

Retail Systems

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Print solutions for modern retail

• Keeping up with retail technology

• Q&A with sector expert



Ensuring brand trust through proper labelling

Consumer confidence is hard won and easily lost, so it's important to make sure something as simple as up-to-date labels are not to blame.

Correct food labelling is increasingly crucial, due to everything from new regulations to rising rates of allergic reaction, dietary requirements to ethical production demands.

But many food retailers and food outlets still use manual labelling processes, running the risk of financial and reputational damage when any of the above cause customers to complain. By ensuring processes are accurate and removing opportunities for human error, brands can gain and maintain customer trust.

Regulation

Food labelling requirements are governed

by a combination of EU regulation and UK laws. These rules vary according to the product and the packaging type, but in general, full and clear information must be visible on the packaging.

Following the European Food Information to Consumers Regulation 1169/2011 - which brings together EU rules on general food labelling and nutrition labelling - the UK enacted its own Food Information Regulations in 2014, making sure manufacturers give the correct information in a legible format.

Typically, labels must show: use-by date, origin of product, allergens,



quantity, name of food, ingredients, nutritional value, address of the manufacturer, packer or seller and storage conditions.

One of the most important things driving the standardisation of such measures is the rise in food allergies and intolerances. In the UK, about 10 people die every year from food-induced anaphylaxis, and there are also about 1,500 asthma deaths, some of which are triggered by food allergies.

In June, the government responded to the tragic death of Natasha Ednan-Laperouse - a teenager who died after suffering an allergic reaction to a Pret a Manger baguette - promising to introduce legislation mandating full ingredients and allergen labelling for foods pre-packed for direct sale.

Traceability

As more consumers want to know the provenance of their food for ethical, religious or dietary reasons, the tracking of food through all stages of production is more and more vital. Incidents of food safety failures and cover-ups have caused consumers to question the traceability of their food more than ever before. But despite mounting urgency, there is evidence that the industry is not changing fast enough.

Research into food labelling technology commissioned by Brother last year - conducted among 200 food industry staff in the UK, France and Germany - explored satisfaction and experiences with food

traceability.

A common frustration among both backroom and front-of-house staff was that label printing equipment can be difficult to use, slowing down the labelling process. Labels for food storage and distribution also need to be robust enough to stay attached until the product reaches the supermarket shelves.

Specialist food printing and labelling can save time and free staff to focus on ensuring the warehouse or shop floor runs efficiently, so that by the time products reach the shopping basket, customers know exactly what they're getting.

Hygiene

According to the Food Standards Agency's latest public survey, the hygiene rating of a business is the biggest concern for diners looking for somewhere to eat out, underlining the importance of achieving and displaying a good hygiene score.

Of course, there is more at stake than a rating displayed in the window, website or brochure - neglecting to put robust processes in place can put customers at risk, which in turn will hurt the business.

Ged Cairns, head of the Auto ID business unit at Brother UK, pointed out that a reliable stock rotation regime is key to maintaining high standards of hygiene.

"In a busy food-prep environment, there is a high volume of produce being removed from freezers or arriving as fresh deliveries to be temporarily stored in readiness for preparation and serving to customers - therefore, it's vital to know

what stage in the process each food item is at, how long it has been there, and when it needs to be used by.

"Unfortunately, in our experience consulting with businesses from across the hospitality sector, at least two thirds are currently using handwritten 'day-dot' labels for their stock-rotation process," he continued. "And it isn't just small independent firms: in our research, a large number of multinational operators continue to hand write their stock rotation day-dot labels."

Conclusion

Printed labels also allow businesses to go beyond the day-dot approach, with date and time stamps adding additional precision to the process, helping to ensure compliance with hazard analysis and critical control points (HACCP) policies. This can also help save valuable time, create more efficient workflow and reduce the risk of mistakes in the kitchen that lead to wasted food and the spread of food borne illness.

There are a variety of hardware and software solutions which can improve efficiency in the kitchen and shop floor, while also driving improvements in food wastage and company-wide compliance with regulations.

