

THE LABEL INDUSTRY MEETS IN IRELAND:
FINAT's European Label Forum 2019



The challenges of a 21st-century business platform trying to compete for the interest (and commitment) of younger people are exceptional in today's label and packaging print world. The international label association FINAT has taken the leading role in this challenge, and its annual conference, the European Label Forum, devoted much of its programme this year to focussing the minds of the 250-strong audience – founders and managers of converting companies, and their suppliers across the board – on developing ways to harness the skills and allegiance of tomorrow's label industry leaders to drive the efficacy of a key feature of modern life – packaging print. Couple this mission with the major changes across the print technology base, and the typical label converter is at a crossroads – in terms of skills base, finances, and young, talented personnel who might make middle and higher management in the fullness of time.

Dublin's fair city



The FINAT 2018 European Label Forum took place at the very edge of the European continental shelf – in Dublin – in early June. Proceedings kicked off with an optional business simulation workshop arranged by FINAT's Young Managers Club, and the formal FINAT General Assembly. Delegates met together in the early evening for cocktails prior to attending the FINAT Label Awards Ceremony and

celebrating the worthy winners in this year's very-well-supported label printing competition and its associated recycling and sustainability award, the former of which recognise excellence in self-adhesive labels and flexible packaging as effective marketing, promotional and identification tools. Led by Master of Ceremonies **Vlad Sljapic**, Xeikon's Vice President, Global Sales, the sparkling presentation ceremony -- somewhat



reminiscent of the Oscars ceremony -- culminated in **Multi-Color Corporation North America Wine & Spirits** achieving the judges' accolade of 'Best in Show' for their labels for **Sidewinder Spirits**. A networking dinner followed, bringing together key players from the international labels and packaging print sector.



The President's address



Next day saw the opening of the formal agenda by current FINAT President **Chris Ellison**, Managing Director of a true family label company, OPM Group. He welcomed delegates, highlighting those attending a FINAT event for the first time. They were doing so, he said, in FINAT's 60th anniversary year -- a longevity achievement which, he noted, pales into insignificance if compared to that of Arthur Guinness, whose central Dublin brewery was opened in 1759 – with a 9000-year lease! During its more than 250-year history, the Guinness brand has continued to reinvent itself. Ten million glasses of Guinness are drunk every day now, and Chris Ellison adjured the audience to 'join me tonight at the Guinness Storehouse and sample a glass or two yourselves'. He added: 'I am personally looking forward to the upcoming programme of rebranding the label industry as an inspiring workplace for young talent.'

Alastair Campbell on Brexit

It was time to introduce keynote speaker, **Alastair Campbell** – writer, TV commentator, author and strategist, and well-remembered as UK Prime Minister Tony Blair's director of communications. His headline topic for this multinational meeting was 'The Elephant in the Room' – Brexit and implications for EU/UK B2B relations.' The extant lack of clarity on the UK's final proposals for its departure, and the likely situation that might follow the UK's exit from the European Union, were shared with the participants in an address that explored all the options, all the possibilities, and all the shortcomings.



Afterwards, participants were able to share their own views on the topic with coffee around the extensive tabletop exhibition.

The Irish market



Ireland has a strong history in self-adhesive labelling, which certainly continues to be lively today, as **Gavin Killeen**, Managing Director of Nuprint Technologies Ltd – leading Northern Ireland suppliers of labels and packaging print – showed in his review of the current Irish marketplace. Naturally, the relationship between the island's northern and southern territories (still very strong, despite the political differences) was discussed, along with the implications of Brexit, and Northern Ireland's response to the UK

referendum. In the context of the event's primary focus, it was good news that Nuprint's commitment to the industry of which it is part has led the company to develop a strong programme of staff training and apprenticeships and R&D and technology support, including the EU-funded PhD project with Glasgow University investigating printed conductive inks and related opportunities.

