

## Voices of the Industry: Why go linerless?

**Joanna Costello**

*At the recent AWA Release Linear conference in Amsterdam, I asked the industry experts what they thought about Linerless Labels. Is this something that will become more popular? Currently, the market share is only 1.75% (Source: AWA). Editor of NarrowWebTech's sister magazine Etiketten-Labels, Holger Knoell, provides the following argument:*

"Unfortunately, linerless is not a general solution for label production as there are certain limitations in terms of shape. Linerless labels have to be of a quadrangular shape as die-cutting is not possible. Furthermore, all printed labels are positioned on a continuous substrate web until dispensed. For separation they must either be cut or supplied with a perforation line. The use of transparent substrates and the printing of opaque White prior to the application of the coloured inks may contribute to overcoming the limitations in shape. However, this further restricts the range of use for linerless labels."

*Here are what the linerless experts had to say to my question "why go linerless?"*

"Companies that choose to go with linerless labels demonstrate their awareness of environmental issues, which is a direct benefit to



**Mauro Fadiga, Sales and Marketing Director Arca Etichette**

their image. The price of linerless labels made by PP (polypropylene) is in line with, or even less, than conventional paper labels. And

this, even considering the cost of a wax/resin TT ribbon, necessary for optimum print quality on plastic materials. With linerless labels, all direct disposal costs are eliminated. The absence of a release liner and its thickness, cuts the number of line stops for the label roll replacement in half, this results in increased productivity and lower labour costs. "

"Linerless technology for the labelling industry is being used in variable information labelling applications and prime labels for fresh



**Jackie Marolda, Vice President / Sr. Consultant AWA Alexander Watson**

meat, poultry, and fish for retail pre-packaged trays. Linerless technology for prime labels continues to advance, due in part to the development of in-line label printing and converting, which puts the label printer and converter in control of the whole process. Linerless may also save cost by eliminating the release liner component, and also solves current issues in relation to recycling/reuse of spent release liner – a serious discussion point with respect to traditional pressure-sensitive labels. "

"Cost and environmental pressures have made linerless technology the solution of choice for many retailers and packaging buyers. The



**Paul Beamish, Sales Director at Ravenwood**

linerless label system has multiple formats from a top label right through to a slideable sleeve if required and can be supplied on paper, card or film.

The environmental benefits are not just the fact that no expensive liner is required which then needs to be disposed of, the system allows for more labels on a roll, reduced weight, lower transportation costs and improved efficiency and cleanliness within the factory environment. "

"Linerless remains a niche application in the pressure sensitive label (PSL) market but has made signifi-



**Richard Southward, Market Development Manager, Labels at Innovia Films**

cant in-roads into print-and-apply (secondary packaging labels) and as primary labels into fresh pro-

duce applications. For the primary label markets, the key technology providers work with co-supplier partners to offer "turn-key" solutions. Labelling costs can be reduced with a linerless solution but it is not a simple "no liner = 30% cost reduction". The leading technologies offer total-cost-of-ownership benefits through efficiency gains throughout the value chain. There is a drive by brand owners to reduce their environmental impact and linerless labelling offers a viable route forward. Filmic substrates for linerless labels offer brands further benefits and continue to maximise brand impact on the shelf. " "

" The industry does not realise that, if nothing is done, the traditional self-adhesive market will be lost in favour of less wasteful tech-

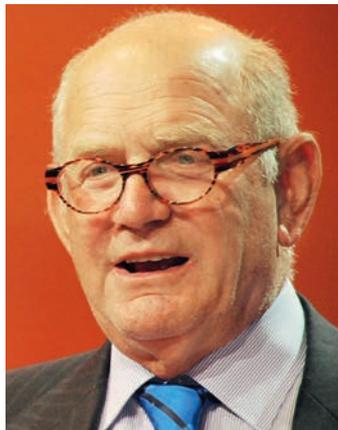


**Francois Bayzelon, CEO at ETI Converting Technology**

nologies that are competing with the self-adhesive market. Changes will be needed because the self-adhesive labels, in its current appearance, wastes 60% of the material produced by major converters. There is an alternative that does not require any modifications on label applicators. The Miniliner technology using ultra-thin film, from 12 to 18 micron, is a valuable option and can be considered as a partial "green" solution. It is also very important that the liner volume's reduction is not strictly limited to a few marginal emerging markets for "grocery scales" and other manual labelling "portable printers". Those markets, if they really exist, are not the only possibility for linerless or liner reduction.

The Industry mixes cost reduction and waste reduction. Ironically, both are linked, but waste reduction is seen as a ghost saving, not visible in short term, i.e.: less downtime on labelling lines, more labels per roll, better corporate "green" image and savings on waste management. The focus should be put on the "green" and the sustainability. " "

" Sooner or later someone will force us to get rid of the liner, for environmental reasons. I am pretty sure that there will be legislation in



**Thomas Rink, President at Ritrama**

the direction of a liner tax, because the liner is considered packaging material which needs to be disposed of after dispensing of the labels. The Linerless label also uses considerably less material, hence lower logistics costs, more labels on a roll, lower environmental impact, consequently lower costs. It's understandable that some label converters have reservations, because making linerless labels versus traditional, represents a change in their technology, but the right approach should be to regard it as an opportunity and not a threat. " "

" These days one can see a high interest in linerless labels. The advantages of linerless labels addressing sustainability and costs savings are obvious. In fact PSA linerless labels have been around for more than a decade. Examples such as wrap-arounds in food packaging or hand applied labels in weight scaling in grocery stores have proved the efficiency and robustness of linerless labels in practice. UV-curing silicones allow in-line coating on top of the printed filmic or paper



**Stefan Stadtmüller, VP Surface Technologies at Evonik Industries**

substrate. New concepts such as micro-perforation, and innovations in raw material (activatable adhesives) and equipment will help to broaden applications and make linerless label production and dispensing more efficient. " "

" I believe in the future of sustainable linerless labels. Saving waste, reducing environmental impact and optimizing the labelling pro-



**Roelof Klein, Commercial Manager at MaanGroup**

cess, linerless labels will gain market share within the pressure sensitive label market and many other applications. But I also see that co-operation within the entire value chain is needed to overcome the hurdles in different process steps and to ensure a bright future for linerless labels. This is why we are teaming-up with brand owners, labellers, labelling machinery suppliers, printing companies and even paper manufacturers. " "