

ENGAGE
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HOW DO YOU PACKAGE INNOVATION?

This Is the Company to Ask.

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Written by Jessica Ferlaino

Engage Technologies Corporation is a renowned manufacturer of comprehensive packaging solutions. But it is how this company innovates both its processes and its products that is its true claim to fame.

From automated coding, marking and labeling solutions, case sealing, and shrink packaging for a range of product shapes and sizes, to the various inks used, Engage's highly innovative systems improve efficiency and performance for its customers and for the global supply chain. ►►





David Mylrea
CEO of Engage Technologies

► Source of solutions

To deliver this range of solutions, Engage relies on its subsidiaries: Squid Ink, Eastey, and American Film and Machinery (AFM), which offer complementary capabilities and have been flawlessly integrated under the Engage umbrella.

Squid Ink is a specialized manufacturer of industrial coding and marking equipment for the packaging industry. Its industrial inkjet printers and fluids can be used to print information on a number of substrates, making it a leader in this regard.

Eastey is also a leader in its own right, as a manufacturer and supplier of heavy-duty shrink packaging equipment and other packaging tools and solutions, including its complete line of case tapers, case erectors, L-sealers, sleeve wrappers, shrink tunnels, and bundling equipment.

AFM also manufactures a complete line of shrink sleeve labelers, heat shrink tunnels, full body labelers, and tamper-evident seals for a variety of sectors, a market reach that's impressive on all counts.



Better process, better output

Regardless of which Engage Technologies product line is being discussed, innovation is at the heart of every conversation and is built into the processes, the culture, and the DNA of the organization. This is one of the reasons the company fared so well during the pandemic.

While the pandemic illuminated flaws and weaknesses in the supply chain, bringing entire operations to their knees, Engage reveled in the challenge, sparking a new era of innovation and driving opportunities through process improvements and product enhancements. On the process side, training was a great place to start.

“Innovation is at the heart of every Engage conversation; it’s built into its processes, culture, and DNA, and is one of the reasons the company fared so well during the pandemic.”

For CEO David Mylrea, a new virtual way of doing business that was accelerated by COVID was the game-changer. “The pandemic made us figure out how to do a better job of educating our employees, our district sales managers, and our distributor in the field on how to train people on our products for installation and service,” he explains.

Engage achieved this in two different ways: the company launched a YouTube channel complete with an extensive library of videos chronicling installation, service, sales, and maintenance support to train members of its network remotely on all its product lines, as well as a BlueVolt online training system which was developed in 2021 and greatly expanded its reach.

“As a result of the pandemic, we were able to pivot in terms of how we trained and how we educated our distribution network, so we reach over ten times more people today via our YouTube channel and our BlueVolt training than we did in the past,” says Mylrea, who still encourages people to take advantage of onsite training because, as the saying goes, “there’s no place like home.”

Another significant process improvement came in the way of ISO 9001:2015 certification. “We analyzed everything in detail and then went back and changed what needed to be changed to make us more efficient, with better products, better systems, better procedures,” says Mylrea, who notes that ISO certification was preceded by the adoption of and adherence to KAIZEN™ principles.

Vice President of Marketing Chad Carney provided an update regarding the ISO certification process: “We’ve just finished our third year of ISO certification,” he says. “It was renewed in April with no non-conformities, which is a credit to our employees and internal ISO teams.” Further to improving its overall function, ISO certification helped Engage land new business and has further enhanced the quality of its output, resulting in elevated customer acceptance rates and overall satisfaction. ►►



► Top marks for innovation

As well as process innovation, Engage Technologies generates impressive product innovation. Squid Ink recently revolutionized how companies can mark boxes or cases. By eliminating the need for labels or preprinted stickers in favor of printing directly on the box, the company was able to reduce costs and environmental impact in the process.

As Carney notes, “It costs ten times more to put a label on the box than it does to just print on the side of it,” and to top it off, our CoPilot® Gemini™ offers excellent resolution and variable print; whether it’s logos, bar codes, lot numbers, or batch codes, it can be printed in a single pass at speeds of up to 220 feet per minute.

