

LABELLING & NARROW WEB



Arrie van Wyk, production manager, with directors, Mark Sherriff and Barry Skjoldhammer, offering the best of label printing techniques for Labelpak's customers.

## Brands flourish with quality printing

**LABEL** printing receives scant attention until poor quality affects brand image. It's the care taken to maintain each and every brand's quality that has seen Gauteng-based Labelpak post 22% growth in the last year.

Between them, Labelpak directors Mark Sherriff and Barry Skjoldhammer boast almost 80 years' experience in the industry, and have seen the quality of printed labels go through massive changes since the 1970s.

'In the past, print choices were restricted by equipment and techniques,' says Mark. 'But today we're looking at photographic-quality labels that literally jump out at consumers in-store. Labels are a key part of marketers' efforts to protect and enhance brand image.'

Starting life as a family business, operating from a house in Alberton, Labelpak has evolved since Mark and Barry bought the company in 1991. 'Our first task was to deal with quality,' explains Barry. 'We had some good customers in the fruit juice and dairy sectors, so we began to rejuvenate the company by rebuilding the equipment to produce better quality labels.'

Later, they imported sophisticated equipment from Europe. 'Labelpak now prints some 1 500km of labels/day on its flexographic, lithographic and digital presses,' says Mark. 'Importantly, our growth this year has come primarily from repeat business, which means our customers are looking for consistently high-quality work.'

With three flexographic presses (a three-colour Flexodiecutter and a five-colour and a six-colour Aquaflex), two Codimag waterless offset presses, and two HP Indigo digital presses, Labelpak is in a position to offer the best, fastest and most cost-effective method of print for any given job.

A major turning point occurred eight years ago, when Labelpak installed South Africa's first Codimag semi-rotary waterless offset press, putting the company in a position to offer customers exceptionally high-quality lithographic print at attractive prices even on short- and medium-length runs. It also provided an extra advantage where in-line hot foiling was required.

'This created growing demand for even shorter run lengths and more specialised work and opened the way for us to invest in digital printing. We're now one of only five label printers in the country to offer digital label printing,' Mark continues. 'Digital printing has had a huge impact on the printing of high-quality labels expected by agencies and brand managers. The more sophisticated markets within the FMCG sector demand this quality and service, and we're geared for flexibility. Someone can bring us a concept and we take it from there – through our in-house design studio to job completion,' he adds.

Years of experience allow for a fast assessment of which print method is most suitable, and the number and variety of machines housed in Labelpak's 2 000m<sup>2</sup> shop ensure fast turnaround times. 'In assessing

jobs, we take into account the colour range afforded by digital printing where necessary, as well as waste, which runs at 1 to 2% on digital; 4% on waterless offset and up to 10% on flexographic printing, making digital printing extremely cost-effective and environmentally-friendly,' adds Mark.

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Another feature of this go-ahead operation is Labelpak's own slitting unit, which allows the company to import materials directly and to offer one of the broadest ranges of label substrates in the country.

Current customers who bring repeat business include Coca-Cola, Parmalat, Annique, Clicks and Famous Brands. 'We've built our business primarily on word of mouth,' Mark says. 'We adhere to Best Principles in Manufacturing and we received ISO 9001 accreditation three years ago, which ensures consistency. In our business, repeatability is as vital as dependability.'

Both directors attribute Labelpak's growth and success to good market penetration and a commitment to dependable, reliable service. 'Our first month's turnover was R250 000,' Barry muses. 'Now, 18 years later, our turnover for October was R6-million. We believe the key has been our staff – many of whom have been with us from the start – combined with our industry expertise, dedication to quality and constant upgrading of equipment and training.'



Mark Sherriff bases his company's work ethic on a simple truth – brands flourish with quality printing.

While many companies are finding times difficult, Labelpak is working long and hard, and has once again outgrown its premises. 'We're fully subscribed right now, and need another press. While we're coping with the exciting range of jobs that the digital and Codimag equipment have enabled us to handle, we're also experiencing growing demand for high-quality long-run work. For this reason, our next investment will probably be in a high-speed full-rotary UV flexo press,' Barry explains.

The future's looking rosy for Labelpak and its customers. 'Whether it's labels for the pharmacy, food, engineering or entertainment industries, we base our work on a simple truth – brands flourish with quality printing,' concludes Mark.