Using technology alongside improved processes should help improve and maintain consumer trust in retail brands, giving people all the information they need to make informed choices about what they're buying.



Driving sustainability through printing

Adopting environmentally-friendly practices can benefit the business, as well as the planet.

Action on food waste is just one part of a wider movement towards sustainability – something which is no longer a corporate social responsibility afterthought, but a key part of brand building and bottom-line growth for a growing number of UK businesses.

Environmental issues have finally permeated the mainstream consciousness, so retailers are coming round to the potential competitive advantage to be gained by developing

sustainable processes.

Meanwhile, government organisations are also asking for greater granularity from businesses on waste disposal, water and electricity use, and evidence of supply chain good practice.

A properly managed printing process means businesses not only reduce their environmental impact, but also save on costs, energy efficiency and benefit from increased security.

Print wastage

Paper and ink are two obvious areas of wastage for any business, with Brother UK surveying 800 managers and employees in the print and scan sector to analyse the prevailing trends. It found that two thirds of managers (61 per cent) were

striving to reduce paper consumption, but significantly less (14 per cent) had managed to do so in the last two years.

Only half (53 per cent) of managers said they were actually aware of their monthly print costs. They estimated spending approximately £1,502 every month on print, of which £475 goes on hardware, £468 on human resource, £351 on external IT support and £208 on consumables – including ink and paper.

Andy Johnson, head of product and solutions management at Brother UK, explained that managed print services (MPS) monitor paper usage to minimise wastage.

“With MPS, firms are in a better position to intervene and reduce their environmental footprint,” he stated. “Plus, paper saving efforts can be tracked and then showcased in corporate social responsibility reports, which can help win customers’ and stakeholders’ trust.”

The growth of printer leasing services is also having an impact on sustainable

printing, as MPS users will get a new fleet of printers every few years, which will come with the latest energy-efficiency features. Newer, more efficient units, effectively pay themselves off in environmental terms, helping to offset the impact of replacement.

Practising what they preach

It's not just sales talk for Brother UK, as the company encourages customers to send used cartridges to its Recycling & Environment Technology Centre in Ruabon, Wales, where they are re-used or recycled.

In the year to March 2019, more than 145,000 toner cartridges were returned by UK customers, up three per cent on the previous 12 months. Of the 133 tonnes of waste produced at the company's head office in Manchester last year, zero went to landfill – marking the ninth consecutive year of Zero Waste to Landfill accreditation.

Brother research revealed that sustainability and recycling are important to three quarters of people employed by small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), with over half trying to reduce the amount they print as a result.

"Employers can make this possible by better integrating their print and scan solutions, so that documents can be shared, edited and stored digitally," said Phil Jones, managing director of Brother UK. "Combining an optimised scanning infrastructure with a managed print service is the best option for businesses looking to monitor usage and identify ways of increasing productivity and efficiency, while ensuring staff are working in the most environmentally-friendly way."

A paperless panacea?

The concept of moving towards the paperless office has been a discussion point for many years, but the mission has proven impractical for many businesses.

Paper-lite alternatives - using less



Combining an Optimised scanning infrastructure with a managed print service is the best option for businesses looking to monitor usage and identify ways of increasing productivity and efficiency

paper to achieve a range of efficiency, security, productivity and environmental advantages - have however been made achievable by the growing sophistication of document capture solutions. Brother's scan devices for example, can now process up to 6,000 pages a day directly to email, email server and cloud services – allowing companies to integrate documents into workflows and support a more efficient way of working.

Aaron Hopkinson, product and solutions manager at Brother UK, said: "Our latest research shows that paper, ink and toner are still essential to the running of offices, so while the dream

of a completely paperless office might be out of reach, adopting a paper-lite approach is a realistic aspiration that most managers are striving to achieve.

"Our portfolio is perfectly set up to help partners capitalise on the demand for integrated print and scan solutions," he continued, adding: "With the recent launch of our X-Series range, we now have a full suite of business grade printers designed to meet the print needs of all businesses – which we can deliver alongside a strong managed print offering and scan range."