“As well as process innovation, Engage Technologies generates product innovation, recently revolutionizing how companies mark boxes or cases by eliminating labels and preprinted stickers.”

Additionally, the CoPilot® Max™ is a new product that can operate using a range of inks including oil-based, solvent-based, UV cure, and more. This enables printing on virtually any substrate, an ability that has propelled Squid Ink into markets that were not previously accessible.

On the Eastey side, Carney says, “A lot of what we do are variations on a theme. So, we have shrink-sleeve wrapping equipment and we offer them in a variety of sizes to fit the user’s product. Whether it’s something small like a tray of bottled water to windows, garage doors, or kayaks—you name it, we can shrink-wrap a wide variety of products by simply modifying the machine to fit a number of different markets.”

At AFM, instead of variable sizes, it boasts systems with variable speeds: 60 to 100 products per minute at entry level; intermediate systems that can process 300 products per minute; or high-speed machinery that can achieve 500 products per minute at the top end.

“We’re constantly trying to find out what’s going on in the market and attend to those market needs,” says Mylrea, and the way Engage does this is by engaging its market through a distributors council, which is used to communicate with members from different areas of the country.

For Mylrea, “the input we get from our distributors is tremendous. We talk about everything from current products, issues, opportunities, customer service, modifications, access to additional info, improving our warranty statements, and improving our product manuals, to ‘what do you want to see us do next? What kind of enhancements do you want to see on our equipment?’”



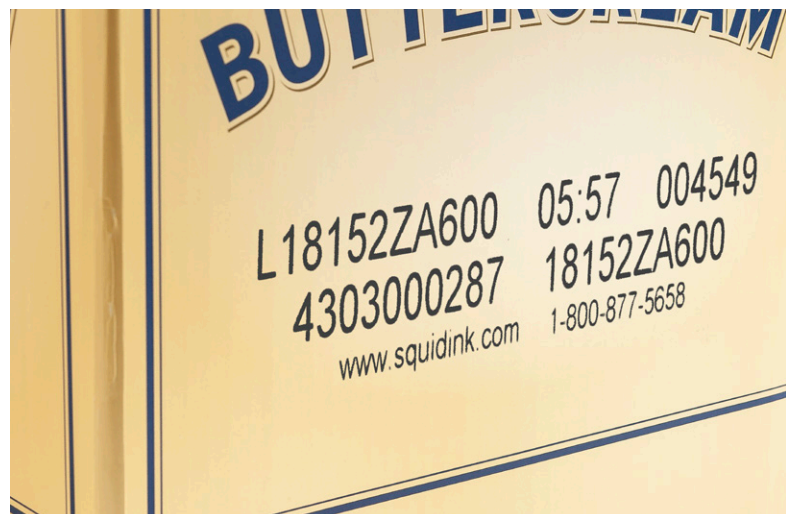
Growing in every way

To better support its customers with its expanded product lines, Engage has expanded its physical footprint as well. Eastey's recent move to an advanced new manufacturing facility in Big Lake, Minnesota takes the company from 20,000 to 50,000 square feet of production space with a dramatic growth in capacity.

"Previously, when we would have a factory acceptance test for some of our big bundlers it would essentially shut down the plant because it took half the plant to do the test. Then once we shipped it out, things could start moving again. Now we can have 20 factory acceptance tests happening all at once and it won't impact our ability to continue working," explains Mylrea.

Growth has been not only physical, but fiscal as well. Engage is coming off three blockbuster years of growth, and fiscal year 2023 shows just as much, if not more promise thanks to the culture of continuous improvement that's been infused throughout the company's ranks. To top it off, all the efforts are paying off as Engage was named a 2023 Top Workplace in Minnesota by the **Star Tribune**.

With this notable success behind it, the goal once again is to organically triple the size of the company, just as Mylrea believed was possible when he took the helm in 2017. All it will take is more of the same: continuous improvement, purposeful innovation, and the infrastructure to sustain growth and maintain the quality and value that have brought Engage to this point. ■



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