

Sustainability still a top concern

Whether or not you are weary of hearing the term 'sustainability' there is no doubt at all that it is top of the agenda for brand owners and packaging companies alike.

The two most recent conferences I attended, PCD in Paris and the PACE forum in London, both focused almost entirely on how to make materials and processes more 'green'.

PCD, a conference and exhibition that is devoted to perfume and cosmetics packaging design, would not seem at first glance the place to find the sustainability message pressed home again and again, but this was indeed the case. The theme was 'eco design' – how to produce beautiful packaging with the least damage to the environment. Speaker after speaker explained their companies' efforts to reduce waste, cut down on materials, and make production more efficient.

For example, French company Blue Lake, supplier of metallised film and folding cartons to the cosmetics industry, has been working on reducing the thickness of the plastics layer to 8 micron, but says it is 'difficult to source' film this thin. The board it uses, in common with most suppliers these days, is from well-managed sources. The company also uses water based, solvent-free adhesives and bio based inks.

Converters are certainly taking sustainability seriously. Another

paper at the PCD conference, given by Steffan Schnizer, of Cartondruck, was entitled 'Multisensory Packaging and Corporate Responsibility'. His company has been investing in many ways to reduce waste and CO₂ emissions. A modern ventilation system with waste heat recovery has reduced fossil fuels by 30%, and saved 300 tonne of CO₂ a year. In addition, a circuitry damping water system for the printing machines means that no industrial effluent has gone into the public waste system since 1999; chemical waste has been reduced by CTP technology; solvent emissions are catalitically burned; and the company has its own in-house recycling centre.

Are brand owners and packaging companies interested or impressed with this? The answer is a resounding 'yes'. At the PACE forum I asked several of the delegates what they most wanted from the conference. The answer was always: 'to learn how I can make my operations more sustainable'. I think that says it all. ■

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