Streamlining GHS Labeling With On Demand Color Labels

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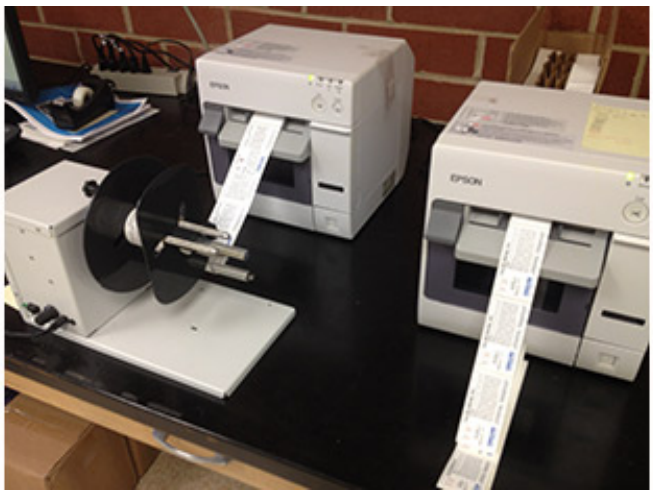
Recent regulatory changes for manufacturers and distributors of chemical products have prompted Carolina Biological, an educational material supplier that specializes in chemical products, to revise its labeling operations. Known as the Globally Harmonized System (GHS) of Classification and Labeling of Chemicals, these new standards rely on color printing and labeling accuracy to properly convey health and safety information for the handling of chemical products.

To meet these new requirements for its specialty sized chemical samples and chemistry kits, the company began outsourcing the label printing process and considered adding an in-house industrial printer. However, both presented challenges for the company's shipping operations. One of the main prerequisites under GHS is to reflect label product information onto safety data sheets. Outsourcing label production not only made GHS adoption difficult, but also proved to be expensive and time-consuming. "From a GHS standpoint, it is critical for the labels on our chemical supplies to have accurate product and safety information," says Fevzi Yalin, IT Project Manager at Carolina Biological. "Often times, labels printed outside of the company would be incorrect or inconsistent, risking GHS non-compliance and costing us time and money to correct."

Managing a high number of SKU's was another major challenge costing the company time and money. As a well-established company with historical equity, Carolina Biological sought to enhance brand recognition with end-users by presenting a consistent and distinguishable product label across its portfolio. But with over 15,000 products to manage, consistency was often an issue, and labels failed to match up with corresponding products. The resulting chaos led to discrepancies in label size and format depending on which department a product was shipped from, creating challenges for staff to correct labeling errors and track inventory. Outsourcing these operations proved too inefficient and adding a large-scale printer was logistically complicated and did not guarantee GHS compliance or the benefit of color.

The issues of GHS compliance, SKU management and brand recognition were all resolved by switching to an on demand color labeling solution. "We needed a solution that wouldn't just help us with either GHS compliance or label standardization. It was about finding a comprehensive and efficient system that would print our labels accurately, reduce errors and help us elevate our brand," Yalin says.

The company reached out to Epson after reading industry news which highlighted



Epson’s printer as the first inkjet solution capable of meeting the British Standard BS 5609 chemical labeling standard, a key durability requirement for GHS and international shipping. With the Epson ColorWorks C3400 label printer, Carolina Biological was able to provide color, compliance and accuracy for all its label operations. The printer produces color labels on demand, in a large variety of label sizes, up to 4.4 inches wide and at speeds up to 3.7 inches per second. Seeing the upside the technology offered, Yalin installed a series of printers throughout the facility to create a distributive network where each department could print product labels on demand in the exact formats and sizes needed.

The printers began to yield benefits almost immediately, especially in the chemical labs where they were primarily used. The company was able to streamline labeling operations; standardizing label sizes and formats across all departments, reducing inventory upkeep of pre-printed label stock, minimizing errors and printing GHS compliant color labels that could instantly reflect SDS changes.

“Our old system was a laborious process that consisted of ordering pre-printed color labels, loading them onto black and white labels and afterwards, making sure each label was correctly sized. Employees would often have to manually trim labels to ensure they fit products properly. The whole thing was a huge drain on our time and resources,” explains Yalin. “Now the entire process is just a single step; we not only print labels in color, but we are achieving GHS compliance quickly and cost-effectively.”

With Epson, Carolina Biological was able to drastically standardize its labeling operations, reducing the number of label sizes used from eleven to two. For every production category, regardless of volume and label size, Carolina Biological cut labeling production costs across the board. By eliminating errors, pre-printed label obsolescence and minimizing inventory costs to blank labels, Yalin anticipates the company will reduce labeling costs by about 50 percent and pay for the investment within the next couple of years, all with the added benefit of color printing and GHS compliance.

To learn more about on demand color labeling solutions from Epson visit http://pos.epson.com/colorworks/index.aspx [1]

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