

The case for digital

Ofer Nir, VP Marketing & Business Development for Velox explains the benefits of direct-to-shape digital decoration for mass production for the rigid packaging industry

Digital decoration technology has made the packaging industry more exciting than ever before, igniting new creative possibilities for brands, allowing more operational agility for manufacturers, and encouraging leading industry players to explore new directions. In direct-to-shape (DTS) decoration such as for aerosol cans and plastic tubes, digital decoration technology in the required quality, for any volume run and at a competitive cost, is key, however not easily found. Velox, a company focused on solutions for mass production direct-to-shape decoration, has managed to develop such technology that is already commercially deployed.

What does “direct-to-shape” mean and what technologies are used to accomplish it?

“Direct-to-shape” means printing the desired decoration directly on three-dimensional ‘shaped’ objects, such as aerosol cans, plastic, and aluminum tubes rather than printing on a flat separate substrate (such as label or sleeve) and then attaching it to the container. Unlike label printing, in which digital technologies have been in use for quite a while, the domain of direct-to-shape decoration is still completely based on analogue technologies such as dry offset, silk-screen and flexo. In the aluminum monobloc aerosol industry, dry offset is de-facto the sole direct-to-shape decoration technology.

With the introduction of Velox’s digital technology earlier this year, at last there is a direct-to-shape digital decoration technology that can really replace the

analogue technologies. Velox IDS 250, being designed specifically for mass production deployments, is the only DTS digital decoration solution that meets the required production speed, quality and low total cost-of-ownership.

What can digital decoration provide design-wise that is not currently possible with analogue printing?

First, I would like to clarify that the term ‘digital decoration’ is not referring to a specific technology, but to a large family of technologies that are ‘digital’ in nature. These technologies can be significantly different from one another in all aspects – quality, features, reliability, TCO, and more. My answers here refer specifically to Velox’s disruptive digital decoration technology.

The core benefit of all digital decoration technologies is the elimination of plates and screens delivering agility and responsiveness. Velox technology delivers several unique capabilities that deliver a disruptive impact compared to analogue decoration. First, up to 11 colour inks, truly enabling ultra-wide colour gamut and highly accurate colour matching.

Second benefit is the selective white. In most deployments of aerosols dry offset decoration, white, applied as a base coating, is by definition at full cover. With Velox’s highly opaque selective white, brands can now create artwork that combines, in a single design, logos and images that require white base colouring with metallic effects achieved by applying specific colour on the aluminum substrate.

Third benefit is the high-quality photo.



Velox IDS250



Velox decorated aerosol cans and tubes

The IDS 250 delivers unlimited colour gradients (ombre effects) and high-quality photorealistic images. The 11-colour process delivers these colour gradients in an ultra-smooth, not grainy, manner.

An additional design benefit is the removal of the seam line or gap that is part of any analogue decoration technology, resulting in true 360° 'endless' designs and a more high-end look. In addition, digital embellishments (such as digital gloss, digital matte, and digital tactile/embossing inks), enable additional creative design possibilities.

Do you agree that brand owners can achieve a significant competitive edge using digital DTS decoration? If so, can you explain how?

On top of the decoration capabilities I mentioned earlier that allow brands to stand out on the shelf, Velox DTS digital decoration, delivering full production speed and applicable for mass production, enables brands the flexibility to quickly respond to shifts in the market, have product proliferation, be more dynamic with designs, and interact with consumers via the actual product packaging. This is only possible with the agile decoration technology Velox is offering.

How is Velox IDS 250 different from other digital solutions?

Velox technology was developed from scratch specifically for the application of mass production direct-to-shape digital decoration. The technology is composed

of two pillars: a novel printing process optimised for digital objects printing and a set of uniquely formulated digital inks. By combining the two together, Velox created a digital decoration technology that delivers a performance leap. The printing quality, the high standard ink properties, the ability to print on multiple substrates, the high speed, and the reliability of the machine is what makes the Velox solution an industrial-grade solution.

What are the benefits of analogue and digital for both short runs and mass production jobs?

Before Velox introduced its technology to the market, digital decoration technologies were used only for label/sleeve printing, which, by definition, limits the number of applications relevant, such as special marketing/promotional campaigns. This creates a situation where brands are using



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analogue technologies for every day, on-the-shelf products, and digital decoration technology for special campaigns and other low volume jobs.

With Velox, this is changed. We've developed a dedicated technology that ensures high-quality decoration, speed that meets and even exceeds that of a production line, and a low total cost-of-ownership. Now that such technology is available it can be used as a principal technology, for any run length, and not only for niche applications and short runs.

2018 was pretty exciting for Velox. What did you accomplish, and what can we see in the coming year?

Yes, in the spring, we formally released the Velox IDS 250, and then announced not only an installed customer, but the use of our technology to produce a six-design beauty product campaign available for retail. In addition, we have secured several other key accounts, for which now we are in the process of manufacturing the systems. Most recently, we announced a \$32 million (approx. £28 million) investment in our company and solution by leading investors who share our vision to provide a superior, smart business solution for the rigid packaging industry. In the coming year, you will see that investment result in more innovation, and converters and brand owners taking advantage of it all.

For more information:
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