

[INTRODUCTION]

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I'm your host, Deborah Corn, the Intergalactic Ambassador to the Printerverse. Thanks for tuning in. Listen long and prosper.

[INTERVIEW]

[0:00:54] DC: Hey, everybody. Welcome to Podcast From the Printerverse. This is Deborah Corn, your Intergalactic Ambassador. I am here in the HP booth in beautiful Brussels. And I'm speaking with Mathias Marichael from a company called Etivoet, who is actually in Belgium as well. Hello.

[0:01:11] MM: Hello. Nice to meet you.

[0:01:12] DC: Nice to meet you. Now, bonjour. And how do you say hello in Dutch? Since you also speak Dutch?

[0:01:18] MM: Hello. Just as simple.

[0:01:19] DC: Oh. I should be Dutch then. That's the easiest one I've learned so far. Hello, everybody. Etivoet is a company that started in 1954 printing tickets and has since evolved into a very successful label and packaging company.

[0:01:38] MM: Yes, that's true. Self-adhesive labels didn't exist until the 70s. We started in the 50s with the tickets, especially for concerts, football matches, events, all those things. But in the 70s, we were the first company in Belgium to start with self-adhesive labels. We are a pioneer here in Belgium.

[0:02:00] DC: Excellent. And they must have been very popular when they were printing the football tickets. Yeah?

[0:02:04] MM: Yes, we were indeed. Yeah.

[0:02:07] DC: Why don't you tell everybody a little bit about you and your journey into the printing industry now that I know that you didn't start off in the printing industry?

[0:02:17] MM: I studied for architect assistant. I was drawing a lot and was behind the tables. But eventually, I didn't end up doing that job because I like it to be around customers. I like it to be on the road. That's how I rolled into sales eventually, and 10 years ago, an opportunity came by, and that was Etivoet. That's why I'm here now.

[0:02:43] DC: That is an amazing transformation from an architect to a salesperson. Yeah. Wow. How has your training in architecture? Do you think it's helped you at all see things maybe in a different way?

[0:02:57] MM: It helped me see that I don't want to be behind a desk all day.

[0:03:00] DC: Okay. That's fair. I used to work in sales. And what I learned there was I don't want to work in sales. Yeah. It's the little things, right?

[0:03:07] MM: Okay.

[0:03:09] DC: Okay. Let's talk about your website. We spoke about it first. I would say that it is focused on innovation, first and foremost, and customer service, which it should be. I mean, you have customers.

[0:03:22] MM: Yes. Yes.

[0:03:22] DC: But you can't just have customers doing the same thing over and over again. And you have laid out a beautiful story with all of the opportunities that you have for all the different types of labels. And I don't think regular people realize. I mean, people who are listening to this podcast know. But regular people don't realize how many different types of labels and glues. And how if it's going to the refrigerator, it has to have a certain way. If it's going on an oil can.

[0:03:49] MM: That's true. That's true.

[0:03:51] DC: Go ahead.

[0:03:52] MM: A few years ago, we decided to really go for innovation because there are a lot of label printing companies. Competition is hard. And we want to stand out with things others can't produce. We want to help our clients with solutions that maybe aren't there yet. But in the long term, we can help them with something that we develop together.

For the moment, I am training a new colleague, a young colleague. And it's true what you're saying. There are so many different labels, so many different adhesives, and materials. Last week, I was still teaching my young colleague and remembering my first weeks at Etivoet and how much there's to learn about it. Indeed, it's very technical.

[0:04:33] DC: It is. I mean, you have a solution that we're going to get to that I have been sharing on social media for a few days. I didn't realize it was you when you came here. But it is on a big note here to discuss it with you. You list many different labels that you do on the site. But two really stood out for me. I'm going to start with the other one and then we'll get to the really cool one. Multi-layer labels. The best way I can describe it, it's like a book that is a label. Please.

[0:05:02] MM: Yes. In the past, you had books like it was a little book of paper and then you put a lemonade on top of it. That already exists a very long time. But in fact, with the multi-layer label, we professionalized it. Because when you open a paper book and you want to reclose it, it's wrinkled, it's dirty. It's not in good shape anymore. And that's how we started developing a

label in full PP. Full filmic labels that are much stronger that can't tear. They are better resistant against water.

And we started with a duo label. Two layers. One on each other. Then we developed three layers, four layers. Always, our customers asking to have more space to put more info on labels. We have really big clients that have export to a lot of countries. If they want 30 languages on a very small packaging, we can help them with that. Because for the moment, we can make 10-layered labels.

