

How packaging features enhance storytelling

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Purpose: *Packaging is marketing and marketing is storytelling. When it comes to wine bottle packaging, the printed front and back labels are the lead storytellers. Manufacturers of narrow web printing presses and their printer partners are investing in highly innovative print capability that help brands enhance the storytelling. What highly decorative packaging features and technical properties are helping brands tell their story and engaging consumers at the retail shelf?*

Design/Methodology: *More than ever all stakeholders in wine packaging, from the designer to the printer and substrate manufacturer, are collaborating about packaging decoration possibilities. For glass bottle formats including labels, closures, and bottles, the entire supply chain is embracing the enhancement of the consumer and brand owner experience. A comprehensive review of pressure sensitive label technology with comments on closure and bottle innovation, explores how these stakeholders are helping bring brands to life with new product features.*

I draw on eight years of technical experience leading label and packaging development for clients in the North American wine and consumer goods market. Furthering my insights and knowledge with attendance at WAWGG, Unified Wine & Grape Symposium, BCWGC and LABEL EXPO tradeshows and working on projects with the design community and vendor partners. This paper is a culmination of my experience.

Findings: *1. More often than not, the printed label design is the lead storyteller and has the most influence on purchase decision as compared to other elements of the package. Recent investments in print decoration technologies by press manufacturers and package printers help to deliver both visual and tactile print effects to the wine package creating a point of difference at the retail shelf and helping the consumer get into the message.*

2. Label printers that submit their work to prestigious print competitions are recognized for technical excellence achievements. Being declared the best in the world for technological excellence provides a sense of pride and is cause for celebration amongst package printing companies, designers and brands.

Practical implications: *The desire amongst forward thinking package printing companies to both help brands succeed and “invest to be the best” at their trade helps deliver innovation at shelf. The result is compelling storytelling for the winemaker and brand.*

Key Words: consumer engagement, innovation, collaboration, label decoration, package

Commonly used terms in this paper:

Closure – the screw cap, crown cap or the cork and capsule combination used to seal the bottle.

Substrate – the label paper or film that the design is printed on. May provide the texture also.

Label stock – same as above.

Label decoration – all the color, texture, foil and other treatments printed on the label.

Finishing touches – same as above.

Press approval – an event where the client attends the print run and approves the final version.

Variable imaging – the process of numbering limited editions or customizing each label numeric, alpha, alpha-numeric, random or consecutive.

1. FRONT AND BACK LABEL INNOVATION

Today, the business of wine labels and packaging in North America is an international business. For a North American winery, it is not uncommon for the glass bottle to be manufactured in Asia and the closure, design and label printing to come from a far or neighboring state/province. A winemaker that already wears many hats is charged to co-ordinate the timing of all these packaging details with his valued supply chain. Label printer selection is especially critical to the winery because the label is usually the lead storyteller and not every printer can print a wine label well. According to Heidelberg, North American printers are operating with some of the oldest equipment in the world. The good news is that in a recent study conducted by Graphic Monthly Canada, in the next 2 years, 4.3% of all printers will invest 15% of annual sales in equipment hardware and software and most of the investment will come from the need to operate more efficiently. Investment goals can range from the need for more efficient workflow, reduced turnaround times and make ready times to the need to enter new markets. There are a select few press manufacturers and package printers that are focusing on combination printing and high level finishing capability. These investments are helping to take wine brands to a whole new level of brand expression. Wine label printing is a very specific field of labeling and not every printer will print a wine label well. It requires a deep understanding of print techniques such as foil stamping and emboss, in some cases, on temperamental label paper. Proudly in Canada, there are a several package printers that are investing to serve the highly innovative global wine market such as ASL Print FX, Tapp Technologies, A1 Label, Collotype and CCL.

The wine business is also a highly regulated business. Whether the regulating body is TTB, VQA, AOC, DOCG or another, the packaging and labeling standards must be followed precisely. For wine label decorators (printers), it is important to know these rules and help brands comply with front label, back label and closure regulations. A good printer will provide 100% of prepress functions in-house and know the rules to help brands comply.

