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## Customising packaging solutions a win-win for Winson Press

By **MINDY TAN**

DESPITE the many accolades it has under its belt, Winson Press is proudest of the fact that it is one of a handful of printers in the world that prints not just labels for goods but also the boxes they go in.

The homegrown printing company, which first specialised in paper box manufacturing, moved into label printing 13 years ago, when it decided to expand its printing capabilities to encompass these two services.

Tan Jit Khoo, chief executive officer of Winson Press, says: "We are one of the very few printers in the world that does both box and label printing, which requires very different printing technology and different skills."

Expanding the company's capabilities has enabled them to provide customers with the convenience of single sourcing, says Mr Tan, whose company is able to provide the box (external packaging), label (for the bottle, container, or sachet), and instructional inserts.

This gives customers significant benefits, as it simplifies their ordering process from having to contact multiple printers to just dealing with one, and in their production planning as they no longer have to wait for two separate shipments.

Perhaps more importantly, having one printer manage the colours for both the box and label ensures a certain level of consistency, says Mr Tan, who adds that his company strives to match the colours as closely as possible.

Not one to rest on his laurels, Mr Tan was soon looking for ways to widen his product offering.

In February this year, Winson Press integrated with Saik Wah Print Media, which focuses on commercial printing, including annual reports, corporate brochures, marketing materials, and book printing, to further beef up its commercial arm.

"Our customers don't overlap, and this gives us an enlarged customer base," he says.

"Also, our mix of machines complement each other. Previously when we offered our services to our customers, we focused on packaging. Certain customers had a commercial side which we were not as competitive in. Now, we can do both."

It's not just about providing cut-and-dried, neatly packaged solutions to customers, says Mr Tan, who believes in working toward viable solutions with his customers.

Giving the example of a client who wanted to package health supplement sam-

ples in small bottles, he says: "No matter how small the bottle is, it is still bulky. Plus, because of regulatory requirements, they have to print all the supplement information on the labels, making the information cramped and hard to read."

Mr Tan suggested the company try packaging the samples in flexible packaging, or sachets, which would provide them the dual benefit of flatter packages thus making it easier to transport and store, and more printing space to list the supplement information.

Beyond repackaging the product, Winson Press also linked their client with an industry partner who was able to pack the pills for them.

In the process, their client managed to reduce material costs by 35 per cent, and cut waste by 354kg per year.

"I always tell my clients that you have to look at the total packaging cost. Many a time, people tend to be drawn into how much labels cost, but this is only part of the total cost, which involves costs from order processing of the label, in-house costs, storage costs, and material costs.

"And storage and logistics costs? Previously, the small bottles had to be moved in cartons. Now at

events they can pack all the sachets in one bag. It saves on both storage and logistics costs," he adds.

Having state-of-the-art technology and using it is one way in which Mr Tan improves his company's competitive advantage.

In 1998, Winson Press was the first in Asia to acquire the Arsoma Narrow Web Flexo, and later, the first company in Singapore to provide single pass multi-metallic colour printing, a process that significantly reduces the costs involved in printing metallic colours.

In addition, the company recently implemented a Web-based system which allows customers to upload, view, and provide online approval for their file designs.

Not only is the system able to automatically check the files uploaded based on rule-based automation to ensure it is suitable for printing, it also allows the various parties to converse via an embedded chat system in real time.

According to Mr Tan, this shortens the time to market from weeks to days as draft copies are easily viewed and approved online. It has also helped Winson Press reduce hard copy wastage and shipping costs, especially for overseas customers.

While technology is an enabler, it should not be an end-all, he warns.

"No matter how far up the technology curve you are, or how advanced your machinery is, anybody with money can buy the same set of equipment.

"For me, anybody can purchase all of my equipment. All I need is my team. Nobody can do what we do, even with the same set of equipment, because at the end of the day, no matter what technology you use, it's the people behind the technology that's very important.

Mr Tan shares that the company will be expanding its product range, through the acquisition of a new label printing machine.

With it, the company will have greater flexibility in managing packaging costs, thus allowing the company to more effectively cater to smaller scale and specialised requests.

In addition, he is hoping to offer marketing and sales services to their customers within the next two years.

Beyond products and services, Mr Tan also hopes to widen his geographical reach. While exports currently constitute 10 per cent of their bottom line, Mr Tan aims to bring this up to 30 per cent in the next three years.

The company currently exports to Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Hong Kong, the Netherlands, and the South Pacific Islands.