

ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE GROWTH IN THE PACKAGING, LABEL AND PRINT INDUSTRY

In the first of three articles, Ulf Sunnberg and Chris Jordan, Partners in ExedraBridge, explore the means by which the printing industry could simultaneously expand its target market, grow revenue and increase sustainability



Chris Jordan, Partner, ExedraBridge

ExedraBridge believes that sustainability in the growth of labels, packaging and all areas of printing can be achieved quickly and easily. The company sees the solution in targeted networking and an increase in co-operation and collaboration with future customers. Sunnberg and Jordan wish to highlight what can be done by individuals and companies – of all sizes – and the possible developments that can be achieved in 2023.



Ulf Sunnberg, Partner, ExedraBridge

READY, STEADY, GO

This is where ExedraBridge usually starts when delivering sustainability workshops for suppliers and print companies. The organisation believes itself to be one of the first to begin to learn and focus on this issue. Questions in the forefront of most people's minds and relevant to the audience are welcomed.

The process of achieving sustainability

must begin with individuals and company employees. For example, could you stop buying and driving diesel cars sooner rather than later? Are you in a position to change to electric? Where and when could you avoid unnecessary car trips? Could you walk, cycle or use public transport instead? Eating less meat and reducing the purchase of plastic bottles can also help.

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Unfortunately, sustainability can no longer be seen as someone else's problem – 'the best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago, but the second best time is now'. Even though the printing industry, specifically in labels and packaging, knows that sustainability is important, many companies continue not to take action. The majority understand that changes are necessary. However, few are taking any action and fewer have put anything in place. Very few have a plan of what they are going to achieve in 2023. It is commendable that companies such as P&G and NESTLÉ have committed to reductions of harmful processes over time. However, Sunnberg and Jordan believe that a detailed, annual published plan would be beneficial. ExedraBridge is of the opinion that brands, suppliers, packaging and label converters are not doing enough to achieve sustainability.

At the COP27, Antonio Guterres, Chief of United Nations, said it succinctly and with urgency: "We are in the fight of our lives and we are losing."

NETWORKING, CO-OPERATION, COLLABORATION

One of the changes brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic has been how and where people work. Many have spent far more time online and have done business with people they have never met in person. This new type of networking is likely to change the way industries do business.



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Online networking to increase sales leads is a step forward, but changes need to go much further, much faster to impact sustainability in the printing industry. ExedraBridge believes that developers, suppliers, converters and major print groups, need to co-operate in ways that have rarely been practised before. These changes will take companies out of their comfort zone, but are essential as a contribution to protecting the planet. This is a difficult ask, but there is no Plan B! If the focus remains on quarterly revenue and profit, at some point, we will all fall off the cliff. Perhaps making a short list of companies that your business would like to collaborate with is a first, achievable step.

This kind of co-operation and collaboration has happened many times. One of the best examples is Desk Top Publishing (DTP). This game-changing innovation happened in the printing industry in the mid-1980s. Four companies changed the printing industry overnight – Adobe with PostScript and PageMaker, Apple with Mac and LaserWriter, Linotype with an Adobe Postscript RIP, and Linotronic with 100/300 Imagesetters.

This was the first move away from proprietary software and hardware systems. Adobe with PostScript was the glue for all as it enabled any company to output in one

language. Overnight, the market increased ten-fold, significantly increased all four companies' revenue and accelerated positive change.

“The process of achieving sustainability must begin with individuals and company employees”

This is the kind of collaboration that is needed in order to help facilitate and maximise sustainability in the industrial-print industry, particularly labels and packaging. A technical leap – or multiple leaps by different groups – is needed to change the production of labels, packaging and textiles.

THERE IS NO PLAN B!

In 2023, individuals and businesses, including the printing industry, need to have action plans to become more sustainable. However, this is not going to be anywhere near enough to significantly change the impact of all the non-recyclable, print, label and packaging products that are being produced annually and are harmful to the planet. Accelerated development and collaboration are required in order to make a significant difference. ■

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