

Doing business in a shrinking market

EuPIA's Annual Conference: more innovation demanded



The newly nominated EuPIA president Felipe Mellado wants the printing inks industry to be more creative

Eric Van de Meerssche

EuPIA's 11th Annual conference was held on the 27 - 28 March 2014 in Lisbon, Portugal. Thomas Hensel, Past President of EuPIA, the European Printing Ink Association, welcomed more than 80 participants with the 4 values that the association stands for: proactive, competent, trustworthy and reliable.

Thomas Hensel reflected on the past ten years and recalled why EuPIA was founded. A decade ago there was felt the need to elevate the image of the printing ink industry because its esteem with customers was low, the value the industry brought to society was not recognised and it was not deemed to be an appealing sector to attract new generations.

On top of these observations the industry faced a phenomenal legislative challenge. Hensel then described the work that EuPIA has been doing in these last ten years and concluded that the association has done a great job in meeting the needs that were expressed at its creation, proudly serving over 80 members representing some 12,000 jobs throughout Europe.

Market is still suffering

From the presentation of Martin Kanert, EuPIA's Executive Manager, it is clear that the legislative challenge still exists and there is still a long way to go. Martin Cellierier, chairman of the Statistics Working Group gave the perfect introduction to the topic of day 1: Doing business in a shrinking market. 28 companies participate in the EuPIA statistics, covering 90 % of the total European market. Overall the volume dropped by 3.2% and the value by 3.4% (in 2013) so clearly the market is still suffering from the economic problems in Europe. Cellierier explained that the share between inks for packaging and inks for publication continues to shift in favour of packaging, illustrated by the



More than 80 printing inks experts attended this year's conference in Lisbon, Portugal

fact that in 2013 the market share of publishing decreased further to 61 % whereas in 2005 it was 69 %.

Use of special inks will become more important

The next 3 speakers, Dr. Thomas Weskamp - McKinsey, Dr. Klemens Berkold - Funke Druck GmbH and Thomas Drensek - Axel Springer AG shared their views and experiences on doing business in a shrinking market and why they still invest in publication. In a shrinking market it is necessary to behave rationally in core markets and find growth elsewhere. The key is to differentiate and in the ability to adapt.

The newspaper of the future will no longer be driven by technologies but by market demands, with a shift from "Publisher is King" to "Customer is King". The reader is now central, so it will be important to use different products to create "other" types of newspaper. Certainly the media landscape of the future will not be print OR digital, but print AND digital. The use of special inks and processes will become more and more important and will offer many possibilities. Drensek proposed that the ink makers use publishers as laboratories to work together on new developments.

The first day closed with a panel discussion which concluded that although the market is shrinking there are enough challenges for those who make creative use of the opportunities laying in front of them; which seamlessly leads to the topic of day 2 : Innovation as driver for the future.

The need to be creative

This session was introduced by Felipe Mellado, the newly nominated president of EuPIA.

The whole packaging concept is to be rethought due to the changing market conditions as Andrew Revel of Faraday explained. The consumers get older and have larger budgets to spend. Shopping is changing from large stores to more local small scale stores. And then there is the whole area of online shopping. How will this influence packaging?

Another challenge for the industry is the growing demand for new bio-based materials which will have different characteristics and therefore have other migration properties that need to be investigated. These new materials need new inks, so "be creative", was the message.

Innovation is the driver for the future

Hervé Baratte - Baratte Consulting sets the Environment for Innovation. No one can afford to "stop innovating" because of a difficult market. Innovation is teamwork and a company's first researchers are its sales force. They are in contact with the market and pick up the first signals for new needs. Baratte quoted "Employees First, Customers second". If this is done the right way, it is possible to secure non-customers to make sure they become future clients.

The third speaker of the day, Dr. Martina Weidner of Altana described the endless possibilities of using printed electronics in packaging and Point of Sales displays. It is obvious that imagination and creativity drive innovation to an unknown extent. Mr. Mellado rounded-up a very successful 11th Annual Conference with the conclusion that even in a shrinking market, for both publishing and packaging, innovation is the driver for the future.

Next year's conference will take place in Marseille, France on the 23 - 24, April 2015. ◀

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