Printing Press Manufacturers help enhance brands.

Almost anything is possible when it comes to label decoration. Printing presses are being designed to print virtually all capabilities in one pass, in virtually any combination. Add a robust selection of unique label papers and films to carry the decoration treatments and you have a formula for successful storytelling! To a brand manager or designer, print innovation provides enormous opportunity to add POP and WOW to the brand and message. Press manufacturers such as Swiss made Gallus are shaping the future of wine packaging with highly innovative, modular press capability.

For high end work, the Gallus RCS presses have up to 12 print stations which allow the printer to build complex print constructions and highly decorative effects all in one pass, making the label not only stunning but as cost effective as possible. These presses have the ability to run almost any pressure sensitive label stock including clear and white films, metalized substrates, gloss coated papers and many different uncoated and textured wine stocks. Multi-layer “coupon” and perforation feature style constructions are also an opportunity. At any of the print stations the printer is able to print flexographic color, hot stamp, cold foil or silk screen. In addition, there are many specialty coatings and varnishes that enhance appearance and create effects. Magnetic dies are utilized to cut the shape of the label, allowing for unique shapes.

The Gallus press multi-tasks brilliantly! It is a modular inline press with direct drive technology, reduced set up time and waste reduction features. This press is very efficient and leans towards sustainability. All this while printing wine labels with substantial bling! Label printers are investing in these presses and their press operators are embracing the opportunity to help create dialogue, impact and so much more for the brands they serve. The press is the hardware. Combine this hardware with the creativity of the technical project team and the brand enhancement story begins. Designers and brands have the opportunity to ask the printer for a discovery meeting to see examples of “before” and “afters”. These testimonials help to demonstrate how specialty print effects help bring brands to life.

Collaboration between the printer, designer and marketer is key.

Printer cultures that move away from a traditional “print job” approach and reach out collaboratively to think beyond the printed surface towards storytelling and branding are usually award winning print houses and good project managers. They establish preproduction events and cross-functional teams to gain understanding of client objectives up front and they clear the path towards project success. They have proven that the most successful projects are the result of team work and attention to the details. Collaboration between the brand, designer, printer and supply chain takes place as early as 1 year before launch date and shares brand and packaging strategy with all stakeholders. A “show and tell” session that includes award winners and best practices helps to identify the range of possibilities for a new project. Cross functional teams first

gain an understanding of the project objectives and build relationships with all stakeholders. The result is a superior finished product as well as an efficient press approval process.

Decoration technologies that deliver POP and WOW.

As indicated by Collotype, 50% of wine consumption involves a new wine experience. Innovative packaging that engages consumers will help brands increase their share of this new wine experience. In packaging circles, we know that 80% of the time, if the consumer picks up that brand off the shelf, she will buy it. Printers and designers that work together will increase the likelihood of getting that brand in the consumer's hand. The first moment of truth (made famous by P&G leaders), is this "choosing moment" and relies on consumer engagement at shelf to influence purchase decision.

Described below are examples of print decoration technologies or finishing touches that help put packages in the hands of consumer's:

1. Foil delivers shimmer and style, making wine labels simply beautiful. There are no substitutes for foil, although metalized papers and print treatments may try to mimic the effect. Foil is very reflective and provides richness and depth. I have heard many designers say "when it comes to wine labels, nothing else looks or feels like foil" Today, foils are brushed, security hologram, holographic, color tinted or they can be overprinted with color or effects for a custom look. Foils are becoming more sophisticated and intricate producing 3D effects and the illusion of light and movement.
2. Combining multiple foils with emboss treatments turns heads. At LABEL EXPO, Pantec showed what is possible with the Rhino flatbed hot foil embossing system. The Rhino system prints multiple foils, intricate shapes and sizes of foil as well as emboss and micro-deboss on uncoated paper stocks, providing brilliant effects and brand security.
3. Tactile high builds or raised varnishes create texture and can be combined with foil to create a 3D look or sculptured effect. High Builds are being used to create contrasts in design such as a glossy high build on a matte substrate or visa-versa. Multi-level high builds and sculpted emboss techniques add various degrees of height to enhance the effect. Despite the growth of high builds there are some brands and designers that will not convert because they believe that the natural beauty and texture of traditional emboss/deboss on uncoated stocks cannot always be duplicated.
4. Color logic has launched a proprietary process metallic color system that produces metalized color effects for shimmer and shine, creating an alluring contrast in wine label design. Over 250 metallic colors can be produced using only 5 colors. Their unique system can create watermark-FX where artwork can hide patterns and images in a subliminal way, gradation-FX, the ability to vignette from one metallic color to the next or dimensional-FX where a selective area of the artwork appears to change color and dimension from a lighter to a darker hue.

