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Digital Bag Printer Enhances Packaging Process



Baking bag engaging with the Maximizer print cylinder.

Dawn Food Products Inc. got its start more than a century ago as a small bakery in Jackson, MI. In 1920, the owners sold the bakery and opened the nation's first industrial mix company, which they named Dawn Donuts for the time of day that bakers did their work. Since then, Dawn has grown into a global manufacturer and distributor of bakery products with more than 40 facilities located in the United States, Europe, Canada, and Latin America and 4000 products sold to 40 different countries.



Baking bag with 9 x 8-in. printed ingredient statement comes off the print cylinder and is bundled in the restacker for ejection onto the conveyor.

The plants that provide bakery mixes had evolved using different label designs and application methods. The solution to this inefficient operation was found when Dawn's Jackson, MI, general manager saw Iconotech's Maximizer digital bag printer at a trade show and informed Jennifer Wurzer, Dawn's product manager, ingredients.

"Our goal was to centralize label formatting so that information, design, and layout would be the same in all of our plants," says Wurzer. "We reviewed many different systems available in the industry, and the Maximizer bag printer offered several benefits over other systems. In addition to upgrading our labeling process, we realized higher print quality and benefited from maximum equipment utilization." A cross-functional team reviewed the equipment and approved the purchase of the printer.

The first piece of equipment went to the Michigan plant. After initial success there, identical equipment was installed in the Louisville and Denver plants. Within a year after the original bag printer was purchased, Dawn was using Iconotech's equipment to print labels directly on its bags in three plants. A fourth printer was purchased for an additional manufacturing plant in Seattle.



**Overview of Maximizer system
showing printed bags collecting in
the restacker**

The Maximizer is used to print product information, artwork, logos, and bar codes on more than 20 different bags that are used for hundreds of bakery mix and base products. The procedure is simple. The user-friendly software that comes with the Maximizer allows an operator to design the print message—including text, graphics, logo, and bar code—on a PC. The print message is transmitted to an Iconotech thermal imager at the plant, which burns the image onto a disposable 11 × 32-in. stencil film made of nonwoven fiber with a thin plastic backing. The print message is burned through the plastic at 200 dpi, while the fiber backing remains intact to maintain the integrity of the stencil.



**Bundled bags with 9 × 8-in.
printed ingredient statement
are stacked onto a pallet in
alternating layers for stability.**

The imaging film is then placed onto the printer's rotating print cylinder. An operator loads bags onto the printer's lift-table magazine, which holds as many as 100 flat bags. The lift table rises as bags are picked one at a time from the top of the stack. Each bag is picked up by vacuum cups that feed it between nip rollers into the machine's press. The Maximizer prints the bag, accumulates them in bundles of 25, and discharges the bundles onto a conveyor.

The Maximizer's quick-changeover feature for new print messages is particularly important to Dawn Foods. When the information on the label must change for any reason, label editing is as simple as opening and editing the electronic file. From there, the operator replaces the imaging film on the print cylinder. According to Wurzer, there is minimal downtime during changeover. Dawn's manufacturing schedulers give a list of products that will be run the following day to the printer operator, who prepares the bags the day before production.

"We integrated the system in-house, along with the help of Iconotech's technical people," Wurzer explains. "The technical training Iconotech provides is excellent, and everyone at the plant was really impressed with the training aspect of Iconotech's system."

Dawn found significant benefits by virtually eliminating label stock. Now, exact quantities of each bag can be printed as needed, saving time and effort.

"Overall we are very satisfied," says Wurzer. "When you look at a bag, the label has to be clear every time. The Maximizer does that for us."

Iconotech, Clinton, CT, supplies case-printing equipment that provides the benefits of a true generic case-printing program while featuring preprint quality print and a large print area. For more information, call 800-521-0194 or visit www.iconotech.com.

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