



LABELLED A WINNER

A label market overview, by Shelley Sofier.

The growth of technology has seen no significant decrease in the use of paper in the office, or at home, and many files need to be kept as hard copies. So the need to identify, categorise and label is just as strong as ever. Combined with people's need for demonstrable order and to find things quickly, the love affair with the label is not only still strong, it is growing.

Label manufacturers have harnessed technology to make sure that they have kept abreast of the different requirements of modern businesses, usually technology-driven, for

compatible products for labelling and mailing.

The market offers many more sophisticated products and customers may not be aware that there are other options than embossing machines or paper labels – although these still have a place. It falls into four main categories: PC compatible machines, stand alone machines, hand held devices and sheet labels.

Avery is best known for its label sheets, which are computer compatible, and are traditionally used for mailing. Despite the development of email, addressing labels are still bought in large

numbers and for smaller companies are a way of avoiding the use of mailing houses, and uses their own databases.

Technology itself is driving the need for more labelling as storage on CDs and DVDs is identified by Avery as providing the greatest market potential for their products.

Blick, one of the UK's longest-established brands in labels – and a brand leader in small pack labels - has reintroduced its A4 labels – suitable for inkjet, laser and copier – in a ten sheet pack. The paper is chlorine free and the



A total 70% of sales are made through office equipment retailers

An exciting area of the market is the rapid growth in sales of labelling and identification machines

air-conditioned packaging ensures that the labels are fully protected.

MACHINES ARE A GROWTH AREA

An exciting area of the market is the rapid growth in sales of labelling and identification machines. The original embossers are still in evidence but tend to be used more in the home. The new generation of machines offer much more flexibility and functionality and include one-at-a-time labels linked with a PC database to keyboard machines which can be stand alone or linked to a PC. The advantage of the desktop system is that it frees up the office printer for other tasks and saves on print cartridges.

The market for labelling and identification machines showed 21% growth in the year to July 2005, according to GfK research. Over 30 million units were sold in the UK, with a value of £2.6m, of which approximately 30% were desktop and the remainder hand held devices.

The new generation of machines offer much more flexibility and functionality and include one-at-a-time labels linked with a PC database to keyboard machines which can be stand alone or linked to a PC

A total 70% of sales are made through office equipment retailers although computer stores are increasing their share of sales, reflecting the increasingly technological nature of the products.

There are a variety of products on the market and customers should select based on the application they need, the flexibility of label size, requirements for images or logo on the label and the speed of printing.

Market leader in both desktop and handheld machines is Dymo with 76% of the desk top market and 58% of the hand held market.

LabelWRITER is Dymo's most popular range in the commercial sector. The range has recently been updated and contains four machines so customers can select the appropriate applications.

LabelWRITER uses Windows compatible software. It also has a database facility which imports and exports databases or creates new ones. Dymo has been supporting LabelWRITER with a TV advertising campaign in May and further advertising will appear in the autumn.

The company's LabelMANAGER range features a QWERTY keyboard so the products don't require a PC, making the selection useful in

factory, retail or warehouse as well as office locations. The top of the range 450 offers USB connectivity, has different print and font styles, uses five different sizes of tape and can print barcodes.

Brother, the number two player in the market, has launched its first-ever true address labelling machine range, including the QL-550 and QL-500, which have the added attraction of being able to produce internal signage.

Hooked up to a PC, the QL can produce the full range of labels, and where offices need to provide clear signs giving information or warnings, the QL doubles as a signage printer. Using Brother's continuous tape, users can create internal signs with a maximum width of 62mm and one metre length.

Although hand held devices are the largest part of the market, they are less buoyant in the commercial sector. Hand held devices, such as Dymo's LabelPOINT range are useful for people on the move or in non-office situations. They have an ABC keyboard for non-typists and print in a range of colours and widths.

Labels are the office signposts, and as long as there is an office, people will need to find their way around. ■

The market for labelling and identification machines showed 21% growth in the year to July 2005