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Color label printer grows business

Digital printer delivers color impact and variable printing on-demand.

Business is good for Kanani Foods, Las Vegas, Nevada. The wholesaler of sushi, salads and sandwiches has grown from an 800-sq.-ft. facility to a 20,000-sq.-ft. operation and added many retail customers to its foodservice base.

Tim Cruz, vice president of Operations for Kanani Foods, credits an L801 color label printer from **Afinia Label (Booth E-8444)** Chanhassen, Minnesota, for much of the company's growth. He says, "We didn't realize that our old, thermal printing technology was drastically hindering our growth until we invested in the L801."

A BLACK AND WHITE BEGINNING

He recalls, "When we started our company, we only needed to print 25 labels per day for our first product, which was bulk packed. We went to Walmart and got their 'letterhead label thing' and started. Our business grew, and we bought a thermal printing system. It allowed us to print more labels, but they were black and white. At the time, black-and-white print was fine because we were only a wholesale company. We were selling our bulk packs 'back-of-the-house' to casinos and golf courses, so we didn't need fancy labels. This was our workflow for four or five years.

"Then one of our customers gave us an opportunity to put our food on retail grab-and-go shelves. We were still using the same black-and-white labels, and we bought a different program so we could change the label format to meet our customer's needs. We increased to printing 600-700 labels a day. This lasted for about a year, but the thermal printer was slow, and we could only print one label at a time and only in one color. Also, the technology for changing fonts and label designs was pretty brutal.

"As we started picking up more accounts, a customer told us, 'your product is awesome and tastes great, but your labels look hideous.' That made sense, because we were focused on producing the best food . . . not on the quality of our labels. We printed labels as a necessity and not as a marketing tool. Back then, we just followed the FDA's requirements. Honestly, our labels looked like what a four-year-old would produce.

"So, we decided to step it up. We started overprinting one-color preprinted labels with the thermal printer. This lasted for four years."

UPGRADING TO COLOR

Eventually, it became clear a different printer was needed. Cruz explains, "At the time, we were producing 195 grab-and-go products each day, and we didn't want to inventory 195 different rolls of labels to support printing 20,000 labels per day.



The L801 color printer prints full-color, high-resolution (1600 x 1600 dots/in.) labels using Memjet Waterfall Printhead Technology®.

"We have to be very versatile and be able to print on-the-fly to stay FDA-compliant. The problem is, you can't print color on-demand with a thermal printer, and we print labels for different customers on a daily basis so our batch printing is all variable.

"With the Afinia Label L801 color label printer, I can easily set up the print schedule and print all of our customers' same-sized variable data labels in one batch. We have USDA customers that need specific labeling, branding and other things. You can't do that with a thermal printer."

COLOR, COMPLIANCE, SAVINGS

The L801 makes it possible to create brands while meeting compliance needs, which means adding manufacturing and kill dates. "Being able to print all of this variable information on a label is phenomenal," says Cruz.

He reports, "We can now quickly produce great-looking color labels and be compliant at the same time." Costs have dropped too. Cruz says, "When we were using the thermal printer (buying one-color preprinted labels and overprinting them in black), it was costing us a total of \$0.05/label. With the L801, our costs went to \$0.03-\$0.04/label. We save 22% . . . , which is \$600 a day. That also reduces our total product cost by 1%."

"When we were using the thermal printer, it would take seven hours to print labels for the day's production. Now, it takes 25 minutes, which is a 94% labor cost savings. We have 395 more minutes of production time and have reduced our headcount by one person. That's a \$4,000 cost savings per month." At the same time, production has increased 50% due to the time saved printing labels.

For more information, visit www.afinialabel.com. **SD**