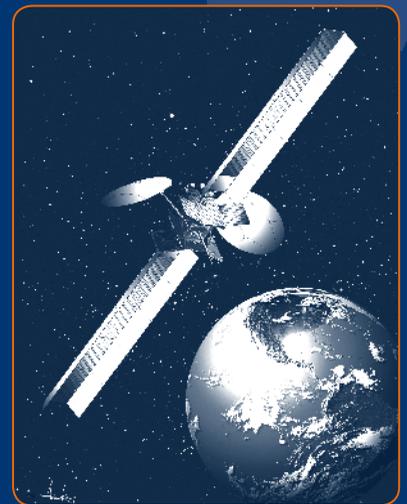


CHAPTER 9

EPILOGUE



EPILOGUE

Past achievements do not guarantee future success. They should be seen in the context of time and place of events. The post-war recovery of a previously divided Europe that surrounded the foundation of FINAT in the late 1950s can no longer be compared with the global business environment of today.



Jules Lejeune,
Managing Director
FINAT

The pioneers of a young, emerging industry who founded the association differed from the new generation of educated young professionals rising to the occasion in the new Millennium. The complexity and versatility for which our technology has come to be recognised are difficult to

compare with the labels of the early adopters when it was first introduced in Europe.

What has remained unchanged however are the forces that drive businesses to meet, talk and discuss topics of common interest. Sometimes it is enough to know that one is not alone in trying to tackle a certain problem. Often it turns out that time, energy and resources can be saved by learning from others or by pulling together resources from different areas of expertise to solve the problem. But how to get in touch with the right people and where? Considerations like this have driven and will continue to drive the success of FINAT as the international business to business platform for the self-adhesive label sector. This success, in turn, has helped and will help to document and disseminate the common knowledge and expertise of the industry necessary to continuously raise its standard.

What will change are the parameters requiring common answers. I have attempted to list some of the key developments facing the label industry in the years to come.

- **From supply driven to demand driven:** until the early 90s, FINAT members enjoyed double digit or at least well above GDP growth figures year after year and every innovative application sold itself. In the demand driven markets of the future, 'getting under the customers skin' will provide a competitive edge. The label industry, with its long tradition of product and process innovation is well positioned to meet the customer challenges of tomorrow. As our sector offers essential functional features that other packaging sectors cannot provide, it may take a crucial position in driving forward the overall development of new packaging concepts. If label printers are to turn into 2label and packaging providers", the interaction with their suppliers, for instance in the development of innovative "nano materials" solutions, may gain further importance and what better "first port of call" to establish initial contacts between partners than FINAT?
- **From national to pan European to global.** With the completion of the European internal market in 1992, the introduction of the single currency 10 years later and the enlargement of the EU from 15 to 27 in 2005 and 2007, the scope of label companies has widened and the role of FINAT as the international label industry platform is increasing beyond that of networking, standards and education (although these remain the main drivers). The development of FINAT as a truly international trade association is facilitated by the ICT revolution and the gradual disappearance of language barriers. Via the internet, FINAT will be on every label printer's doorstep.
- **From baby boom to the new generation.** The baby boom generation is considered to

be composed of those born between 1946 and 1964. Over the next 5 years, 25% of all family companies are expected to change ownership. Incumbent industry leaders will have to prepare for the transition: pass on to the next generation or sell? Unlike the previous generation, the upcoming generation of Young Managers will have to adapt fast to the international business environment.



- **From 'members' to 'subscribers'.** In line with the society trend of individualisation and with the emergence of managers replacing the founder-owners and pioneers, the perception of association membership has been changing from a sense of 'collective ownership' to one of 'service consumption'. The question 'What's in it for me?' has been gaining importance and associations are more and more driven by short term, monetary considerations rather than longer term gains. The challenge for FINAT in an increasingly promiscuous and volatile business environment is to maintain a sense of ownership of our common future and recent years have demonstrated that active involvement in our association can be very rewarding, not just for the common benefit of all, but also for the personal and business benefit of the members. A classical win-win situation!
- **Incorporating the newly emerging markets.** The overseas contacts with North America and Japan in the 1970s and 1980's were driven

by mutual curiosity and networking. Although this has also been the case with our more recent contacts in Continental Asia and

Russia, these contacts are now also driven by more direct business considerations. After all, these newly emerging markets are, to a great degree, serving the same customers who are insisting on the same product quality, standards and underlying skills that have been acquired over decades in the mature markets and have been managed by FINAT as the world's leading label association. For these regions, our association will offer a useful source of reference.



- **From economic to ecology driven.** With Al Gore the focus on a sustainable future has increased. More and more business decisions will become subordinate to considerations of corporate social responsibility towards the environment. The EU is working towards a new holistic approach and has been leading the world as far as measures and legislations are concerned. FINAT's role as Europe's lobby portal to Brussels and promoter of sustainable (recycling) solutions will therefore have global implications. Not only the legislators, but also our global customers are demanding the incorporation of sustainability measurers in the business offerings of our members. Measures which may require a common industry approach which exceeds national borders and for which FINAT will provide the vehicle.

To answer these and other questions, it may help to learn from the experiences of some of the people who helped build FINAT to what it is today. If this is only one of the things that this book has achieved then it will have served its purpose.