[BREAK]

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[INTERVIEW CONTINUED]

[0:06:51] DC: You showed me a sample. And so, there's a little arrow on the bottom so you know that you can lift it up, which a lot of time is the obstacle for people. They don't realize what they're looking at. And you're right. I have seen them with the plastic on top of it and then the whole book comes out. And then, okay, you have a little paper book.

[0:07:09] MM: You have like an accordion.

[0:07:10] DC: Exactly. Now you have an accordion, but not a label anymore. Obviously, I understand why especially wine makers and spirits, alcohol, would want to tell their story. Are they coming to you mostly for that? Or now that you have some customers doing it, are you able to go back to them and say, "Look, if you have a story about your company that you want to

share, if you want to have a story about this harvest of grapes that you want to share." You don't just have to stick a QR code on the label.

[0:07:41] MM: Yes, that's true. A multi-layer label can help a lot. Because on every bottle that goes from a wine farmer to its customer, on every bottle, he can give an added value by putting a multi-layered label on it. Last we had an example of a client that has an artist in their village. And he made an artwork. But they gave more information on the heritage on what does the artist do? What is his work? Where does he come from? And that was the multi-layer label on a verso of a wine bottle. He could tell his story to everybody who had the bottle.

[0:08:18] DC: And in multiple languages.

[0:08:19] MM: Yes, in multiple languages as well if you want to. And in full color if needed as well. On the inside, we can, for example, show a picture of the artwork.

[0:08:29] DC: Okay, Mathias, the other thing I want to talk to you about is something I've been sharing on social media, which are the wash-off labels of the technology that you have developed. I'm very curious about how this idea came to happen. Can you please share?

[0:08:45] MM: Most of innovations, the idea came from the customers themselves. Because maybe I have to explain you first a bit on how it works in Belgium. Here, we have a very big part of reusable bottles. There is a big problem with self-adhesive labels on reusable bottles. And that problem is that the labels don't come off in washing machines.

A bottle that normally has to be reused about 20, 30 times can't be reused at all. That means they just throw the bottle away. And that is the reason why we developed something. We didn't do it just overnight, but we developed, we tested, we changed our innovation during the years until this point. Now we're doing it for eight years. We have something that works really good. That means the labels wash off the bottles even after 2 years.

That's something that's very important. Because a bottle leaves by a brewer or a wine farmer, it goes to retail. Then it comes with the client. The client leaves it in his cellar. He drinks it. He brings it back to the retail. And then it comes back to the brewer who has a washing machine.

That period can take up to one year, half a year, two years. That is something very important that the label washes off the moment it comes back and not the moment you put it on the bottle.

[BREAK]

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[INTERVIEW CONTINUED]

[0:10:51] DC: That is like the most sustainable thing I've ever heard, especially on the glass bottle. Now, forgive me. Because your website doesn't say how to make the labels obviously.

[0:11:02] MM: Well, they're patented.

[0:11:04] DC: Yes, of course. And in the display here, it just shows them with your information there to contact. Are they printed directly on the bottle? Or is there actually – I didn't want to scratch at it over there. Is it printed on the substrate and glued down? Or is it printed on the bottle? Are you allowed to say?

[0:11:21] MM: It's not printed on the bottle.

[0:11:22] DC: Wow. You cannot tell that.

[0:11:25] MM: We print them on paper and then –

[0:11:27] DC: Magic.

[0:11:28] MM: Yeah. Magic, indeed. And that is something that's really important as well that's on paper. The paper is FSC-certified. And, plus, when the label washes off the bottle, you have like a paper pulp. And that can also be reused. For example, boxes to put eggs in. They use the pulp for producing that.

[0:11:49] DC: Oh, really? The egg cartons?

[0:11:50] MM: Yeah.

[0:11:52] DC: I did not know that. I'm learning so much stuff at Labelexpo. Who knew? Everybody should talk to label people. They know a lot of stuff. Right now, you're showing them on beer bottles. And we're talking about alcohol. But are there other uses for these labels?

[0:12:07] MM: Yes, there are. You have yogurt pots. There, you can reuse your yogurt pots if there is a washable label on it. In fact, for all glass, it's something that is really important. Why? Because glass rarify. The base materials, like sand, glass is made out of sand. But especially, production capacity. That is something that's more difficult.

[0:12:34] DC: I love it. And you're right. People just think about recycling – crushing up the glass and making more glass instead of reusing it. And you can use a spaghetti jar, for example, for anything that wants to go in –

[0:12:46] MM: That's true. That's true.

[0:12:48] DC: Let me ask you. In your facility, you're not fixing the labels to the bottles. You send the labels to someone else or you're doing that?

