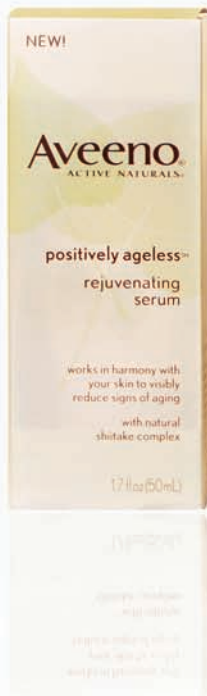


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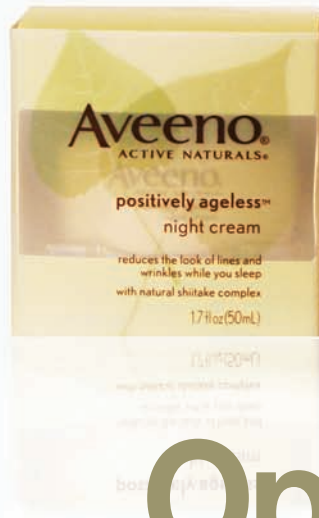
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08.09 | CARTON CONVERTING



MeadWestvaco's Aveeno Positively Ageless cartons won an Excellence Award in this year's Paperboard Packaging Council national competition.



Operational audits:

Cut costs, build profits

Here's how MeadWestvaco works with converters to improve efficiency via a detailed analysis of machinery and materials.

Edited by Chief Editor Mark Spaulding

The economic downturn has impacted nearly all industries, and everyone is trying to maximize budgets and prioritize spending. The Global Packaging Solutions business unit at MeadWestvaco (MWV) is not only

aggressively pursuing its own cost-reduction action plan but is working closely with strategic partners.

The service delivers added value to converters, which is only enhanced by MWV's paperboard substrates, technical expertise and innovative design

capabilities. These audits allow MWV to understand a potential customer's business on a very detailed level and to build long-term partnerships.

So far in 2009, MWV teams have performed several of these customer operational audits. The teams are created after an in-depth discovery process identifies each converter's specific issues, at which point MWV employees are selected based on their skill sets. MWV audit teams use Six Sigma® and lean manufacturing tools to analyze package-manufacturing equipment and process data.

Fresh perspectives

"Our teams have been extremely successful with these audits and have saved customers anywhere between \$50,000-\$500,000 annually," says Jay Woodson, technical manager for Global Packaging Solutions, MWV. "When you bring a fresh set of eyes into a facility, it shines new light and brings a different perspective to the project. Our teams have seen converting lines all around the world, and we have a substantial range of best practices to offer our customers for improvement."

"We recently performed an audit for a major West Coast converter, and we asked a lot of pain-and-gain questions in the upfront process," adds Judith Oprandi, MWV West Region account manager, Global Packaging

Solutions. "Knowing information about the customer's challenges allows us to create a systematic approach to process improvement. In this particular audit, we were able to address four areas: materials storage, inventory control,

"When you bring a fresh set of eyes into a facility, it brings a different perspective to the project."

cleanliness of sheet and incoming material quality check.

"Our recommendations allowed them to reduce their material-storage and inventory-control costs by roughly 13 percent. In addition, our suggestions from a converting standpoint gave them an 18-percent efficiency gain."

Quantifiable analysis

MWV conducts these audits while a customer's facilities are running at full capacity. The audit process takes around a week to gather needed information. The data is then loaded into a proprietary Paperboard Performance Model (PPM), and quantifiable analysis work begins. This tool was developed by MWV as part of a consultative approach which highlights opportunities to gain

efficiencies throughout the printing and converting processes.

"The PPM allows us to quantify the impact of sheet cleanliness, press speed, impressions between blanket washes and the overall operational job costs," explains Chris Moser, MWV global marketing manager. "This tool shows customers how productivity can be increased, and it calculates how many dollars can be saved."

Following an audit and PPM analysis, MWV reviews detailed reports with converters. This typically includes a healthy dialogue about suggestions and ideas for the customer to consider. In addition, the audit team often returns to the facility to measure improvement and monitor the process.

MWV's approach is to provide a dedicated process improvement team to its customers that helps build solid and long-lasting partnerships. The depth of knowledge these teams provide is an added benefit and service that can help customers in any economic environment by improving efficiencies, reducing total costs, and creating a more profitable operation. ■

Editor's Note: *Six Sigma* is a registered trademark of Motorola, Inc.

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MEADWESTVACO, www.mwv.com