**Speed to Shelf and Consumer Engagement – The Rise of Digital Corrugated Packaging Printing**

*Shifts in consumer habits continue to have a considerable impact on FMCG brands and their supply chains. From the continuing rise of ecommerce and personalisation to product diversification in response to a more health-conscious, environmentally aware, and socially responsible demographic, brands are continually adapting, and agility is key.*

*Digitally-printed packaging not only supports brand storytelling and consumer personalisation but also enhances supply chain efficiency through shorter lead times, reduced waste, and improved inventory management.*

*Michael Strehlow, Account Manager – Corrugated EMEA, Domino Printing Sciences, explores the value-added, digitally enabled corrugated packaging that converters can offer brands – boosting speed to shelf and driving consumer engagement.*

**Innovative corrugated packaging – more than just a box**

One could be forgiven for having a somewhat staid view of corrugated packaging. It’s easy to think of it as simply protecting products in transit, but today, full-colour printed corrugated packaging is proving to be a powerful asset in terms of efficiency, branding, and sustainability.

[Corrugated packaging has evolved](https://www.smithers.com/resources/2019/jan/trends-changing-the-corrugated-packaging-market#:~:text=Corrugated%20board%20is%20proving%20popular,dimensions%2C%20rather%20than%20simple%20weight.) significantly beyond its traditional application, enabled by technological advancements in areas such as design software and QR codes, with corrugated packaging printing driving a change in mindset for brand owners.

Indeed, brands are now recognising corrugated packaging’s potential to enhance brand image, improve customer experience, and provide agility and efficiency within supply chain management.

The blank canvas of corrugated packaging is ideal for transforming into stunning, brand-defining designs that provide a unique and engaging unboxing experience. Designs that can be customised to particular market segments or customer personas, as well as adapted into a multitude of shapes, sizes, and models, for eye-catching, innovative corrugated packaging solutions. And, of course, for those brands still seeking durable packaging, corrugated packaging offers almost unparalleled benefits over other materials, with high levels of [cost-effectiveness and sustainability](https://www.dhl.com/discover/en-in/logistics-advice/logistics-insights/the-benefits-of-cardboard-and-corrugated-boxes-for-packaging).

**Speed to shelf – how digital printing supports responsive packaging**

In today’s hyper-competitive consumer landscape, speed to shelf is a crucial factor in achieving brand success. As highlighted by McKinsey’s “[State of the Consumer 2025](https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/consumer-packaged-goods/our-insights/state-of-consumer)” report, consumers are demanding more personalised, timely experiences, and brands must be able to adapt swiftly to shifting preferences and trends. For converters, digital corrugated packaging printing is emerging as a key differentiator, empowering brands to respond with unprecedented agility.

Unlike traditional methods, digital printing significantly reduces lead times and eliminates the need for costly setup processes, such as plate making. This means that a run can be composed of many variations or even personalised boxes, without additional printing costs. This enables converters to streamline workflows and move packaging from concept to shelf more rapidly than ever before, in as little as a week. The result is a faster go-to-market strategy, allowing brands to capitalise on time-sensitive campaigns or seasonal opportunities with minimal delay.

Speed to shelf isn’t just about urgency – it’s also about precision. Digital printing enables small-batch customisation, allowing for the creation of shelf-ready packaging, point-of-sale displays, and ecommerce-ready boxes that visually and emotionally appeal to target consumers. This flexibility helps brands test designs, update messaging, and roll out campaign-specific packaging – all while reducing waste and inventory costs.

Furthermore, digital presses offer ”just-in-time” production capabilities, ensuring converters can meet tight deadlines without overstocking or disrupting traditional production. Even for conventional corrugated producers, digital capabilities can be integrated to absorb short runs, manage late-stage edits, or fulfil last-minute promotional pushes.

**Consumer engagement – packaging as a conversation enabler**

Packaging often provides the first physical interaction between brand and consumer, and first impressions are everything. Corrugated packaging, particularly in retail and ecommerce settings, has become a crucial touchpoint for consumer engagement.

