



2022

Packaging Trends

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Introduction

As we say goodbye to 2021, we continue to respond to challenges created by a surge in ecommerce, a disrupted supply chain, and changing consumer behaviors. Brands not only need to adapt to this new environment, they must be prepared to thrive in it. For packaging professionals to further the necessary personal relationship between their brand and consumers, they cannot overlook opportunities for advancing sustainability, maximizing the use of technology, streamlining supply chain operations, incorporating trending design practices, and creating efficiencies. In this e-Book, we will discuss key packaging trends influencing the market in 2022.

Meet the Experts



Stephen Kaufman

VP of Business Development and Strategy, Esko



Adrián Fernández

VP/GM SMB, Esko



Jan De Roeck

Director of Industry Relations and Strategy, Esko



Jung Sin

Director of Digital Product Management, Pantone



Jackie Leslie

Life Sciences Category Specialist, Esko



Roman Stepchuk

Commercial Product Manager, Esko

In this report you'll learn about packaging trends we foresee for 2022 and beyond. It includes insights gathered from international media trend setters, consumer trend market research and consulting firms, as well as forecasts from Esko and Pantone packaging thought leaders. Also included are the November 2021 survey results conducted by Esko of packaging professionals around the world regarding future packaging trends, challenges, and opportunities for reflection.

Esko's Insights

Meeting Ecommerce Challenges

“Marketers are trying to figure out how to attract a buyer in an ecommerce environment. No one has all the answers, but with ecommerce and the right marketing technology, you can perform A/B testing which will allow for rapid innovation cycles in a digital world,” notes Stephen Kaufman, VP of Business Development and Strategy at Esko.



Ecommerce in the post pandemic world is far from a fad. It’s the future. It has significantly shifted how brands and consumers interact. In 2022 and beyond, brands need to adjust and respond to new consumer trends and preferences to remain competitive in the market.

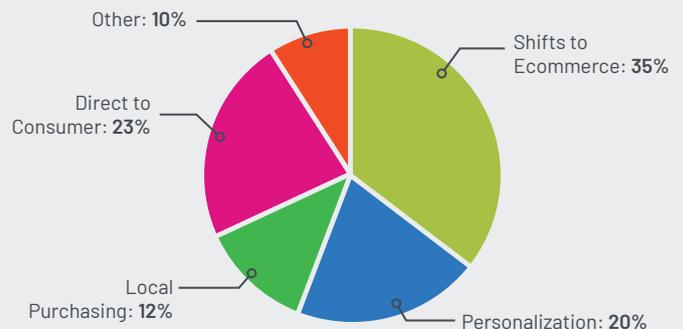
Brands can’t afford to become complacent or approach the future ill-prepared. Their ecommerce strategies must be aligned across all platforms, and brand content must be of the highest quality and consistency.

The Switch to Online

Ecommerce has advanced at a rate 4-6 years ahead of prediction, according to Forbes. In fact, of the packaging professionals we surveyed, 35% believe ecommerce was the most prevalent trend in their respective industries in 2021. This has already impacted the packaging industry and will continue to do so.

For example, there is a phenomenon Esko calls direct-to-consumer vs. retail equalization. This means consumers can now buy online or in a physical retail setting, allowing online market access to brands that were previously denied entry into such markets. This results in an increased market space overall. Online “real estate” is thus more equalized, which means consumers have more choices and demand more products to choose from. A wider variety of products creates more SKUs and, ultimately, the need for more specialized and targeted product packaging.

Which consumer trends were most prevalent to your industry in 2021?



Esko survey to packaging professionals - November 2021 - 150 respondents



“Covid has pushed consumers more into this space and now that they’ve tasted it there’s no going back,” states Adrián Fernández, VP/GM SMB at Esko.

This trend not only results in more product variation from a single brand, but also in more brands. Barriers to enter the consumer market have gradually disappeared. We can all be a brand owner with an online shop tomorrow. More products necessitate packaging and labelling, increasing the number of packaging jobs run at converters and further driving down print run lengths.

