

MULTI-COLOR CHESAPEAKE, VIRGINIA: SMITHFIELD LEAD TIME

BACKGROUND

In the world of fresh protein, market responsiveness is very closely tied to supply and demand. Constant fluctuations in weather and macro-trends in livestock are combined overnight with niche product demands and new diet innovation. The ability of a company to react quickly and gain market share is directly attributed to their ability to launch successful product lines in a minimal amount of time.

CHALLENGE

The ability to predict these sudden market shifts are not easily accomplished. In certain cases, bulk fresh protein is assigned to processing facilities prior to even understanding what purchase orders exist from retail stores for the resulting product. It is up to the companies like Smithfield Foods to constantly adapt and modify recipes, serving quantities and volume demands in an effort to maximize profits. A short shelf life also demands that profitability cannot come at the expense of time. Organizing spices, casings, smokehouse time, and refrigerated trucks are enough – but on top of that the critical legal element of packaging must be quickly updated as well. Often, lead times for pre-printed packaging films exceed feasibility.

MCC SOLUTION

As a local and national partner to the Smithfield Foods umbrella; MCC has instituted a unique Digital printing program which delivers on seven-calendar day lead times from order to delivery. Seven days is not just an arbitrary number tied to a week, but the available lead time from bulk protein shipment to retail delivery commitment for protein producing companies. Orders are placed on a defined list of substrates and die sizes which have been pre-approved for various forms of food grade contact and post-processing legal requirements. At the point of entry, graphics are prepared or modified, PDF proofs are delivered to the company and HP's direct-to-press imaging technology is utilized to immediately move into printing. A quick turn model for finishing and quality assurance follows closely behind to make sure that performance is not sacrificed for speed. Dedicated trucks, couriers, or overnight shipments are then batched to complete the cycle allowing Smithfield Foods to complete the concept to package alignment all in a timeframe which still allows for the maximum amount of shelf-life remaining on the product for retail.



THE RESULTS

In practice for over two years in our Chesapeake, VA facility, this program has led to increased market responsiveness, reduction in obsolescence, flexibility in base film packaging type and quick reaction to legal requirements in nutrition facts labelling. All this is accomplished without the need for traditional tooling, lead times, or long-term inventory solutions.

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