5. Labels that talk brought to brands by CCL and Soundpaper embeds audio, animations, URLs, coupons and other media directly into a 2 Dimensional barcode, read by a smart phone.
6. Complex diecuts are being used to create interest in a design. To get around the more complex designs that do not have a leading edge for label dispensing, printing on clear film is an option. This method may help to create a premium no label look. Bikini labels (2 or more separate labels with top and bottom) can also be more complex and achieve excellent results.
7. Perforation technology is being incorporated into designs to allow consumers to tear off a brand reminder for next purchase.
8. Full color coverage. Coated stocks are engineered to provide the best possible printing surface. Compelling use of color in a design can attract the consumer's eye when merchandised amongst more traditional old world uncoated stock presentations.

There are many more stunning visual effects available such as glitter, color shift, holographic varnishes, unique window cuts to name a few. Reach out and go further with your package to www.aslprintfx.com, www.alllabel.com, www.cclind.com, www.collotype.com , www.elitelabel.com www.tapplabel.com and learn more about how each printer helps to enhance wine brands and packages.

Extending the footprint of a package.

When packaging becomes a significant feature of a brand strategy, it can be very powerful. Packaging features such as extended content labels are designed to expand the printed real estate on the package and can turn an ordinary label into a consumer engagement tool. Multiple printed panels are easy to open and reseal, engaging the consumer over multiple pages while the package is right in their hands. Extended content labeling is embraced by pharmaceutical and food brands. In the wine business, WS Packaging prints an extended content back label for Cline Cellars revealing several printed panels. Consumers simply open or peel back the top panel to reveal! Storytelling on extended content labels may include promotional information, tasting, pairing or winemaking notes and more.

To enhance consumer interaction with the package even further, a mobile strategy merges the physical world with the virtual world. QR codes make the package interactive and are easily scanned when rules of engagement are followed such as size restrictions and safety areas. Augmented reality uses printed markers that cause images to come to life or enable application software for image recognition. NFC technology is emerging as a marketing tool for social sharing and following or coupon redemption as an example.

“Perf and go” features allow consumers to interact with a package and remove a brand reminder panel from the front or back label for future reference and purchase. This is achieved

through deadening areas of the label adhesive and adding a perforation around the deadened area to aid removal of the brand reminder by the consumer. Check out “Wine Find” from Collotype.

Wine papers & films help differentiate brands.

There are a multitude of premium wine papers and films available today to help brands differentiate at shelf. Metalized stocks, paper stocks (coated and uncoated), eco-friendly stocks, and white and transparent film stocks are available. High performance of label papers and films at shelf and on the manufacturing floor is dictated by many factors. That said, printers, brands and designers always work with a material supplier such as Avery Dennison or Raflatac to help select the right substrate for the application early in the design process. Avery Dennison has launched a website www.enhanceyourbrand.com that helps to inspire and guide designers and brands towards innovative solutions. Shortly a new ipad app called designers showcase will become available. This app is designed to be a packaging forum for designers and brands <http://designersshowcase.averydennison.com/en/home/deeper-into-packaging/packaging-lessons.html>. Some striking stock selections that are turning heads include Frozen Orion Diamond, Metalized, White Shursheen and Black Vellum.