[0:12:56] MM: Yes. We produce the labels on rolls and then we send them to our clients for the wash-off labels are mainly beverage industry. But also, food companies. And we produce the rolls on a diameter they want, on the position, on the roll they want and with the artwork they want. We make them custom for our customers. And then they can use them to apply to their packaging.

[0:13:20] DC: Did you have to have any special considerations knowing that this special magic that you're doing here still needs to go through their machines that have heat and other glue there?

[0:13:33] MM: Yes. That's something we tested intensively. It's evident that we don't have a washing machine. We are a printing company. We really need the brewers, the people that have washing machines to help us test this innovation and make it better. And that is something we did the last years, the last eight years. And now for the moment, we have certificates from very big brewers. Like ABMF that certifies our wash-off labels to be washable even after a period of time.

[BREAK]

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[INTERVIEW CONTINUED]

[0:14:41] DC: You have a customer story on your site with BeerSelect. Can you share?

[0:14:47] MM: Yes. Yes. BeerSelect is a company that started a few years ago. It were in fact or it are in fact three young guys. A bit my age. If I can call myself still young. Yes. And they saw an opportunity. They saw that there are a lot of small brewers in Belgium. Even like football clubs or whatever who wanted to make some money and create their own beer. But they don't have an installation.

What BeerSelect does is they are providing the equipment to brew your own beer. And they have grown very big. Now for the moment, they even have a brand-new brewing fabric in the

harbor of hand. They are growing really fast. And I have a lot of respect for those guys because they saw an opportunity and they grabbed it.

[0:15:35] DC: So did you with these wash-off labels. Now we're sitting in the HP booth. They asked us to meet with each other, which we did. And now we're best friends. Yes. Of course.

[0:15:44] MM: Yes. Of course.

[0:15:46] DC: But let's – I mean, we're focusing on innovation. And obviously, HP is part of your innovation story. Can you share?

[0:15:54] MM: Yes, that's true. We have different printing methods. And for our digital printing, HP has been our partner for several years. Our washable labels, we can also print them on digital presses. That's very interesting for, let's say, smaller batches. Or if you have a client that wants variable numbering, which is something you see a lot in beverage, like bottle one of 5,000, bottle two of 5,000. There you have the feeling that it's really an exclusive drink. You have one of those 5,000 bottles. With HP, we can adjust and we can add various data like numbering. But also, like the Tony Labels that are here. You have Crazy Tony, Stupid Tony, Happy Tony, Sad Tony. That is an example of stitching that we also do only on HP presses.

[0:16:47] DC: There's a whole wall of Tony labels right there.

[0:16:48] MM: Yes, indeed.

[0:16:50] DC: It's very impressive. We're talking about innovation. And the other pillars that HP is representing is efficiency, sustainability, and growth. Certainly, let's put efficiency to the side right now. Because you're not the workflow guy. You're the sales guy. Right?

[0:17:07] MM: That's true. That's true.

[0:17:08] DC: But sustainability and growth works for your company. And it works for the clients that you're serving.

[0:17:14] MM: Yes.

[0:17:14] DC: Why is this so important to your company to be part of this sustainable movement, but really leading it in a very unique way?

[0:17:25] MM: What we see is that the story of sustainability is not only a Belgian story. We see that it grows everywhere. Now, the last year, I've been visiting the French market and the Dutch market. And there we see, like in France for example, the reuse of bottles was something that happened regional. But now a new bill has passed in France. And within 2 years, it will be something national. There you have the same story. The reuse of bottles is really something that's growing and that will become very important in the future.

And the Netherlands is the same thing. There you have the BNR bottle. That is the name for the reusable bottle there. And that will be made available as well for little brewers.

[0:18:06] DC: Man, I wish I invented that patent. Right? That's a good patent to have right now.

[0:18:11] MM: Yes. Yes. For sure.

[0:18:13] DC: My goodness. Well, everything you need to connect with Mathias Marichael and Etivoet will be in the show notes of this podcast. Please go to the website, check out wash-off labels, and make an international partner. That's all I can say about that. Thank you so, so much for your time.

[0:18:33] MM: Thank you very much. It was really a pleasure talking to you.

[0:18:36] DC: Excellent. Until next time, everybody. Print long, label long, and prosper.

[OUTRO]

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[END]

Mentioned in This Episode:

Mathias Marichael: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/mathias-marichael-09b547140/>

Etivoet: <https://www.etivoet.be/>

HP: <https://www.hp.com/>

HP Indigo Digital Presses: <https://www.hp.com/us-en/industrial-printers/indigo-digital-presses.html>

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