

# Digital Printed Packaging: A Multi-Functional Solution

What is digital printing doing for the packaging world? For the consumer, digital printing has snuck onto the front of their favourite coffee bags without notice, making a notable impact on flexible packaging over the last few years. Prior to the introduction of digital printing, coffee roasters who wanted custom printed bags had to decide between rotogravure or flexographic printing options. Both printing systems require investment in printing plates of between USD \$200 and \$1000 per colour, and minimum print quantities of 20,000 bags for a typical 12oz to 16oz bag.

Many small roasters simply couldn't afford custom printing, which limited their packaging options to customization of stock unprinted bags using labels or hot stamping. With the proliferation of digital printing, high-quality custom printed packaging has become an accessible and affordable alternative to rotogravure and flexographic printing. Digital printing changed the game!

What is digitally printed packaging exactly? The term digital in this case refers to the method in which "inks" or liquid toners are delivered and applied to a given film structure, which in turn are used to manufacture flexible packaging. HP Indigo digital printers utilize "inks" featuring electrically charged pigments suspended in liquid, and a Photo Imaging Plate (PIP) versus a traditional ink tray and engraved cylinder or plate to transfer the ink to the printed surface. The Photo Imaging Plate transfers the charged inks to a blanket roll, which then transfers the inks to the printed substrate as in traditional offset printing.

The big advantage with digital printing, is that the Photo Imaging Plate can be re-imaged with different information on every revolution without any physical change-over or slowdown



Digitally printed packaging can be the perfect solution for roasters that need flexibility and efficiency, while also having the ability to create beautifully printed designs for their coffee bags.

By Bridget Howley *Photos courtesy of Pacific Bag Inc*

of the printing press. What that means is that the press can switch from printing one thing to something completely different without stopping to change as is the case with analogue printing methods. Despite slower printing speeds, digital printing allows for much lower minimum order quantities of high-quality custom printed packaging to be produced economically.

## More Options, Increased Efficiency

Woods Coffee, based in Lynden, Washington, started to use digital printed packaging a few years ago and now relies on the technology for a majority of its coffee blends. The roaster found itself with 19 individual coffee shops within 15 years. These rapid changes demanded a new look at its packaging options. What did it find out in the digital packaging world? Shea Haggan, the director of coffee at Woods, shared his thoughts on the new printing alternative. When asked why he chose digital printing he laid it out short and simple, "It works great and looks flawless."

For a small company that wants to achieve a consistent custom appearance, digital printing offers low quantity minimums, and design flexibility. Woods Coffee needed to

accommodate different coffee blends each decorated with their own natural landscape. Digital printing offered the ability to alter artwork and bag type without investing in large inventories. Companies can alter branding, logos and slogans without the threat of high costs that traditional custom packaging require.

During the interview, Haggan repeatedly noted that digitally printed packaging required Woods to do more production forecasting, and inventory management, but the company could easily handle the lead times and project management. Haggan explained that lead-time has minimal impact on the overall time to a completed project. Roasting, filling, label application, extra labour and project management can cause many unforeseen bottlenecks. Ultimately lead times may require some extra planning, but it is easy to anticipate and avoid conflicts.

For a steadily and successfully growing coffee company, digital printed packaging offers an outstanding product that has the quality and appearance of a traditional package. With regard to future plans, Woods doesn't see itself changing its packaging method any time soon.

Digital printing offers brands like Woods Coffee unmatched flexibility in short production

runs, as low as 1,000 units, allowing for much faster response to market changes. Without upfront investment in printing plates and long production runs, obsolescence costs are much easier to control as well.

Digital printed packaging offers a unique choice to those in the packaging world. The HP printer can print remarkably clearly on the surface of the bag while also being able to change the artwork instantaneously. Due to the method of printing, the order size can be as small as 1,000 bags versus the 20,000-bag minimum order for rotogravure printing. For coffee roasters with multiple blends or perhaps a company that is considering re-branding, digital printed packaging can make these changes without the threat of cost or waste. Digitally printed packaging can be the perfect solution for roasters who need flexibility and want a beautifully printed design for their coffee bags. ■

**Bridget Howley** is a freelance writer for Pacific Bag, Inc, and is currently based out of Boise, Idaho, where she also received her BA in English Literature from Boise State University. Aside from writing, she teaches yoga and enjoys exploring outdoors.

**Industrial Auctions**  
Professionals in online auctions for the food and beverage industry

Online auction machinery and inventory due to changing production location Ahold Delhaize Coffee Company

Viewing day: by appointment only | Closing auction: 1 March

Ahold Delhaize Coffee Company  
www.Industrial-Auctions.com

**Eastsign®** Single Serve Cup Filling & Sealing Machine

- \*1) Entry Level One Lane Machine, DCC-1-1500
- \*1) One Machine, Different Cups
- \*1) Speed: 30 pcs / min
- \*1) Weight / Dimension: 860lb / 80" x 26.5" x 70"
- \*1) Supply the Lids and the Welded Cups

Process flow diagram:  
 1) Insert One-Body-Cups  
 2) Cup Detecting  
 3) Filling Coffee Tea  
 4) Nitrogen Purging  
 5) Measure the Coffee on the Edge of the Cup  
 6) Nitrogen Purging  
 7) Nitrogen Purging  
 8) Pre-heat Lids  
 9) Lids Detecting  
 10) Heat Sealing  
 11) Heat Sealing  
 12) Ejecting Caps Out

Model: DCC-1-1500

Welcome to visit us at:  
 Mar 15-17, NCA'18, Booth #37, New Orleans  
 Mar 21-23, NAMA'18, Booth #246, Las Vegas  
 Apr 19-22, SCAA'18, Booth #2025, Seattle  
 Email: sales@eastsign.com