Current Favorites and Trends in wine label printing:

1. Shimmer and shine for extra bling – derived from coatings, foil and laminations.
2. Coated stocks with 100% vibrant color coverage.
3. 3D with foil or lenticular effects.
4. Tactile effects – gloss and matte, multi-level.
5. Combining multiple techniques for additional contrast.
6. Extended content – peel back or perforation features.
7. Complex die cuts including bikini, unique shapes and window cuts.
8. No label look.
9. Social media interaction - QR codes/ augmented reality.
10. Limited edition numbering (variable imaging).
11. Multiple versions across the web ie brand strategy includes more than 1 design by varietal.
12. Brand protection.
13. Sustainability with eco-friendly applications.
14. Specialty stocks such as frozen orion diamond and black vellum.
15. Conversion from glue applied to pressure sensitive formats as a result of new cold wet application technologies.
16. Printed electronics are emerging.

Digital Printing is gaining share of the wine market.

Advances in digital print capability are helping to quickly establish digital as a high end solution for an underserved part of the wine label market. As a result, many flexographic and offset wine label printers have added digital options to their portfolio. Digital efficiently handles shorter print runs or print runs with many varieties or versions and is useful for providing accurate proofs and mock ups on a variety of substrates. Strategies of flexographic and offset printers include either adding digital iron to the press floor or, establishing a 3rd party alliance with a quality digital partner.

Press manufacturers such as HP Indigo are developing more sophisticated digital presses to serve the wine market. The Hewlett Packard WS6600 digital offset press prints wine labels beautifully. This high quality digital offset press is being used by award winning printers to help revitalize a mature brand, launch a small run of multiple varieties or to personalize a brand. When it comes to digital, combinations of foil accents, variable imaging, sculptured emboss and other decoration treatments may be applied inline or in finishing, depending on the capability.

2. WINE LABEL COMPETITIONS

Printers, designers and marketers are thrilled when they earn awards. For printers, entering their best work in awards competitions means that printers have an opportunity to prove their leadership position in quality and innovation. Winning awards offers many benefits to printers including but not limited to:

1. Increasing awareness for the label printer capabilities to the supply chain, designer, industry peers and clients/prospects.
2. An opportunity to build relationships in the design community. Designers are an integral part of the awards process as they help to guide the printer on decoration technique placement.
3. Reinforcing the printer's reputation as a leader in quality and innovation.
4. Helping printers attract new clients with a "best of, award winning" positioning.
5. Helping to archive print jobs for future reference.
6. Providing a sense of pride amongst employees for the accomplishment.
7. Raising the technology bar in the category the award was printed.

When the printer earns an award for technical excellence, their team is recognized, along with the designer and supply chain/vendors. Through industry communications, all participants have an opportunity to create awareness about how their product or service contributed to the award winning label.

Both the FTA (Flexographic Technical Association) and TLMI (Tag & Label Manufacturers Institute) hold annual competitions where label printers from all over North America compete for the top awards. Proudly, in 2010, 2011 and 2012 ASL Print FX was awarded consecutive World

Label Awards for technical achievement in wine label printing. ASL's winning Ontario and California labels were judged in the Flexo Multi-Process Color Process category by the World Label Award Association.

In 2012, Collotype earned Best of Show and a World Label for Le Pich. And there is more glory for the Collotype team at FINAT: Le Pich "The judges were extremely impressed with this label not only for its technical excellence but also for its artistic appearance. Using screen and offset litho along with delicate and very accurate foiling and the additional bonus of embossing, the whole label exuded quality. Registration even in the smallest detail was absolutely accurate. The design was very authoritative and confident, a real credit to Collotype and the label industry."