More SKUs = More Brand Content

The proliferation of brand content presents unique challenges in terms of content and asset management. Brands need to develop content per SKU quickly and efficiently. More importantly, brand content must be consistent across all platforms. This is a challenging undertaking due to the sheer amount of content new SKUs generate. This is not an exaggeration. McKinsey¹ reports:

- There are more than 1,000 new SKUs per year for brand owners
- Each SKU can require management of up to 700 attributes
- More than 500 attribute formats needed for global retail partner support
- Approximately one month for each SKU's attribute development

Manual ways of working are neither fast enough nor accurate enough to keep up with this heightened demand. Enter automation. Digital tools can help brands streamline packaging processes so they can get to market faster than ever before while ensuring accuracy, consistency, and scalability.



“Primarily digital interactions have changed the way packaging is designed and viewed. Now more than ever, brands need to create packaging that is valuable and differentiated from the competition. The increase of online shopping where most products are viewed virtually challenges the notion of quality and competition in a different way.” –Jung Sin, Director of Digital Product Management, Pantone.

Digital Tools for the Future

However, juggling more products increases the likelihood of errors and inconsistencies. What consumers see in-person must match what they see online, requiring careful management of digital assets. A digital asset management (DAM) solution enables consistency and quality in the customer experience as well as the content with which they engage. DAM minimizes the likelihood of producing and releasing inaccurate, confusing, and/or non-cohesive information. DAM helps brands keep pace with the proliferation of changes resulting from ecommerce.

Similarly, digital twin technology enables brands to create packshots faster than ever before. Previously, packshots were created manually by product photography which is a time-consuming process. Digital twin technology enables brands to create packshots automatically from structural design, artwork, and specifications which then generate photorealistic product images straight from production files. Automating packshot creation eliminates the need for physical prototypes and photoshoots, saving brands both time and money. Overall, digital twins increase speed to market and allow brands to turn conceptual products into reality faster.

Ecommerce is firmly entrenched as “the” business model for the future. Satisfying consumer preferences and meeting their demands will therefore only grow in importance. Digital tools are necessary for success in a digital world. Successful brands will employ these software solutions to manage the ever-growing amount of content their products and product packaging will require.

Jan De Roeck, Director of Industry Relations and Strategy at Esko, says, “Digital transformation is a key trend for 2022. The packaging production workflow is being affected by this.”



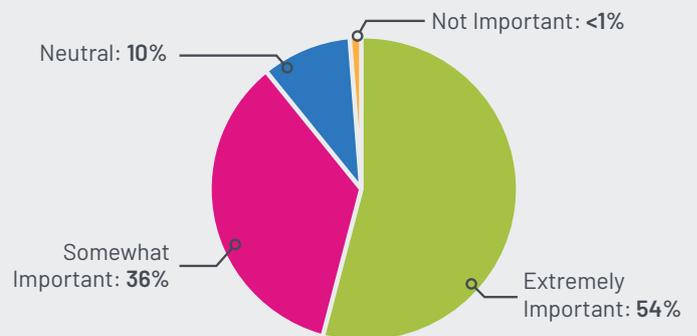
Packaging 2022:

Sustainability & ESG are Paramount

Sustainable packaging design is a priority for brands and consumers alike. Now more than ever, countries and their major companies are under increasing pressure to reduce their carbon footprint by providing sustainable products outfitted in eco-friendly packaging. How do brands protect their products and the environment at the same time? In this article, we'll go over the numbers, give you examples, and explain why consumers pledge their loyalties to companies that prioritize sustainability.

Consumers are increasingly concerned about sustainability, eco-friendly business practices, and shopping with socially conscious brands. They also look at packaging as waste. 54% of our survey respondents believe sustainability will be extremely important to their company for packaging in 2022. According to GLOBALDATA, 71% of global consumers say product packaging that is "sustainable/made from renewable sources is quite/extremely important." Furthermore, according to Global News Wire, a CGS survey reports that sustainability is a driving force behind consumer demand, regardless of age. The survey involved 1,000 Americans, ages 18 and up. The data revealed 70 percent of respondents take sustainability into account when making a purchase, and 47 percent are willing to pay higher prices for more sustainable products.