For brands seeking to stand out on crowded shelves or create memorable unboxing experiences at home, digital printing provides a dynamic and versatile solution. The combination of corrugated packaging and digital printing enables not only high-resolution, eye-catching designs that elevate the consumer experience but also quick and cost-effective production of packaging variations, empowering brands to [tell their unique stories](https://www.domino-printing.com/en/blog/2024/connected-packaging-and-consumer-engagement?utm_medium=non-paid&utm_source=onlinepublication&utm_content=tl-speed-to-shelf&utm_campaign=2025-int-en-Global-PR-DP-FY25-Q3). Limited-edition designs, for example, add a sense of exclusivity and collectability, which can strengthen emotional connections with consumers and inspire brand loyalty.

Moreover, digital technology enables the integration of connected packaging through features like 2D codes. These digitally printed QR codes serve as gateways to an extended brand experience, guiding consumers to interactive and informative digital content. As [Merkle’s 2025 Connected Experience Research](https://www.merkle.com/en/merkle-now/ebooks/2025/connected-experiences-research-report-2025.html) report highlights, QR code engagement has surged – 87% of consumers now interact with them, up from 64% in 2024. Many do so out of curiosity, seeking deeper insights into the product.

Through QR codes powered by GS1 or augmented reality (AR), consumers can access a wide range of content – from promotional games to vital information on provenance, sustainability, and recycling. This interactive bridge between the physical and digital realms enhances brand storytelling, offers a platform for brands to gather vital consumer feedback, and builds lasting relationships.

Finally, digital presses with variable data printing and late-stage customisation capabilities enable converters to help brands provide better distinction of product variants, delivering additional shelf impact and enabling more efficient picking. Messaging can be tailored to specific customer segments for a localised or even personalised experience, boosting relevance and engagement. For converters, embracing digital print to produce innovative corrugated packaging is not just an upgrade; it’s a strategic tool enabling the next level of consumer connection in a more sustainable and efficient process.

**Conclusion**

In-store and at home, packaging is the silent salesperson – the first touchpoint that shapes consumer perception – and in an era of personalisation and speed, it’s about connecting when it matters most.

Digital corrugated packaging print not only complements traditional analogue solutions but also unlocks new value for converters, giving brands the tools to accelerate shelf presence, stay relevant, react in real time to market dynamics, and facilitate consumer loyalty. In a world where speed and accuracy define success, digital’s role in enabling faster, more flexible, and more relevant packaging solutions is a powerful competitive advantage.

By embracing digital corrugated packaging printing as a value-added service, converters can offer their brand partners more than speed – they can deliver measurable savings, reduced waste, and packaging that truly engages.

To bring their interactive packaging ambitions to life, converters should look to a [digital press partner](https://www.domino-printing.com/en/?utm_medium=non-paid&utm_source=onlinepublication&utm_content=tl-speed-to-shelf&utm_campaign=2025-int-en-Global-PR-DP-FY25-Q3) with proven expertise in advanced variable data printing – a partner who can help them elevate the consumer experience and stay ahead of the competition in a continuously evolving market.

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Digital Printing Solutions is a division within Domino Printing Sciences. The company, founded in 1978, has established a global reputation for the development and manufacture of digital inkjet printing technologies, as well as its worldwide aftermarket products and customer services. Its services for the commercial print sector include digital inkjet printers and control systems designed to deliver solutions for a complete range of labelling, corrugated, and variable printing applications.  
  
All of Domino’s printers are designed to meet the high-speed, high-quality demands of commercial printing environments, bringing new capabilities to numerous sectors, including labelling, corrugated, publications and security printing, transactional, packaging converting, plastic cards, tickets, game cards and forms, as well as the direct mail and postal sectors.  
  
Domino employs over 3,000 people worldwide and sells to more than 120 countries through a global network of 29 subsidiary offices and more than 200 distributors. Domino’s manufacturing facilities are located in China, Germany, India, Sweden, Switzerland, UK, and the USA.  
  
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