



Digital Printing Allows Shorter Tin Runs

Wet Women LLC of Paia, HI, prides itself in creating unique, eco-intelligent products for women who engage in water sports. Wet Women's newest product is a scientifically certified biodegradable surfing wax that is harmless to aquatic life.

Morgan Fisher, Wet Women's founder and president, wanted environmentally friendly packaging for the wax to create a completely eco-friendly product and package, and looked to recycled metal packaging. Fisher's obstacle was that small volumes of lithographed metal containers were not economically feasible. Plate charges alone for printed metal tins can cost several thousand dollars.

"We had researched a number of types of biodegradable packaging and found them excessively expensive," explains Fisher. "Most would have produced significant levels of trash byproduct. Metal packaging was selected because it is American made and contains a minimum of 31% recycled steel. In addition, the cans are reusable when empty, and this adds to their utility while minimizing trash and waste."

Fortunately, Fisher discovered that Ball-Steeltin, part of the Ball Corporation's Aerosol and Specialty

Packaging Division, had installed state-of-the-art digital capability for producing custom decorated metal tins without costly plate charges. Through digital printing, Wet Women could order a quantity they could afford and still have a solid package with a high-quality and high-cost appearance.

With Ball-Steeltin's process, trademarked Xccelerate™, custom art can be produced with a set-up charge of just \$400, making production runs as low as 250 units economically reasonable. The Xccelerate process also reduces lead-time, which is typically two to four months for lithographed metal packaging, to less than four weeks with the digital process.

Fisher needed a startup test market run of 2,500 units in each of two designs. The development process started with Ball-Steeltin's Adobe PDF template for the desired end product size and shape. Wet Women's graphic artists used Adobe software to populate templates supplied by Ball-Steeltin. The digital process is compatible with Adobe Illustrator vector-based (eps) or Adobe Photoshop raster-based (tiff) formats. Output for



both designs were generated in CMYK format at a 300 dpi resolution and were forwarded to Ball-Steeltin electronically.

Several aspects of the manufacturing process were compatible with Wet Women's needs. First, the preproduction samples that were generated were a direct match to those that would be ultimately produced. Necessary design element revisions were incorporated and containers were available in final form within a few days of submission.

Also, the full production run of 5,000 cans was completed in just a few weeks. "The economics and turnaround time exceeded my expectation and the ability to tweak graphics and see samples representative of production in a matter of days was equally impressive," says Fisher. ■



to reality.