How important will sustainability be to your company for packaging in 2022?



Esko survey to packaging professionals - November 2021 - 150 respondents

"Consumers are motivated to purchase and spend more if they're certain that what they're buying is actually sustainable." -Stephen Kaufman, VP of Business Development and Strategy at Esko.

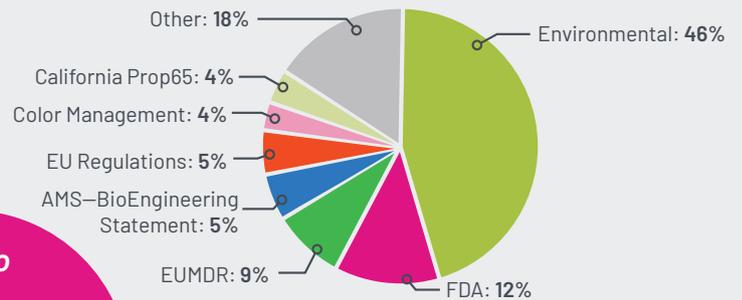


What is Sustainable Packaging?

According to [Big commerce](#), “sustainable packaging refers to the sourcing, development, and use of packaging solutions that have minimal environmental impact and footprint.” Packaging is vilified for depleting natural resources and contributing to the nearly 80 million tons of annual waste in the United States ([United States Environmental Protection Agency](#)). For example, McKinsey reports, “FMCG manufacturers and retailers are experiencing severe pressure regarding their plastic packaging choices. Visceral images of ocean plastics have stirred up consumer sentiment around the world, and regulators are responding.”

46% of the packaging professionals surveyed reported that environmental regulations will have an impact on their packaging and labeling for compliance in 2022. Clearly, companies need to challenge packaging norms by utilizing new and unique techniques into the future.

What Industry regulations will have an impact on your packaging & labeling for compliance in 2022?



Esko survey to packaging professionals - November 2021 - 150 respondents

Showing that a company is a good company is no longer enough. Consumers have become more intentional about what sustainable really means. There is a higher level of adoption of meaningful sustainability objectives.” – Adrián Fernández, VP/ GM SMB at Esko.



What is ESG?

According to [Mintel](#)², consumers are skeptical of taking an institution’s, company’s, or government’s word at face value. They want to see evidence of how a company is reducing its carbon footprint. This is where ESG comes in. ESG is the combination of environmental, social, and governance (ESG) factors that are used to determine how advanced a company is when it comes to sustainability and environmentally friendly initiatives. ESG is measurable, specific, and data driven. It provides a set of standards for companies to follow in their endeavors to make the world a better place.

Sustainable Packaging & ESG Intertwined

Sustainable packaging enables brands to comply with the environmental criteria defined in ESG. ESG and sustainability are inextricably linked, but they are not the same. The biggest difference lies in their meanings and how they’re interpreted.

Sustainability is a broad, not necessarily measurable topic. It can range from reducing carbon emissions to minimizing plastic use within an organization. Sustainability is a holistic practice designed to have a positive impact on the world in any form, no matter the size. ESG, however, is a formal framework with specific metrics to back it up.

²Dana Macke, Matthew Crabbe, Simon Moriarty, “Global Consumer Trends 2022: What consumers want and why - now, next, and in the future.” (Mintel(2021)): 19.

How to Be More Sustainable

Sustainable packaging strategies range in effectiveness and ease of use. For example, shipping products in smaller packages reduces the amount of waste by saving space and is an easy fix to implement. However, utilizing recyclable, plant-based, compostable, or biodegradable packaging materials is even more effective in reducing environmental harm. It may take brands time to overhaul their current packaging processes and replace them with a sustainable ecosystem, but there are smaller scale methods that will help as well.



“Consumers are very concerned about the circular economy and the recyclability of materials. The plastic versus fiber debate is driven by consumers, who are making that decision for brand owners. They would prefer products packaged in fiber-based materials rather than plastics.”
–Jan De Roeck, Director of Industry Relations and Strategy at Esko.

It is often said that Rome wasn't built in a day. Brands can implement their ESG and sustainability practices programs over time. For example, simply labeling products and providing instructions for how consumers should, and should not, dispose of packaging is a small yet effective first step.