Conclusion

A well-thought out approach to printing can save any company money and respond to the move towards environmental efficiency.

This can be as simple as implementing things like toner recycling, pull printing or two-sided printing and monitoring usage/setting quotas in order to reduce waste.

For those looking to take this a step further, Brother can provide a framework to help roll out such initiatives across the whole business, from the back office to the shop floor.



Q&A

Ged Cairns, head of category for Auto-ID and CIV at Brother UK, explains the business case for having the right technology solutions in place in the retail and hospitality sectors.

What solutions does Brother offer for retailers and businesses in hospitality?

Brother offers a wide range of shop-floor label printing, back office document management and food labelling solutions. Our customers include organisations of all sizes, from micro-businesses right up to large enterprises like Laura Ashley and Subway, which operate over large networks of stores or catering venues.

Can you outline the main benefits that Brother's solutions bring to its customers?

Efficiency, productivity and sustainability are at the heart of everything we do. Our solutions are designed to be quick and easy to use, as well as integrating seamlessly into customers' existing software systems – the less time employees spend interacting with a printer, the more they can spend on customer service and other important tasks.

As a business, we take huge pride in our own sustainability achievements, and are committed to helping our customers follow suit. Having an optimised print infrastructure in place reduces waste, and for those customers looking to boost their green credentials further, we offer a recycling programme for empty toner cartridges.

Information security is another key concern for retail and hospitality businesses – ultimately, if your printing is vulnerable, your entire IT environment is vulnerable.

We work closely with our customers to ensure that their print security solutions are in line with industry best practice. Our devices feature a host of built-in security features including PIN-protected printing, optional swipe-card systems and compatibility with network data encryption technology.

What are the key challenges in the industry that are driving demand for Brother solutions?

Cutting costs – and more importantly predicting costs – continues to be a focus area, which is where our solutions have an important role to play. Managed Print Services (MPS) in particular give customers increased transparency around how much they're spending, and exactly what they're getting in return. What's more, the cost per page is agreed upfront, so IT managers can budget ahead with confidence.

For businesses involved in food preparation, increasingly stringent regulations around allergies and food hygiene are creating a demand for robust, compliant and user-friendly labelling solutions.

How does a managed print service or MPS agreement work, and what are the main benefits of outsourcing printing?

Outsourcing print management helps businesses reduce the cost and complexity of printing, maximise efficiency and productivity, and ensure best practice when it comes to sustainability and security.

The implementation of Brother MPS is split into three phases.

The Assessment Phase is where we get to know our customers and their specific print needs – then we can design a custom solution to suit them. In the Transition Phase, we implement the new solution and train staff on how to make best use of it.

During the Optimisation Phase, we regularly review day-to-day operational demands to ensure the service continues to deliver. We automatically supply all replacement consumables as and when they're needed and take care of any service

and maintenance enquiries, to eliminate printer downtime and the need for intervention from staff.

Looking at hospitality, how do your solutions support businesses in the sector?

We're well-known in the sector for our compact range of business printers, which are widely used for receipts, labels, visitor identification all kinds of site documentation. Increasingly, our solutions are also being used by restaurants, hotels, and other businesses involved in food preparation, to underpin critical food safety processes.

I understand you have launched a new thermal labelling solution specifically designed to support stock-rotation – can you talk us through it?

As anyone who works in the hospitality and catering industry will know, a robust stock rotation regime is key to maintaining the highest standards of hygiene, and businesses must be able to demonstrate this to secure a five-star rating from the Food Standards Agency.

We launched our new stock rotation solution following some research which found that 90% of the market still relies on writing food labels by hand. This is time-consuming and error prone, especially when the labels are at risk of smudging or fading.

Investing in a system based on real-time thermal printed labels eliminates potential inaccuracies and save time for staff. Our solution is built around the Brother TD-2120N label printer and delivers real time, highly legible, and in some cases, colour-coded labels, that help businesses comply with regulations and reduce food waste.