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## **Consumers Want Choices, Digital Printing Delivers!**

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Since the arrival of the digital age the world has experienced an accelerated rate of technical change that has and continues to transform social interaction, human behavior and expectations. The impact is seen and felt by all people of the world and changing what consumer purchase, how they purchase and where they purchase.

The digital age has propelled the notion that the “consumer is boss” to a reality. Social media allows and encourages consumers to share their experiences on the internet. The voice of the consumer is audible to anyone who turns on their device while on the go.

Today’s consumers enjoy experiences and connect with brands that provide relevancy and appeal to their community. Brands need to constantly keep an eye to the “likes” and “dislikes” as feedback upon launch to products & packages is instant and available for all to see. Successful brands must provide their target market with exactly what they want, when they want it and deliver on their brand promise.

The days of “mass production” are quickly fading. Year after year the chant of “sku proliferation” and shorter run lengths for printers is getting louder. We are now solidly into the days of “mass customization”. Consumers all want something different and brands are trying to meet those demands or their competitors will.

## ***What does this all mean for brands and folding carton converters?***

Brands now face new challenges as the consumer has multiple paths to choose from while navigating their shopper journey. The path to purchase can be through retail shops, online, from social media or by phone. Omnichannel retailing means brand marketers need to be present in multiple places to completely serve the consumer in relevant and engaging ways. The big opportunity for brand marketers is to create different and relevant choices for each of these shopper channels. Net, more sku's overall.

Folding carton converters invested in long run capability. Analog print presses run at high speed, are very wide and change-overs were less important. Today printers need agile capability, which is why the importance to compliment analog presses with digital assets becomes paramount. The use of legacy metrics to analyze new capability has held many printers back. The metrics needed to make business decisions will be: speed to market, agility, workflow complexity, sheet size and press waste to name a few.

Here is a recent case study that illustrates this point. The eVo brand (e-cigarettes) of Nicopure in efforts to keep up with consumers preferences and providing different flavors turned to digital folding carton printing. Multi Packaging Solutions was able to respond and work in partnership with the brand to enable and deliver across many product flavors, sizes and strengths. This allowed Nicopure to expand their product line while maintaining the integrity of brand equity colors by reproducing the graphics in high definition and with extreme consistency. The HP Indigo 30000 just launched in 2014 enabled the execution of 120 different sku's delivering a total of 250,000 cartons. The B2 sheet size was optimal for these multiple sku jobs. Such a packaging effort would simply not make sense with analog assets, but it is now possible with digital printing.

Consumers will try various flavors and demand levels will fluctuate. It is hard to predict which sku's will become the most popular and which will be very minor but essential volumes once consumers experience the product. In a digital supply chain eVo can now easily conduct seasonal and promotional packaging. They can manage inventory by adjusting orders weekly. Folding carton converters with traditional assets require brands order large volumes making it difficult to offer choices.

More stories to follow from case studies of digitally printed product and packages released to the marketplace around the world. Learn how you can add value through increased print capability and leveraging these changing times to become the preferred supplier to your client.

### ***about the author***

*Mike Ferrari is the founder of Ferrari Innovation Solutions, llc and a brand packaging consultant. Retired after 32 years of service from The Procter & Gamble Co., he is dedicated to educate, guide & inspire those in the packaging industry to grow. Follow him on twitter via @gamechanger78*