Streamlining supply chain functions is another key area for waste reduction. An efficient supply chain ensures that products are not ordered in large quantities or packaged in more materials than necessary (Big Commerce). Having just enough product, packaged in just enough material, and not any more than needed, creates much less waste as products make their way into the hands of consumers.

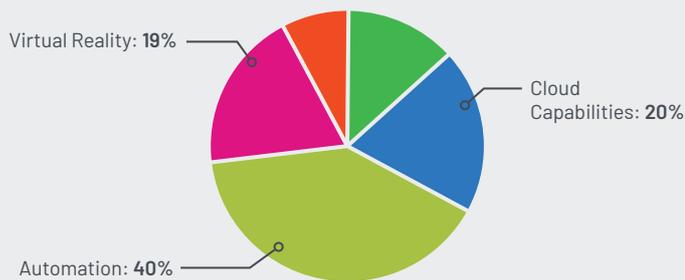
“Sustainability also includes the number of cycles for review, reprints, removing manual steps, and more. Working more efficiently and automating the process in these ways can have a significant sustainable impact on the industry.”
–Jackie Leslie, Life Sciences Category Specialist.



It is beyond the scope of this article to review all the possible ways by which brands may reduce environmental waste and their footprint through packaging. However, in the final analysis, a brand's products speak volumes of their concern for customers and the planet. Successful brands will have an in-depth understanding of what it means to be sustainable and how to incorporate practices that will not only affect their bottom line, but also make a tangible impact.

The Need for Automation in packaging

What technology do you think could have the most impact on packaging in your industry in 2022?



Esko survey to packaging professionals - November 2021 - 150 respondents

“Reliance on highly advanced automation and digital tools will be of tremendous value during supply chain interruptions and workforce shortages,” states Adrián Fernández, VP/GM SMB at Esko.



The importance of packaging as a physical touchpoint with consumers cannot be overstated. Packaging is more than just a protective wrapper. It tells a story and provides an initial physical engagement with consumers. With the explosion of ecommerce, brands must step up their packaging game to keep pace with skyrocketing consumer expectations. One way to accomplish this is through automation.

Automating the packaging management process enables brands to save time, money, and get to market faster than ever before. Innovations in packaging automation include digital printing, automated packshots, artificial intelligence (AI), and augmented and virtual reality (AR & VR). Let’s look at how each of these will be relevant in 2022. Furthermore, 40% of our customers think automation will have the most impact on packaging in their industries in 2022.

Digital Printing

Digital printing is the process of digitizing an image and sending it directly to a printer to be used on packaging. According to Pak Factory, “Digital printing is commonly used in packaging for creating cost effective samples and prototypes for custom packaging. However, digital printing can also be used to create some pretty impactful packaging artwork designs!”

Digital printing will take on an expanded role in 2022 to meet the demands of the continued ecommerce surge. Integrating it into the packaging process helps package designers and engineers create packaging faster and more cost-effectively. It also enables brands to create targeted packaging with specific information and shorter runs.



“Digital printing will become even more critical because packaging accuracy and consistency is paramount.” states Roman Stepchuk, Commercial Product Manager at Esko.

Digital printing can offer various benefits for brands. For example, it gives designers flexibility when creating and editing package designs. "Digital represents an entirely new way of processing jobs, from the file to the end product; and step-by-step, it will enable companies to reach new frontiers in quality, productivity and overall workflow," notes Federico D'Annunzio, who was quoted in [Packaging Strategies](#).

Digital Twin Technology

Digital twin technology enables brands to create 3D virtual models of products before going to physical production. Using a digital twin eliminates surprises in both the manufacturing and packaging of products. Stakeholders are afforded the opportunity to see, feel, understand, and develop a comfort level with the product in a digital environment long before it hits the production floor.

What are the benefits of having a 3D virtual model of a product before it physically exists? Digital twin technology generates significant cost savings. This has resulted in 3D virtual modeling technology becoming the go-to pre-production method for the packaging industry. In fact, the digital twin market is predicted to be worth 48.2 billion by 2026, according to [MarketsandMarkets™](#).

