

COATINGS CAN FORGE A POWERFUL MARKETING TOOL

Are you managing so that you maximize the profitable benefits available from using coatings? Have you taken advantage of the opportunity of differentiating your output from your competition through the use of coatings?

Answering these questions, many of you will find that you are caught in a mindset of running solely with the ordinary; commodity coatings.

Have you forgotten the opportunity that the evolution of coating technology brought you? That is, the opportunity to make a difference through the ability to apply coatings.

Coatings, providing that you're using them, are no doubt improving your productivity, but coatings can also enhance a printed product's look, feel and improve its functionality. Used to advantage, coatings can deliver a novel marketing opportunity. Today, the only question about coating should be, which of the many coatings available do I choose to use to produce beneficial results for my customer. There should not be a question of whether to coat or not. Coating always makes sense!

How do you take action? It's easy! Assemble a coating team made up of your key people. Take a new look at what can be done to create unique products that will make a difference to your customers. Learn to use the full range of coatings that are available and offer your customers product improvement and differentiation that matters. What you'll find is that, "Coatings can forge a powerful marketing tool"; one that can produce a profitable selling advantage.

Almost all packaging printers and a vast number of commercial printers operate offset presses with the capability of applying a coating over printing. Most of the last decade a very high percentage of new offset presses were supplied with in-line coaters. It's fair to say that all of the sheet fed offset litho press manufacturers consistently report that 85-90%, and up, of the six-color, 40 inch and wider presses are sold with coaters. In half size presses, the percentage drops somewhat but still 70-80% of these presses are supplied with coaters. Probably over 90% of these coater equipped presses have the capability of running aqueous coatings with the remainder capable of running and curing UV coatings.

Suppliers of coaters also report high levels of activity retrofitting older presses, as well as being asked to outfit some new presses. The majority of these installations also have the capability of running aqueous coatings with a growing trend to equip to run UV coatings.

Considering packaging web presses—offset, flexo and gravure, the latter two liquid ink print processes almost always have units available to apply aqueous varnishes or are configured to have UV or EB capability. In publication, many heat set webs are equipped with coaters and curing units enabling the application of UV coatings to such products as magazine covers, annual reports and brochures. Several heat set web lines are also set up to be capable of running aqueous coatings.

Why, we might ask, is there this almost universal interest in coatings? It can be said that the use of coatings/varnishes has grown in leaps and bounds over the past two decades because of the great gains in productivity and product enhancement that has been proven possible from the technology.

While this almost universal capability to apply coatings over printing exists, it seems that many printers look only to run a general-purpose commodity coating, seeking productivity gains from mid-range gloss and scuff resistance. There is nothing wrong with this of course because productivity gains are real, but look around at some of your competitors; usually the ones winning awards for excellence are doing something else.

The fact is that while the great majority of printers in the commercial and packaging sectors have purchased the capability of coating over and over again when furnishing pressrooms, it doesn't follow that they have mastered the art. Nor have they taken full advantage of the opportunities presented by the technology of coating.

Again we say, look around at the award winners. These are the progressive printers that lead the pack in taking advantage of the technology of coatings. They use coatings to optimize productivity while at the same time they look to create a salable product differentiation through an enhancement of their customer's products. They often sell based on creating a difference for their customers to exploit.

There is a wide range of product and productivity benefits that coating technology offers. Eye catching effects created with gloss, matte or satin spot, pattern or full sheet flood coating has long been a practice bettering what conventional varnish has been able to do. Additionally, specialty coatings have improved on the ordinary offering varied functionality to both printed and unprinted materials.

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Commercial printers have learned that coating can be used to increase productivity by using work & turn techniques to speed the printing of both front and back of a sheet. Using coating to effectively seal underlying wet litho inks allows handling without a wait for ink drying. Jobs can be moved through the printing operation and the bindery faster capturing productivity gains.

Summarizing, coatings give the graphic arts industry the unique ability to add value in such a variety of ways that virtually any customers' product can be improved.

Aqueous coatings have grown in popularity to dominate, but UV and EB curable coatings are also growing in use. Each of these classes of coating chemistry have their own specific attractions and limitations. However, all have the benefit of being able to be low VOC products. This alone often makes them the choice over previous dominant solvent-based coatings, especially when it comes to meeting ever-stricter environmental protection regulations.

Interestingly, while coating technology has become pervasive across most printing graphic arts market segments, it doesn't follow that all users have become the best they can be, neither have they always made the most of what the technology offers.

The opportunity is there for the taking but many of you are missing optimizing the payoff.

Applying coating is different than putting ink on a substrate. Coating involves different skills that need to be learned and practiced. Coating offers the chance to be different. It is these differences that offer the opportunity to enhance the product that you offer your customer. These enhancements are added value. Added value has worth. When a product has greater worth it commands attention and creates demand; all of which puts you in the foreground of the action that is growth and profit.

Developing the coating skills to be different, means accepting the challenge to better understand coatings and what they can offer.

Sharpen your knowledge, enhance your graphic output with coatings, look for productivity improvements and capture new customers with coatings — a powerful, creative marketing tool.

Whenever you consider primers, topcoats, or varnishes used in the production & converting of graphic arts products, consider **CORK!**

LOOK TO CORK! for all of your coating and varnish needs, for both aqueous & **UV/EB** coatings and vanishes.