

## A Window to Better Packaging

According to Point of Purchase Advertising International (POPAI), 82 percent of shoppers make their purchases in store, comparing a number of products vying for consumer attention. Gaining prominence on the shelf is paramount. How does one maximize product appeal and steer impromptu choices? One way is through a view of the product in flexible packaging.

The increasing market demand for customer-friendly packaging and enhanced product protection is expected to propel flexible packaging as a viable and cost-effective alternative. Beyond the visibility on the shelves, U.S. consumer lifestyle trends, along with demanding convenience and portability of products particularly among foods, make flexible packaging an attractive choice for brand owners. Thus, it is no surprise that flexible packaging has experienced exceptional growth. The Flexible Packaging Association (FPA) has estimated sales of flexible packaging—the second largest packaging segment in the country with a 22 percent market share—at \$31 billion in 2017.

An increasing number of brand owners are expected to continue to shift to flexible consumer packaging such as films, pouches and bags. The creativity that can be designed in to flexible packaging really lends itself to greater presence on the shelf. Other reasons for the proliferation of flexible packaging include the increase in new products with faster inventory turns, the interest in market differentiation, and the convenience of flexible packaging. That should be no surprise. Flexible packaging is convenient and easy to use, lightweight and conducive to on-the-go consumption. Done right, it can also extend product shelf life.

Sales of healthy products are outpacing growth across fast-moving consumer goods. Changing demographics have, to a degree, enhanced this trend. Younger generations are busier. Millennials focus on attributes they associate with healthy living. Meanwhile, in the U.S., 60 percent of baby boomers choose food because they desire to manage their health better.



Research demonstrates that see-through packaging can improve shopper perception of a product. Mintel's 2014 Food Packaging Trends study reported that 54 percent of shoppers consider product visibility important, and 30 percent of shoppers judge freshness by appearance, not by use-by dates. This added transparency raises confidence in the brand. It acts as a visual cue around quality, taking consumer trust to a new level. By revealing product color, shape and texture, clear packaging can help discerning shoppers visibly ascertain health claims. When it comes to communication values, transparency taps into the consumer's desire to know how food and beverages are produced.

Consumers love to see what they are getting inside packaging. In the past, cardboard packaging did this with diecut windows and transparent films. Pasta is a good example. However, today this is also possible with flexible packaging and stand-up pouches. Done correctly, along with eye-popping graphics, window packaging minimizes light exposure yet allows transparency. No matter how good the artwork, shoppers trust purchasing food that features transparent windows. Windows transform pouches into unique

*Packmaster CrossWeb*

## A Window to Better Packaging, Continued

packaging that is inviting and attractive to consumers. Pouches give brands a more contemporary look that appeals to millennials. According to BNP Media's packaging facts, the top three features consumers want in food and beverage are tamper-proof, easy to open, and resealable. Other packaging benefits popular among consumers are portability, lightweight and no-mess dispensing.

How can the flexible packaging converter maintain market share? The proliferation of successful small- to medium-sized specialty food companies will continue to take a growing share of U.S. grocery spending. Consumers are looking for locally sourced, health-focused brands that feature natural ingredients displayed in transparent packaging. Food startups are riding this wave, and growing faster than larger competitors. In order to thrive in this market, flexibility and adaptation must be prioritized.



### Laser Technology Lends Itself to Flexible Packaging

Laser technology is one of the champions of this change. Thanks to its versatility, today it is possible to deliver innovative packaging solutions that meet the requests that characterize demand, adding value and personality to the packaging. The applications remain endless, from easy-open and micro- and macro-perforations to ensure food freshness and safe cooking to the most demanded application: windowed packaging made of paper.

SEI Laser, a pioneer of laser technology applied to flexible packaging, develops systems specifically designed for single and multilayer flexible film processing in different materials. For example, the SEI Packmaster Cross Web uses digital laser cutting to create different geometric window shapes, in the same production batch. This is not possible with traditional mechanical die-cutting. Another feature that makes this laser system innovative is the extraordinary precision

of micro holes for micro perforations, as well as the repeatability of the process over time.

SEI Laser systems provide innovative solutions—easy opening and closing as well as easy-breathing, ventilation, modified atmosphere packaging (MAP) and window packaging. SEI Laser's Packmaster laser systems offer laser cutting, laser scoring, macro- and micro-perforation on different materials such as PE, PET, PP, nylon, PTFE, laminated film and paper.

The operator can import the cutting layout and instructions directly into the system. The machine is able to manage any file, place it inside the laser work system and, automatically, repeatably deliver laser cutting with perfect registration.

With precise selective material removal, the laser perforating capability and process repeatability of SEI Laser systems offer exceptional quality. At up to 1312 ft./min. (400 m/min.) in cross-web laser cutting (and over 1640 ft./min. [500 m/min.] in web direction), laser scoring and micro-perforation is extremely productive. And, the all-digital process allows rapid job changes and a significant reduction of downtime and costs that are just not possible with traditional systems.

SEI Laser also believes in—and participates in supporting—sustainability. Thanks to the resealable packaging that can be created with this technology, it is possible to reduce food waste, preserving the environment by eliminating waste. Easy-open pouches reduce food waste and diminish its environmental impact—issues that concern sensitive consumers.

The ability to integrate the SEI Packmaster directly into solvent-less laminators, slitter/rewinders and printing machines with minimal electrical or mechanical modifications is one of its strengths. In addition, the easy-to-use software and complete certified Industry 4.0 automation make the SEI Packmaster the most innovative system for flexible packaging. It has responded and adapted to both manufacturing, as well as innovative flexible packaging, demands. That's flexibility.

Flexible packaging—and a view to the product—could not be possible were it not for the abilities of laser technology to finish the job. As consumers look for easier ways to see what they're buying, graphics will catch the eye, but laser technology will help provide a glimpse of what's inside the package.