Further benefits include shortened design time and the ability to produce prototypes faster. Companies prioritizing sustainability also enjoy the benefit of producing less waste by eliminating physical mockups. Digital twin technology enhances efficiency by enabling

brands to visualize how a product looks before production so they can make the necessary changes. Overall, digital twins increase speed to market and allow brands to turn their pre-produced products into reality faster than ever before.

Augmented and Virtual Reality (AR & VR)

Virtual and augmented reality, long the fantasy platform of video games and futuristic movies, are now commonly applied to businesses and consumers. MarketsandMarkets reports VR will be a \$20.9 billion market by 2025, while [Worldplay](#) notes 65 percent of U.S. consumers believe VR impacts peoples' shopping behavior.

The use cases for VR and AR in packaging are growing. In the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) market, this revolution is already underway. Companies are not only experimenting with AR and VR applications, they are also incorporating them into their core packaging processes by using augmented and virtual representations of package designs.

Brands not using AR or VR in their current packaging processes are missing existing opportunities for the future. Consumers are expecting digitally immersive experiences and this expectation will only continue to grow. Both AR and VR enable designers to go beyond a product mockup and see a more accurate representation of how a product will look in its competitive environment. The resulting confidence developed makes the process more efficient and cost-effective.

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Artificial Intelligence (AI) takes packaging designers to a level beyond that seen with AR and VR. According to [Packaging Strategies](#), "AI will be able to visualize an algorithmically designed package perfect for specific products." AI takes customization to a new level and enables product-related experiences not previously offered.

As we venture further into the 2020s, the role of AI will only continue to grow. Brands will be able to not only employ AI for creative purposes, but for business purposes not being accomplished with the same degree of sophistication AI is able to offer. For example, AI will impact inventory management by, among other things, predicting demand and pinpointing manufacturing process efforts towards that demand. It will also minimize supply chain complexities and assist in distribution. In fact, there is little that AI won't be able to make better.

Automating packaging processes is not just a trend for 2022. It is the future. Brands will experience multiple benefits by implementing the aforementioned technologies. Digital printing, digital twin technology, AR, VR, and AI are necessary to keep up with the ecommerce explosion and meet consumers' ever-changing demands. Automating packaging helps brands streamline their processes so they can remain competitive in the rapidly changing ecommerce world.



2022 will be about building machine intelligence into the process to make everything more efficient," Roman Stepchuk states.

Trending Packaging Design: 2022 Style

It's often said you only get one chance to make a first impression. Nowhere is that more true than in packaging. In a fleeting moment, packaging serves as an initial point of engagement with the power to entice or put off. Thus, it is no surprise that brands design packaging with the intention of creating a close relationship with the consumer.

Packaging is a vehicle through which a story is told. It must not only protect a product but also influence consumers' perceptions. Brands strive to make their packaging informative, engaging, exciting, and above all, convey a message of trust. Let's discuss the biggest packaging design trends for 2022.

Be Pandemic Prepared

It goes without saying the pandemic was incredibly disruptive in consumers' and brands' lives alike. 2020 taught us some tough lessons. As we continue to navigate the pandemic-related changes, it's important for packaging designers and brands to be prepared for anything to happen. Accordingly, one of the biggest 2022 design focuses is ensuring packaging is resilient. In response to the pandemic, AIB International created a pandemic preparedness certification. These guidelines are here to stay and brands will follow them into 2022 ([Facility Executive](#)).

Technological Advancements in Packaging

As the digital world advances so must packaging. Technology is being used in packaging design to not only create new and immersive experiences but provide helpful information to consumers.

"VR and AR are starting to grow in popularity and relevance which will impact packaging design in 2022."
States Roman Stepchuk, Commercial Product Manager at Esko.



Augmented and virtual reality (AR and VR) have started gaining popularity in packaging. Tech-interactive packaging offers convenience, information, and fun. Whether consumers scan a QR code, engage in a game, or participate in other virtual experiences, it's an innovation many brands are going to want to be a part of. While these aspects are novel and exciting, consistency is still key. According to [In the Bag](#), part of Grauman Packaging, "When you are following this trend, you need to make sure that the elements introduced into the package are correlating with the story, vision, and purpose of the brand."

