing variable data capabilities.

“Many packaging companies have put up with the mess and cost of CIJ (continuous inkjet). Now, the availability of HP solvent ink and an effective delivery system, in a custom-designed configuration engineered by us, means that the whole packaging market is starting to change.”

—Martin French, marketing director, inc.jet

Industry:

Packaging

Company name:

Hilco Vision

Location:

Plainville, Massachusetts, USA

HP equipment:

HP Solvent Bulk Ink System
inc.jet Carton Black Plus ink

Website:

hilcovision.com
incjet.com



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Introducing HP Thermal Inkjet technology to the packaging market

In the 20 years that inc.jet has been an alpha partner of HP Specialty Printing Systems (HP SPS), developing solutions based on HP Thermal Inkjet (TIJ) 2.5 technology for addressing, mailing and graphics applications, the company has worked with mailing and addressing companies and has installed more than 50,000 machines worldwide.

“Until recently, TIJ was not considered suitable for packaging, and accounted for less than one percent of coding and marking printing in that market,” says Martin French, marketing director, inc.jet.

“TIJ typically uses water-based ink which does not adhere effectively to packaging substrates like films, foils, metal and glass. However, we saw the enormous potential in the packaging market, and worked with HP in the development of a solvent-based ink solution.”

One of the reasons inc.jet felt the opportunity was there was because the continuous inkjet technology (CIJ) used in packaging was complicated, messy, and generated odors that site workers did not like.

“We knew that when a solvent-based TIJ solution could be developed, the interest would be huge,” French says. “The biggest challenge for HP was to develop a print head that wouldn’t react adversely to solvent ink, which it did with the introduction of the solvent ink cartridge. Secondly, we needed a bulk ink delivery system to ensure that consumable costs were kept as low as possible. Again, HP delivered, and our customers are now starting to see the benefits.”

Saying “NO” to CIJ

HP solvent ink print heads and the HP Bulk Solvent Ink System provided the basis for inc.jet to design solutions for packaging applications and environments.

“Once we were able to mount the print heads in any orientation to suit user requirements, the next challenge was to build awareness of TIJ in the packaging market and generate sales,” French says.

To do that, inc.jet launched a “Say NO to CIJ” campaign that ran during 2016 promoting the advantages of the simpler, cleaner TIJ technology.

At the time, Hilco Vision, a global eye wear/eye care company headquartered in Plainville, Massachusetts, was in the process of seeking a replacement for the embossing machines it used for coding and marking packets of moisturized wipes for eye-glasses and respirators, and saw the campaign in a trade magazine.

Hilco Vision contacted inc.jet and after meetings and site visits, arranged a trial using HP solvent ink cartridges.

“We manufacture towelettes for a number of leading brands, and each one of the six million packages produced each week has the date and a machine identifier embossed on it,” says Robert Levesque Jr., manufacturing supervisor, Hilco Vision. “We were looking at new solutions for several reasons. Sometimes the embossing would affect the seals on the towelette, causing it to dry out before use. Inkjet is non-impact, so this is no longer a problem.”

“There was also an issue with downtime on each machine when the date was changed each day,” adds Keith Kinsella, production director, Hilco Vision. “We wanted a system that was user-friendly, started up quickly, had minimum downtime, and the ability to put more information on the packets for customers.”

Cost and productivity benefits

“For packaging businesses, coding and marking, while essential, is an operating cost; you can’t charge extra for doing it, and systems that require high maintenance are a distraction from the real operation,” French explains. “For Hilco Vision, TIJ was a worry-free solution.”

Levesque Jr. agrees: “The solvent ink works well on the foil film we use for the packages, and we are able to change the date with a key stroke, and add the exact time of printing. This enables full integration with our overall quality control process that also checks the weight, brand, and number of towelettes in each box. The system runs smoothly and can be started virtually instantly after the weekend shutdown.”

After the TIJ system had been running for several months, inc.jet introduced Hilco Vision to the HP Bulk Solvent Ink System with a 400ml ink capacity. The company installed the system on its eight towelette lines.

“The new system means that I only have to order ink once a year and the print heads last two to three times longer,” Levesque Jr. says. “Start-up is fast; there’s virtually no downtime, and we’re making cost savings, too.”

“The inc.jet solution is user-friendly, and fits into an area that is small and has a lot of moving parts,” he concludes. “We have a very good relationship with inc.jet and HP which have been helpful and responsive, and we are presently planning to add two more production lines similarly equipped.”

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