European label market data



Next, it was time for FINAT MD **Jules Lejeune** to provide an update on the broader European label industry picture, which has exhibited a strong recovery since 2012. The association's data confirmed healthy 4.7% industry growth in 2017 over prior year (which, however, was below the average growth rate of 5.4%, 2013-2016), with film-based labelstocks growing at an even higher rate – 8.2% over prior year. The top 15 label market countries in Europe represent

a massive 90% of the total business, and the statistics affirm that Turkey, Poland, and Italy have enjoyed the largest increase in absolute volumes between 2010 and 2017. Again, the influence of Brexit has made itself felt in the UK, with consumption in decline since Q3 2017, unlike the other top-performing European country markets. A recent issue of FINAT's regular member publication, RADAR, researched brand owners' 2018 label purchasing projections, reporting optimism in terms of growth between 3-5%, and pinpointing other interesting market features. For a detailed report, we refer to the detailed summary presented within the first semester Radar edition of 2018 (to be) released at the beginning of July.

The future landscape

Following this factual resumé, **Andy Thomas-Emans**, Strategic Director, Tarsus Labels & Packaging Group, went on to map out the evolving current industry landscape and the next five years, examining in particular the growing crossover for label converters between label print and other packaging print options. FINAT RADAR research, he referenced, indicates that the production of flexible packaging pouches is already an additional capability for 19% of label converters; sleeves for 31% of



survey respondents; and other flexible packaging items for 27% of them. Flexible packaging, indeed, is a key market for the future, forecast to represent €16 billion-worth of business in Europe by 2022, with the biggest growth in the savoury snacks, cheese, coffee, dry products, and pet foods markets. He went on to highlight issues and opportunities in converting: the health and safety problems around solvents; energy-efficient UV flexo print; and, of course, digital print. He also introduced the industry's ground-breaking UVFoodSafe group, embracing major suppliers and related professional associations across the converting value chain, who are committed to making UV and

UV/LED curing fully appropriate for food packaging print. He concluded by confirming that Labelexpo, the label industry's prime annual event, has now expanded its coverage to become a package print show -- as is appropriate in this changing marketplace.

A novel approach to on-pack promotion



Packaging professional and author **Keran Turakhia** went on, in an offbeat and thought-provoking presentation, to look at the ways converters and their clients can benefit financially from thinking outside – and inside! – the box, to create innovative messaging opportunities. After all, the inner surface of a box lid, or of a slideable cardboard sleeve on a meat prepack, is as much a printable advertising space as anywhere else on the packaging. With real-life case histories, he showed how his own

thinking has successfully changed packaging from just being a cost, to helping a brand to take advantage of new on-pack promotional opportunities, particular with digital print. His lively and musical presentation style, and awe-inspiring case histories, stimulated much enthusiasm and interest.

'Rethink packaging' is the motto of rlc-Packaging, whose managing director, **Marc Büttgenbach**, then moderated an expert panel discussion featuring all the morning's industry presenters, and gave delegates the opportunity to explore their topics in further detail.



Hands-on business learning sessions



A networking lunch preceded an interesting afternoon of concurrent 'hands on' 'business learning sessions' on different and important aspects of today's market. **Jennifer Dochstader** and **David Walsh** of marketing researchers LPC Inc looked at how 'going digital' has created impacted both converters and brand owners, updating the findings of their FINAT-commissioned report on digital label printing.



James Bevan, founder and director of specialist product authentication and security consulting house Vandagraf looked at the latest trends and developments, with a focus on taggants and forensic solutions.

Food safety and migration issues in the wider world of labels and flexible packaging were addressed by a multi-disciplinary panel of industry experts – **Jakob Abilgaard**, of Dan Labels Flexible Packaging Division; **Robert Rae**, of GEW; and **Niklas Olsson**, Flint Group Narrow Web and also chairman of the ELF's overall programme committee.



Sean Smyth, print consultant at Smithers Pira, discussed the total cost of ownership of 'alternative' label printing technologies. Business marketing strategist



Bert van Loon, independent strategist, guided his audience through modern ROI methods for marketing to deliver improved results in online B2B marketing; and



Dieter Moessner, project engineer, pharma, at Edelmann, examined compliance with the new EU Falsified Medicals Directive which comes into effect in February 2019, in terms of serialization and tamper-evidence.

Guinness is good for you

Completing a full day's agenda was a pleasure trip to the magical Guinness Storehouse for a brewery tour, Irish music and dancing, a gourmet dinner and, of course, plenty of Guinness.