Christobel's "The way in which the flowers are depicted on these three labels is reminiscent of the style of diagrams found in the flora and fauna illustrations normally associated with the early 19th century. The sharpness and detail in the flowers and the bird, bee and butterfly are reproduced very well. The added subtle grey branding in the background adds to the overall effect. This label carries so much information including the plant genus "hidden" in the grey background. A classic result making the very best use of the offset litho process." Results: FINAT Competition Judges FINAT Yearbook 2012

3. GLASS BOTTLE INNOVATION FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

In winter 2013, Beringer 2011 Founder's Estates Chardonnay is merchandised in light weight bottles at the LCBO in Ontario Canada. Upon picking up its California neighbor and making the comparison, the difference in weight and the thickness of the glass between the light weight and the regular weight is recognized instantly. Beringer's weighs in at a mere 390 grams, the other at almost 600 grams. Winemakers are switching to lightweight glass bottles to align their packaging to their brand story but also, because retailers are encouraging light weight. Retailers such as the LCBO are now initiating light weight programs as a priority in 2013. The LCBO introduced their constituency to this policy in 2010 and winemakers are rallying around it. In a letter dated June 21 2012, the LCBO advised that they are issuing a non-compliance fee for non-conforming bottles in excess of 420 grams for those formats that qualify in 2013. The LCBO is taking steps to become a world-wide leader with regard to light weighting glass bottles. Light weight glass bottles are changing the game for the corrugate industry also. Lighter cases mean changes to corrugate for wine packaging.

Producers of light weight glass such as Verallia are converting winemakers in the California, Washington and Finger Lakes market. To view a listing of suppliers offering eco-friendly bottle options go to www.wineindustrynetwork.com. Search for eco-friendly bottles to find a supplier.

The Wine Groups Oak Leaf brand was packaged in O-I's lightest bottle in the marketplace in 2011. According to the store brand decisions innovation awards spotlight, Oak Leaf achieved

“27.3% reduction in weight from its previous package, diverting 8.7 million pounds of glass from landfills. The bottles which were made with 25% post-consumer content, reduced by 6.7% the overall product cost to consumers. Furthermore, the brand shipped 280 less trucks per year and 6,100 less pallets.”

What does all this mean to the consumer? A lot! Light weight bottles are a positive story for the industry as a whole. Another observation - Taking a bottle of wine on a picnic or camping excursion just got a little lighter for the consumer!

4. CLOSURE INNOVATION

On the back label of their 2008 sparkling, Flat Rock Cellars tells the bottle closure story. The back label reads “What does a winery use to close their sparkling wine when they are staunchly opposed to using cork closures? Luckily we are a crafty bunch and this riddle is no match for us. Enter the amazing crown cap, no cork taint, more bubbles, better aging and it’s safer to boot. Consider this wine riddled, in more ways than one.” Back labels are usually reserved for terroir & winemaker storytelling. Flat Rock is a proud Ontario winery and uses packaging to help differentiate their brand.

More wineries are moving away from traditional and technical cork/capsule closures and into screw cap closures in the white and red wine category. On a recent trip to the Okanagan in BC, it was clear that BC winemakers are converting to screw caps in a very big way at all retail price levels. Amcor, a supplier to North American wineries “has a wide range of attractive screw caps which offer extensive & intricate design possibilities. A Stelvin closure is easy-to-open and allows the wine lover to reclose the bottle if they do not consume all the contents. Bottles with Stelvin closures are easy to store ship and are suitable for away-from-home consumption as well as the more traditional wine occasions. And The Stelvin® skirt can be printed in up to 6 colors thanks to the different techniques used by Amcor. In addition the Stelvin®+ product offers the possibility of ink embossing on the top of the screw cap which is an attractive design feature. Stelvin® .”

In the case of the French wine maker Henri Bourgeois and the 2011 Les Barrones Sancerre, the screw cap appears to be designed to look like a premium capsule closure.

5. CONCLUSION:

Packaging is storytelling. As innovators in the package printing industry invest in new technology enhanced storytelling will create new consumer experiences and help differentiate brands even further. The retail environment is one of the most competitive playing fields for the marketing of brands to consumers. When it comes to wine labels and packaging, the goal is to connect the consumer's personality to an emotion. To engage consumers at a level that causes them to participate in some way with the package surface they see in front of them, to lead people to brands.

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Screw cap that takes on the appearance of a capsule closure.



EZ Tab from WS. Award winners from Collotype. World Label Award winner – ASL Print FX.



Flat Rocks back label for sparkling wine

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