



PACKING BENCH TRANSFORMATION

How the latest innovation in
Duplex Thermal Print technology
is contributing to this.

A leaner, faster, greener way to despatch

How much thought do busy logistics managers give to the printing of despatch notes, invoices, packing lists, carrier labels and the like? Probably not too much – after all, they’re just simple pieces of paper, aren’t they?

But like anything produced over and over again, perhaps hundreds, thousands or tens of thousands of times per day, paying a little thought to their production can reap great rewards.

In a nutshell, Duplex Thermal Printers can speed up despatches, cut your carbon footprint, lower the total cost of printer ownership, simplify the task of keeping printing equipment running and release valuable space in the despatch department.

How can one machine achieve all this? Read on...

The future: Two heads are better than one

Until recently, standard practice in a busy operations/fulfilment department was to print a despatch label using a single-headed (simplex) desktop thermal printer, peel it from its backing paper and stick it to the box/bag. A separate laser printer churns out despatch notes and other documentation to be packed inside the box/bag with the goods. The output of the simplex thermal printer and the laser printer have to be carefully coordinated – woe betide anyone who gets them out of sync.

About three years ago, the directors of a Lancashire based print company PaperUK spotted a new duplex thermal printer from Toshiba which they felt could transform the operations of many of their multi-channel customers. As the name implies, it has two printheads,



meaning that it can print on both sides of a duplex thermal label simultaneously. The benefit: it prints a despatch label with the reverse side being used to print despatch/return information - boosting the users green credentials and eliminating an expensive and time consuming disposal problem. What’s more, thermal printing does not use ink, the image is produced as the

thermal paper reacts with heat, eliminating the downtime involved with changing laser toners and drums.



Duplex thermal printers weren’t being used in logistics operations at the time, but were beginning to find favour in applications such as medicines labelling.

“We spotted its potential immediately,” says Julian Pickford, director of DuplexThermalPrinters.com, the division that PaperUK set up to market and distribute the new printer.

PaperUK is a family firm, originally founded in 1985 as Pioneer Business Forms Ltd. in Darwen, Lancashire, specialising in the design, supply and print management of printed literature, labels, tags and operational

CASE STUDY

Redesigning retail fulfilment

A Toshiba Duplex Thermal Print Solution saved Europe’s largest online retailer of premium beauty products, feelunique.com over £75,000 in operating costs and improved processing speeds.

Feelunique sells 25,000 products in 80 different countries and its business is growing 50% year on year. It ships 2m parcels a year – and 100,000 in the peak pre-Christmas week - keeping its 55-strong despatch team very busy.

Feelunique immediately recognised the potential cost and time saving benefits of the Duplex Thermal Printer proposal and asked for a pilot test of the equipment. This was quickly followed by a firm order and a roll-out in line with the company’s new WMS.

The company now produces a pre-printed promotional message beneath its despatch labels, explaining: “Customers are much more likely to read a message on the despatch note – we have found that they keep these as an invoice reference for the future – so this has very powerful marketing communications potential.”

The retailer also saved around £50,000 a year on material costs and £10,000 on maintenance and support compared with its old laser printers. But it also cut out the £15,000 annual cost on keeping a senior administrator in the despatch area to resolve printer problems. The supply of hardware and duplex thermal labels is print managed by Paperuk.com, the parent company of duplexthermalprinters.com.



consumables for retailers.

Julian Pickford's fellow director, Amanda Gibson, adds: "With Duplex Thermal Printers, every part of the label is used, so there's no waste. Also, because it's a thermal printer, you have only one consumable to purchase – the thermal label paper. There are no inks or toners to worry about, nor are there the problems of disposing of empty toner cartridges. That means less purchasing, storage and distribution work.

"Having only one printer frees up valuable workbench space, so there are benefits in terms of overheads too – and there's also less maintenance to worry about."

The directors are also convinced of the inherent reliability of thermal printers compared with other technologies. Julian Pickford adds: "In fact, many of our customers have moved to Duplex Thermal Printers having experienced unreliability with their existing equipment."

Good things come in small packages

The duplex printer is a very compact machine with a 20cm x 24cm footprint and 22cm height.

Crucially, thermal printing is also very quick – and in an industry where time is money, cutting the time it takes to produce labels and documentation from 5-6 seconds to 2-3 seconds means that many more dispatches can be handled in each work shift. (It can print both sides of a two sided direct thermal material simultaneously at up to 6 inches per second.)

Like any printer, the duplex thermal printer needs maintenance, but thermal printers in general need less than most.