Profiling the upcoming generations



For an audience composed of leaders across the packaging print value chain, the second day's programme was strongly and appropriately focussed on management issues, and opened with best-selling author and CEO of XYZ University **Sarah Sladek**, who deliberated on the key label industry topic of driving stronger engagement with the younger generations in the quest for new, young business talent. Since, between 2010 and 2020,

78% of the 'baby boomers' will turn 65, and 25% of 'millennials' will move into leadership roles, the need of their younger-generation successors must be met because here has, as she showed, been more in change in lifestyle and attitudes in the last few decades than in the whole of history... Each upcoming generation -- the baby boomers, and generations X, Y, and Z -- is different; and not all of them, since birth, have enjoyed the benefits of the internet and associated technologies, with communication media changing, generation to generation, from face-to-face, through emailing, texting, and -- once again -- to face-to-face. Each generation also has a different concept of what would constitute the ideal leader, and what one word defines 'success'. For Generation Z, it is 'happiness'. This state of affairs has created, and continues to create, many workforce issues across all industries -- not the least of which are the availability of skilled labour; retiring company founders; and leadership change. Little is being done to control and manage these issues -- and a completely new approach from employer organisations is the key central requirement, because today's most successful, engaging leaders have the same three special traits in common: passion, humility, and urgency. There is a lot of thinking to be done!

Generational handover, family-owned companies



Bert van Loon carried the topic further, leading a lively debate with the audience on the next-generation challenges for, specifically, label converters in Europe because, he said, ‘the label industry has a vast interest in successful generation handover of family-owned converter companies’. Contributions from the floor included **Chris Ellison** and family members also working within OPM Group, **Philippe Voet**, **Bart Reynders**, **Andrea Vimercati**,

Francesc Egea, **Josh Yerecic**, **Thomas Hagmaier**, **Chris Jones** (in his capacity as FINAT’s Young Managers Club Chairman), **Calvin Frost**, and **Jules Lejeune** (himself after all also running a second-generation family company), – all with personal experience to share.

Would the alternative to successful generation change be more consolidation, with resultant reductions in innovation? This was an interesting discussion point which, like the entire debate, was beautifully summarised in cartoon form by local Dublin artist **Philip Barrett**.



The power of Guinness



Following a break for refreshments, the audience welcomed **Emma Rochford**, Global Marketing Manager for Guinness, and **Kathryn Wilson**, Design Lead for Guinness and Baileys at Diageo, to the podium. The trend for premium and craft beers is creating a pressing need for high-quality branding and, while Guinness is a global brand with local flair, Rupert Guinness was right to say, back in 1929: ‘the

quality of our advertising must equal the quality of our beer!’ Following an opportunity to review current full-of-life Guinness brand imaging, advertising, and packaging, FINAT delegates were delighted to receive an open invitation from the speakers to contribute to the future embellishment and sustainability of Guinness’s packaging.



Eyes wide open



In the conference’s final keynote, business guru, writer, and broadcaster Prof **Noreena Hertz** delivered an eye-opening seminar on ‘how to make smart decisions in a complex world’. In this age of disruption – which includes the potential effects of Brexit – ‘we need time to think, to imagine, to dream...’ and to be ‘the smartest organisation possible – smarter, deeper, and more precise.’

She shared insights into the upcoming new generation of potential employees, generation K – the 15 to 24 year olds -- and profiled what they care about, how they behave, what they want, and how they consume. What is more, she underlined, it is important to note just how different they are to the millennials that came before them. She left the audience with lasting thoughts on how to use her amazing insights to improve their businesses.

‘A bright future’

FINAT President Chris Ellison took to the stage to close the event, thanking speakers, sponsors, and event organisers, and commenting enthusiastically, and with good reason: ‘We are an industry that has such a bright future, and we don’t always realise it’ We’re also a very, very, very passionate industry!’ And, as a reminder of the power of FINAT and of packaging print as a valuable brand component, he added: ‘A brand like Guinness stood on this stage and asked for our help!’



The FINAT European Label Forum featured a highly-focused agenda planned to address the needs of its specialist audience – and was confirmation of the relevance of FINAT as a professional industry association, now celebrating its 60th anniversary. **The FINAT European Label Forum 2019 will take place from 5-7 June at the Scandic Crowne in Copenhagen.**

