



## Cashing in on Sustainability

Switching from Pre-printed cases to Generic Case Printing is how companies save significant dollars and resources by consolidating sku's into common case sizes and letting the power of quantity purchasing take over. The traditional model for purchasing pre-printed corrugated cases negatively impacts both profit and planet. When companies make the switch to a Generic Case Printing Program, they can save anywhere from tens, to hundreds of thousands of dollars annually and make substantial progress in the conservation of resources and the elimination of excessive warehouse space, printing plates, scrap and obsolesce.

The negative pre-print cycle starts because the trigger to order comes from the sku related production schedule and sales forecast, which are almost never accurate. As a result, ordering pre-printed corrugated shipping cases unfortunately leads to inventory overload, because it is driven by fear and speculation. Fear, because shutting down a production line, delivering late, delivering short, or not at all has extreme consequences. Speculation exists because of the need to have sufficient inventory to meet the forecast. Therefore, buying sku specific cases is done well in advance so they will be in inventory when production is ready. Excess case inventory accumulates from over purchasing to eliminate the possibility of running out during a production run. From the buyer's standpoint, it is the lesser of two evils to over purchase than suffer the consequences of shutting a line down. However, excess inventory is subject to becoming lost, forgotten, damaged or obsolete. Ultimately, it becomes scrap.

By contrast, ordering generic cases puts control in the buyer's hands. With a generic case program, the trigger to order is based on usage for a COMMON CASE SIZE, not on a SKU, and this is HUGE. Ordering a greater number of a generic case sizes rather than a lesser number of a specific sku, drives the unit costs down dramatically in addition to reducing inventory. The hazardous aisles, jumbled inventory, overloaded warehouses, leased outside space all go away. Space once taken by obsolete inventory can now be converted back to productive activities. Case inventories can easily be viewed to verify if stocks are getting low. Yes, the buyer will have to plan for a certain safety net of generic cases, but the safety net for 10 generic case sizes pales by comparison to that of 500 skus. And if one supplier cannot make a delivery, the absence of printing plates makes it possible to get it from another supplier.

Eliminating printing plates frees the buyer from being tied to one corrugated supplier and gives him real purchasing leverage. The cost advantage of bidding out case purchases to several suppliers is a terrific assurance of getting the lowest cost.

Two of the most common methods of Generic Case Printing are Ink Jet and Labeling. Ink Jet attempts to replicate a pre-printed case with text, graphics and bar codes. However, print quality does not consistently stand up in comparison to pre-print, and there are issues with reliability and high maintenance costs. Also, being mounted in-line, ink jet adds its own share of downtime to the production line.

Labeling solutions offer the promise of higher reliability than ink jet and the opportunity to provide better graphic quality as well. However, they cannot compare to pre-print in terms



of print area for including the desired graphics and text on the case, and as a result, make little marketing impact. The confined print area of a label is suitable only for the essential product identification necessary for the supply chain, and the larger the label the more cost is added to the box. Hand applying labels is slow, sloppy and labor intensive. Automatic print and apply labeling machines mounted on the production line carry the same threat of downtime as ink jet equipment. Anytime you install anything in-line, you have potentially created a bottleneck that can restrict the flow of production.

Another Generic Case Printing method is in-house Flexographic Printing. While good printed results can be achieved if done correctly, there are problems with this process. First, there is the cost of each of the individual printing plates. Then, there is the storage all of the plates somewhere and retrieval of the appropriate plate for each new run. And, maintaining print quality is very much subject to operator skill as well as the condition of the print plates.

By contrast, Iconotech's case printing technology offers simplicity, flexibility and pre-print quality. Easy PC based print message design makes for a nimble system with the ability to make changes within seconds. There are no plates to store and no lead-time for plates to be made. The machines are virtually maintenance free and the ink is a non-toxic oil-in-water emulsion. With the graphics capability and the large 32" x 11" print area, opportunities abound to enhance product marketing and even create point-of-purchase cases. In the end, the user gets the huge cost advantage of buying and stocking generic cases and a system that is flexible, reliable and easy to use all at a cost of one cent less per print including labor.

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*To learn more about Generic Case Printing or the Iconotech line-up of case and bag printers, visit our web site at [www.iconotech.com](http://www.iconotech.com) or call our sales staff at 800-521-0194.*