

MODERN MATERIALS HANDLING

Networked printers ensure proper labels for 15,000 SKUs

Global supplier of educational materials streamlines labeling operations with on-demand color labels.

By Josh Bond, Senior Editor · March 1, 2014

Carolina Biological Supply Co. supplies classrooms and laboratories with educational materials and resources. From living organisms to biotechnology kits and lab and safety equipment, the company offers more than 15,000 products to customers in more than 170 countries. After deploying a series of on-demand label printers, the company was able to ensure compliance with new chemical labeling requirements while improving inventory tracking and uniformity of branding.

The company ships thousands of items on a daily basis, making products available for delivery any day of the week. Known as the Globally Harmonized System (GHS) of Classification and Labeling of Chemicals, recent regulations rely on color printing and labeling accuracy to properly convey health and safety information for the handling of chemical products. Initially, the company outsourced the label printing process, which proved to be expensive, time-consuming and prone to inconsistencies. The company also considered adding an in-house industrial printer, but this option was logistically complicated for the various departments to cooperate and failed to meet GHS color labeling requirements.

"Our old system was a laborious process that consisted of ordering pre-printed color labels, loading them onto black and white labels and then making sure each label was correctly sized," says Fevzi Yalin, IT project manager at Carolina Biological. "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. Now the entire process is just a single step."

With a new on-demand color labeling solution (Epson, pos.epson.com), the company is able to provide color, compliance and accuracy for all its label operations. The printer creates a large variety of label sizes, up to 4.4 inches wide and at speeds up to 3.7 inches per second. The printers have been installed throughout the facility to create a distributive network where each department can print product labels on demand in the exact formats and sizes needed.

The printers have helped reduce inventory upkeep of pre-printed label stock, minimize errors and print GHS-compliant color labels that can instantly reflect material safety data sheet changes. Yalin anticipates the company will reduce labeling costs by about 50% and pay for the investment within the next couple of years.

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