Smart packaging is an innovation that many brands can benefit from, specifically companies in the life

sciences industry. For example, sensors are used in packaging to track drug temperatures during the shipping process, ensuring drugs do not spoil or become unsafe ([Industrial Packaging](#)).

Digital solutions within packaging impact the way brands engage with consumers. Packages are able to convey information and amplify brand messaging. Technological advancements such as QR codes, RFID, and NFC have and will continue to facilitate this ([McKinsey](#)). This helps brands stand out from the competition and meet consumer demands efficiently.

Sustainable Packaging

Consumers' demand for sustainable packaging will remain strong. Governments are starting to respond to this outcry by implementing new regulations seeking to reduce waste and improve the way packaging materials are disposed of. So, how can brands balance their concern for product safety against their consumers' concerns for the environment? [McKinsey](#) notes that FMCG companies are starting to move toward flexible packaging and pouches as a way to reduce waste and eliminate rigid packaging. Another method to create sustainable packaging is designing the shipping package without wasted space. Eliminating extra materials improves shipability, benefits the environment, and minimizes cost.

Color Quality Counts

Color is extremely important in brand packaging. Getting that packaging color right is paramount. Color is a critical factor in brand identity and recognition. It serves as a major determinant in the purchase decision process. As a result, it is more imperative than ever to produce high quality color consistently.

"At the end of the day, color is what delivers the emotional experience to the customer and brand owners will not compromise on that," says Jan De Roeck, Director of Industry Relations and Strategy at Esko.



Remote working presents unique challenges for color consistency. How color appears on a computer varies from screen to screen. Brands need a way to know if the color they're approving is correct. It's nearly impossible to do this virtually taking risk that reproduction would not match design intent, initial artwork approvals or worse, prior production runs. A physical reference ensures brand owners, designers, and other partners are on the same page every time.



"Professionals need a physical reference to define, communicate, and approve color in a hybrid world," notes Adrián Fernández, VP/GM SMB at Esko.

What's in the Box?

Further accelerated by the ecommerce boom, unboxing became a major trend during 2020 and 2021. Its popularity indicates it will be around for quite some time. Consumers like to open packages; they find it exciting. In some respects, this means unwrapping the packaging has to be as exciting as the product within. Marketers and packaging designers spend considerable effort making this experience a positive one. Transparent packaging, allowing a fuller view of the product shape, size, color, and texture, serves a similar function and will retain popularity.

The Good 'Ol Days

Taking the unboxing experience one step further, consumers want to be transported back in time. Vintage packaging, as the name implies, creates a packaging experience from the past. The look and feel of the package conjure a sense of nostalgia. Nostalgia engenders feelings of comfort and increases trust in the brand. It's not just well-known and established brands that can participate in this trend. Brands lacking the history to fall back on nostalgia are not without options. Smaller brands can create nostalgia utilizing packaging inspired by the past.

Art is in the Eye of the Beholder

Packaging is multidimensional and multi-functional. It needs to be synthesized to reach consumers from selection to unboxing. Accomplishing this task is made even more challenging by new expectations resulting from the events of 2020 and 2021. Brands that incorporate packaging and design trends for 2022 will have the best opportunity to capture consumer attention and loyalty.

Updating Labels in Response to Regulatory Changes: **Reducing Risk** and **Driving Efficiency**

Heavily regulated industries know all too well the need for prompt compliance with changing regulations. As companies urgently strive to meet these requirements, they must evaluate their end-to-end labeling processes. Many companies are exploring the benefits of automation to achieve efficiencies and minimize risk.

“Packaging data used to be in Word or Excel and had to be manually copied, cut, and pasted. It’s clear that using a modern database is more effective in managing content and reducing errors.” Stephen Kaufman, VP of Business Development and Strategy at Esko.