DuplexThermalPrinters.com supply cleaning kits and maintenance service agreements to ensure best performance and reliability especially throughout peak periods.

Duplex Thermal Label paper is available in different sizes on a next day delivery basis - 6" x 4" is the most popular for despatch labels but maximum paper width is 128mm with a print width of 104mm. Maximum label depth is 13".

"We've researched and developed our duplex thermal label paper to ensure that it delivers the best performance for our customers."

One possible use of the extra length is to include one or more peelable return labels.

Feeder trays and other accessories are all part of the service.

Life isn't all black and white

Duplex thermal printers only print a black image on a white label – but there's no reason

The Fastship Label from duplexthermalprinters.com

why you can't introduce some colour into your customers' experience. DuplexThermalPrinters.com can provide labels pre-printed in full colour to the customer's own specification. Furthermore, a pre-printed message can feature underneath the despatch label.

The printers' powerful capabilities can be put to good use by producing bespoke graphics – such as photos, cartoon characters, full colour pictures of this season's products, promotional offers or vouchers. The possibilities are limitless.

Quality printing

Good quality printing is essential in logistics and the labels provided by DuplexThermalPrinters.com are second to none in this respect. "Printing of barcodes is especially crucial," explains Julian Pickford. "A barcode will be scanned many times during a parcel's journey, especially if it's an international shipment, and it can deteriorate if the thermal paper its printed on isn't up to scratch."

A misreading barcode could lead to the parcel being delayed, so DuplexThermalPrinters.com urges customers to consider whether cheaper thermal papers are necessarily the bargain that they appear to be.

The duplex thermal printer can produce 1 and 2 dimensional barcodes and QR codes at 203dpi. Julian Pickford firmly believes that thermal is best when it comes to barcode quality.

Poor quality consumables can also take their toll on the print-head, necessitating its early replacement. As Amanda Gibson says, "paper may look the same, but it isn't necessarily so. We've researched and developed our label products to ensure we supply a quality product for mission critical operations."

Peer recognition

DuplexThermalPrinters.com and Toshiba were recognised and rewarded for their innovation using duplex printers in the operation at Feelunique.com when they won the Logistics IT Business award for Printing and Labelling in the Supply Chain in October 2015.

Out of the box thinking

Another innovation supplied by DuplexThermalPrinters.com is the Fastship Label. This is aimed at retailers who need to include packing lists or other information on ready-boxed items received from a supplier – but without having to open the box in order to insert it.

Once both sides are printed through the duplex thermal printer, the Fastship Label is stuck on the outside of the box in the usual way but a small thumb notch allows the label to be peeled back revealing the order information on the underside. This can then be detached and kept by the customer. Like all the company's consumables, it can be pre-printed in colour and customised according to the customer's needs. It will also be available soon for Print and Apply operations.

Systems integration

Quality hardware is essential in today's logistics industry but it is only part of the story. Printers must also interface with today's sophisticated warehouse management and despatch systems if they are to fulfil their potential.

Amanda Gibson says: "This is a GDI (graphic data interface) printer. It comes with a Windows driver that allows you to print both sides of a duplex thermal label from a two-page document.

"We have integrated our printers directly with bespoke warehouse management systems without the need for middleware."

The company can provide a demo printer for IT departments to test systems integration. Further technical assistance is on hand from their team along with Toshiba support. DuplexThermalPrinters.com can also help with systems integration and there is also the technical assistance of the Toshiba team to call on.

The bottom line

Price isn't everything, but it is an important question to ask. The duplex thermal printer costs around £899.00 + VAT and the labels approx. 2-3p per label depending on size and order quantity, and the cost of the duplex thermal labels works out at around 2-3p per label (6"x4") depending on order size, which is very reasonable compared with the alternatives.

It's also important to bear in mind that the equipment's smaller footprint could give significant savings in premises costs and, because every part of the label is used, the cost of disposing of waste is virtually eliminated, as is the downtime involved in changing consumables like toners and drums.

DuplexThermalPrinters.com offer a full end to end service from integration support, label design, supply of hardware, labels and cleaning kits in addition to service agreements.

Please visit: www.duplexthermalprinters.com or contact: sales@duplexthermalprinters.com t: 01254 870522. ■



“Duplex Thermal Printers have changed how the whole despatch process works, allowing us to operate more efficiently. We have been able to increase the number of parcels sent out within a shorter time frame.”

A LEANER, FASTER, GREENER WAY TO DESPATCH

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