

Aftermarket Inkjet Nozzle Reduces Packager's Maintenance, Production Costs

Toll Packaging is a Gibson, IL-based co-packer of pet foods and other specialty products. The company sets high standards for itself and suppliers, including. InkJet, Inc. (IJI), an Elk Grove Village, IL-based provider of low-cost, high-quality inks, replacements parts and service to the coding and marking industry.

When Toll took on a new customer in early 2003, the company needed to install a new packaging line to handle the new product (a cat treat in a stand-up foil pouch). Toll installed a Videojet 37e ink jet printer to code the pouches with a "best by" date and other key information. Then Toll turned to IJI to supply fluids, parts and service to the printer. In April 2003, Toll began using IJI's new 31 ink and in November 2003, Toll installed IJI's new EZ JET nozzle on the printer.

"Price is important but quality and service are critical," says Dave Earl, maintenance supervisor at the Toll Packaging facility in Wendell, NC. "The ink we get from IJI is less than half the price of the OEM fluid."

The new 31 ink from IJI is an ethanol-based product that provides good adhesion to glass, aluminum and plastic. And since the ink features a MEK-free formulation, it helps Toll create a safer operating environment by eliminating the handling and odor considerations often associated with ketone-based products.

Although IJI designed the EZ JET nozzle for use in a variety of Videojet coding and marking equipment, the differences between the nozzles are significant. With traditional closed-unit OEM nozzles, dirt that gets past the filter into the orifice causes print quality to suffer or printing to stop altogether. Since the nozzle does not come apart, it cannot be cleaned, it can only be replaced. By comparison, the EZ JET nozzle features field-replaceable components that can be cleaned or swapped out by Toll's in-house operators. With EZ JET, Toll buys a nozzle and never needs to buy another.

"The IJI nozzle produces good print quality and achieves good printer performance at the same time it reduces our costs," says Earl. "We stock both component parts of the IJI nozzle. If a part goes bad, there's no need to throw the entire nozzle away; we just clean it out or replace the component and put it back in operation. And we have less maintenance with the IJI nozzle," he says. "It's not toggling and we don't have to constantly clean it."

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