Label Changes Create Risk

Changes result from new and amended regulations (MDR, for example), global expansion, new product variants, reformulations, and rebranding. Oftentimes, label approval and release deadlines are tight, and the data are extensive. Irrespective of the cause of the changes, end product quality is critical. Without clear and accurate labeling information, consumer trust is damaged, product recalls occur, and, most importantly, consumer or patient health and safety is put at risk.

In fact, Deloitte estimates that over 50% of product recalls are related to labeling or packaging artwork errors and over 60% of all recalls are caused by human error. Clearly, there is much room for improvement in the end-to-end labeling process in these circumstances.

Efficiency through Automation

65% of our respondents reported managing regulatory packaging content will become extremely important to their business in 2022. Companies need a system and process that easily adapts to new and changing regulations. Creating and updating labels using automation reduces human touch points which effectively mitigates risk. This includes simple tasks such as automated quality checks, file comparisons, and barcode checks. It also includes more complex tasks such as automated artwork updates using structured content management capabilities.

Impact assessments, a traditionally manual-intensive activity, become simple searches with automated solutions. This provides the confidence that no label is missed, and consistency is maintained across the product portfolio. Having a scalable, connected digital ecosystem maximizes the opportunity for successful compliance with new label creation and amendment of existing labels.

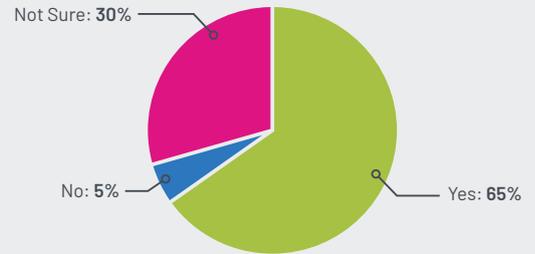
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Structured Content Management

Structured Content Management (SCM) allows companies to specify, manage, and reuse texts, claims, symbols, barcodes, and other data for use on packaging artwork, labels, leaflets, IFUs, and more. SCM reduces risk by enabling companies to standardize the content collation process, define content ownership, promote content reuse, and track changes for IFUs, leaflets, and other documents for submission to regulatory bodies.

For some companies, compliance with regulations is all part of a day's work. Similarly, 2022 will be noteworthy for companies' efforts to minimize labeling-related risks in general and in the life sciences industry in particular.

Do you think that effectively managing regulatory packaging content will become more important to your business in 2022?



Esko survey to packaging professionals - November 2021 - 150 respondents



"Automated label changes are important to working more efficiently. It's time to get away from copying and pasting as the only way to manage label changes."
-Jackie Leslie, a Life Sciences Category Specialist at Esko.



"Automating and streamlining the way companies manage and update their labels to be compliant with new and changing regulations is one of the top trends for regulated industries in 2022,"
notes Jackie Leslie, a Life Sciences Category Specialist at Esko.

E-commerce

Causes Supply Chain Disruptions

The ecommerce explosion has provided sales revenue and growth opportunities at a rate significantly beyond all expectations. However, it has also had supply chain repercussions that have left brands and retailers spinning. This article offers suggestions for how brands may streamline their packaging supply chains to manage the ongoing disruptions.

Why is This Happening?

No one can deny ecommerce has provided a level of convenience never before seen in consumerism. Want to select your groceries from the comfort of your home with the click of a button? You can. Need a last-minute holiday gift? Online retailers have your back. This heightened reliance on digital platforms has led to brands expanding their product lines. Responding to consumer demand for personalization has become essential for maintaining loyalty and boosting sales.

The Disruptors

Brands now utilize omnichannel platforms to offer streamlined shopping experiences, enabling them to meet consumers everywhere they shop. They have turned to increasing SKUs to provide consumers new and more personalized experiences with their products (Institute of Business Forecasting and Planning). As a result, they have expanded their product portfolios, requiring a multitude of different packaging. Changing packaging, however, is not without its challenges.

If brands don't consider the resulting supply chain stressors, they will incur more costs, experience product packaging delays, decreased efficiency, and falling margins.



As Stephen Kaufman, VP of Business Development and Strategy at Esko, states, "We know the global supply chain is stressed right now. Packaging brands are having to make decisions based on lead times. When materials are in short supply, brands need to get creative and use alternative materials. They are being asked to be more flexible in what they're choosing based on these issues. This will probably get worse before it gets better."



