

Waste Not, Want Not

Getting on the Cutting Edge of Responsible Pharma Packaging

A Real Solution – An environmental revolution is underway that will impact communities, governments and businesses across the globe. Conservation and management of finite resources are at stake as we address the “perfect storm” of rising energy prices, societal and customer expectations to go green. The healthcare industry is no exception, and packaging will play a key role in providing solutions, as it represents upwards of 30–50% of the overall waste stream. As manufacturers and suppliers position for the future, a clear understanding of customer requirements including return on environment will not only have a profound impact on package design, but present significant opportunity for those on the cutting edge of this revolution.



Packaging performance in sustainability and environmental excellence are increasingly referenced by investors as leading indicators for management quality and long-term shareholder value throughout the entire supply chain. Performance based packaging metrics are the foundation that can be directly mapped to sustainability efforts, including associated impact on profitability, capi-

tal cost and increased revenue. When done correctly, suppliers, manufacturers, distributors and end users can share success with sound corporate environmental stewardship, profit improvement and growth.

Sustainability Scorecards Start With the Customer and End User

The use of sustainability scorecards has been widely recognized as the foundation of environmental preferred procurement (EPP) practices. Companies such as Wal-Mart, Procter and Gamble, and IBM have effectively and

the Broadlane Group (key supply chain partner) by September.

What the Healthcare Sustainability Scorecard Measures

It is important to first understand that the healthcare sustainability scorecard is mapped to actual product use and from that, specific scores are provided for each supplier. These scores will then be included in the overall decision making process that will provide an environmental benchmark included in the procurement decision making process. More than 30 groups of specialty clinicians at Kaiser Permanente for example are responsible for selecting medical and pharmaceutical products.

“This score factors into clinicians’ decisions along with product performance and cost,” said Robert Gotto, Kaiser’s procurement director. Gotto believes the scorecard is a powerful tool. “It gives you detailed product information at the point when our clinicians are evaluating products, and they have the detailed information to make informed decisions.”

This is a fundamental shift from the prior decision-making process where knowledge of packaging, chemical composition and environmentally friendly processes are unknown.

The healthcare sustainability scorecard will focus initially on

a spreadsheet that suppliers fill out for each of their products, and it looks at 10 criteria. Six of those criteria relate to specific chemicals, and the other four involve the recycled content of the packaging. Based on a numbering system, an environmental factor to differentiate products and suppliers will be established.

Healthcare Scorecard is a Good Start

“Green washing” or misleading marketing claims can damage credibility and in serious situations, result in litigation. The use of sound metrics based on a clear understanding of the voice of customer and waste stream dynamics will not only avoid costly mistakes, but position organizations to reap benefits with increased profitability, sales growth and positive corporate perception. The healthcare scorecard is a good start, but much more is needed as we progress into the future.

The use of an acceptable life cycle analysis (LCA), one that is generated on mathematical modeling, and includes all appropriate factors associated with cradle to cradle metrics, is the foundation. Software applications such as the Wal-Mart model, Sustainable Packaging Coalition model continue to expand and improve. The ability to provide an objective assessment that supports a properly weighted average on all environmental factors will be key.

It will also be important to recognize and adjust to the dynamics of a changing waste management stream. The impact concerning waste to energy, biodegradability, recycling and landfill options can dramatically change design decisions and render a package as less than environmentally friendly if not done correctly. Maintaining a good understanding of voice of the customer, and evolving changes in the waste stream will be vital to an organizations success.

Use Sustainability For Market Edge

The medical waste stream represents significant cost to hospitals and end users to dispose of it properly. As hospitals embrace EPP, they expect to see cost savings, better regulatory compliance and enhanced corporate social responsibility for sustainable packaging. And they want it done right. Packagers who respond can gain a marketplace advantage. The following steps should be considered as part of an effective strategy:

1) Develop a mission statement for sustainable packaging

- No matter where you are along the packaging supply chain, make it part of your company environmental policy by taking the following actions:
 - Get senior management to buy in.
 - Make it part of standard operating procedures and incorporate as part of the new product.
 - Development process, cost reduction and compliance requirements.
 - Work collaboratively with other functional disciplines to support the strategy across your organization.

2) Develop a legislative benchmark and compliance strategy

- Understand the legislative requirement in all global locations where you sell products and packaging.
- Set action plans focused on compliance. Work with regulatory bodies across the globe as well as industry groups to develop sound legislative policy and positions. That is especially true for areas where your organization anticipates future requirements.