Adrián Fernández, the VP/GM SMB at Esko, echoed this sentiment, noting, “Supply chain issues and labor shortages are affecting the whole industry. Supply chain issues will continue for the next few months. Lead times and quality have gotten worse, which makes cost less of an issue because brands need their materials.”

According to Forbes, supply chain issues predated the Covid-19 ecommerce surge. They began with trade tensions between the US and China resulting in tariffs and sanctions. Then the pandemic happened, and the state of the global supply chain only worsened. When the economy started to bounce back late into 2020, it seemed as if things would get better. But the rush to online shopping created a demand frenzy. Delays were felt in every facet of manufacturing from beginning to end. Forbes notes shipping container and trucking shortages, increased shipping rates, and congestion of international ports and railways abound.

Streamlining Through Digitization

If consumers are all about digital, brands must be as well. Investing in digital solutions is imperative to streamline supply chain operations. Automating part of the process and replacing manual tasks can help counteract the “Great Resignation” – stress caused by current labor shortages.

More specifically, McKinsey notes, brands will derive value from “developing track-and-trace solutions at the packaging-unit level to enable complete supply chain traceability (for instance, for product recalls, food safety, quality tracking).”

Brands need to ask, “Are my supply chain and manufacturing processes agile enough to address increasing SKU proliferation and consumer personalization preferences?” (McKinsey). Introducing technology into the packaging workflow process enables brands to automate manual tasks, reduce errors, and produce packaging with faster turnaround times. SKU proliferation without automation may result in increased costs and cycle order time, less accuracy, trapped capital, and material shortages (Conveyco).

Supply chain stressors have disrupted how brands have and will continue to respond to the current ecommerce surge. Irrespective of the specific stressor, brands will continue to find the delicate balance between meeting consumer demands and achieving the production necessary to do so. Digitizing this process will go a long way towards being successful in that endeavor.



Jan De Roeck, Director of Industry Relations and Strategy at Esko comments, “The Great Resignation is really affecting the packaging industry. Companies are struggling to find workers to operate machinery.”

Conclusion

The likelihood of packaging becoming more sophisticated in 2022 and beyond is extremely high. There is much brands can and should do to maintain and grow consumer loyalty, maximize efficiency, minimize cost and risk, and preserve the environment. The current ecommerce environment has significantly derailed traditional business practices, requiring successful brands to prepare for and implement today practices that not very long ago seemed to be the subject matter of science fiction. Embracing these trends improves a brand's ability to thrive in the new normal.

The Esko | Brand Solutions Toolkit



WebCenter Content Workflow Management

Protect your consumers and your brand by controlling the quality and accuracy of artwork from a single, integrated workflow platform.



MediaBeacon Digital Asset Management (DAM)

Categorize and store all digital files with refined data and accessibility based on roles, groups, and more. Search for assets quickly using your company's terms and data points.



Studio 3D Design Software

Design packaging, displays, and more directly in 3D so you can see and use virtual prototypes, or the digital twin, before physical production.



3D Store Visualizer

View and interact with packaging in a virtual 3D retail environment and collect consumer insights to anticipate how products will perform on-shelf.



Cape Pack Palletization Software

Reduce your ecological footprint and reduce costs by designing optimally-sized products to fit more in the case, on the pallet, and on the store shelf.



ArtiosCAD Structural Design Software

Increase productivity by designing 2D and 3D structural designs, resize to fit a product, and create internal fits.

About Us



Esko helps its customers make the best packaging for billions of consumers. Our product portfolio supports and manages the packaging and print processes for brands, retailers, designers, premedia and trade shops, packaging manufacturers, and converters.

Esko solutions are used in packaging management, asset management, artwork creation, structural design, prepress, 3D visualization, flexo plate making, workflow automation, quality assurance, sample-making, palletization, supply chain collaboration and/or the production of signage and displays.

The Esko family includes Enfocus, with its PDF quality control tools and automation solutions and MediaBeacon, with its digital asset management (DAM) solutions.

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