3) Continue an ongoing engagement with voice of the customer

- Understand strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities within the challenges of waste management. Do that for your

organization, and do it for your customers. Know their waste management processes, trends and challenges.

- Understand present and future direction. That gives you the basis for developing effective strategies to better meet these evolving needs. In doing so, you enhance the opportunities to increase revenue, lower cost and prove the basis for good corporate citizenship.

4) Build metrics, corporate goals and competitive benchmarks on LCA modeling

- Be concerned about the perception of “green washing”-non-legitimate labeling and marketing claims.
- Use LCA models to support your efforts. They help you focus on source reduction and sustainable package material choice; identify sustainable manufacturing processes and equipment; impact the supply chain; and identify shared opportunities in cost savings with suppliers, distributors and end users.

Eliminate or Change Materials That Create Environmental Deficiencies in Medical Waste

Look to replace PVC and plasticizers. Use materials that are inert or non-harmful in common waste management technologies such as landfill, incineration, chemical disinfection, autoclave and microwave systems.

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In The Matrix

France to Use Datamatrix System for Pharma Traceability

Safety First – France is adopting the Datamatrix system to meet new regulations on the traceability of pharmaceutical products to increase patient safety. Avery Dennison is at the forefront of the Datamatrix barcoding technology that will become the accepted standard across France in January 2011. Other European states, such as the UK, Germany, Spain and Italy are looking to introduce similar regulations to improve consumer safety. 2D Datamatrix barcodes are able to store large amounts of information (up to 2,300 alphanumeric characters) on a small label. This makes it ideal for the small products and packaging often used for pharmaceuticals.



sion solutions. These solutions will enable any pharmaceutical manufacturer to fully comply with the new regulation and improve traceability along their whole supply chain.

Improving the Distribution of Pharmaceutical Products

This regulation derives from the need to increase the control of the supply chain of medicines in order to guarantee the safety of patients. The aim of the new standardization is to improve the efficiency of batch recalls, to reduce errors, to combat counterfeiting and reimbursement fraud and to increase the transparency of the distribution chain. From 2011 onwards, manufacturers, distributors, pharmacies and hospitals will be required to trace products by an electronic receipt notice (EDI).

Valérie Marchand, health sector manager of GS1 France explains: “The new regulation will enable pharmaceutical companies to know quickly and accurately what they have supplied, both to the distributors and to the hospitals, but traceability often stops there. The strong point of this new regulation for the supplier is that it will send the information

included in the Datamatrix code electronically. It will allow automatic integration by the various players in the traceability information chain, while also improving product monitoring and enhance flow management. In a nutshell, the regulation improves the traceability of products from the production chain to the patient’s bed.”

A Possible European Standardization

France and Turkey are the first two countries to adopt the Datamatrix system in their traceability regulations. What has become an official regulation in France could become a rule shared by all of Europe in the future, given that EFPIA (European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industries and Associations) recommends the adoption of the Datamatrix system to GS1 standards as a common traceability standard. Moreover, Germany, Spain and Italy also envisage adopting the Datamatrix system in the future.

Advantages of the Datamatrix System

The Datamatrix marking system was chosen because the new regulations require three types of information: the new CIP 13

code, the batch number and expiry date of the medicine. If stored on a conventional uni-dimensional barcode, this amount of information would need a large printed area, making it impractical for many smaller medicine packages. The serialisation number will be added over time. Datamatrix marking has a large storage capacity and minimal physical dimensions, making it ideal for this application. This system facilitates the automation of product monitoring in the supply chain to allow batch recalls or automatic detection of out-of-date products. Finally, its cost remains competitive (marking cost between 0.1 to 0.2 cents).

Pharmaceutical Companies Must Adapt Their Supply Chains

Marchand said: “The pharmaceutical manufacturers will be obliged to install new printing systems for the Datamatrix marking. It is a necessity to satisfy the new regulation criteria.”

As such, the French and international manufacturers who wish to distribute medicines on the French market will have to acquire appropriate equipment in order to comply with this new regulation. The difficulty of implementing this new marking lies in the correct integration of new printing and control system.

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Read the full interview with GS1 France Healthcare Manager Valérie Marchand here: www.chemanager-online.com/en/tags/GS1

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