

THE CRAFT BEER REVOLUTION

THERE'S A RUMBLING FROM THE DEPTHS OF THE INTERNATIONAL BEER DRINKING MARKET, AND FOR A WHILE NOW, DIGITAL PRINTING HAS BEEN SLOWLY EMERGING. CANTECH CAUGHT UP WITH TONEJET TO FIND OUT MORE

This is the noise of the craft beer market breaking through the barriers of traditional beer drinking appetites, driving demand for a more local product – beers and real ales made with passion and local ingredients, often delivering unique flavours and strong personal/local stories.

These beers are produced by a range of people who consider themselves either small to medium sized brewers, artisans or simply hobbyists. While individually they may be small, collectively, they are becoming a significant and growing percentage of the overall worldwide beer market.

No wonder then that large breweries are now starting to take keen interest in this market too, with some even diversifying their offering to capitalise on the trend.

Today in the USA alone, there are over 3,500 individual craft breweries producing in excess of 22 million barrels every year. In 2014, the US craft beer market grew by 17.6 per cent, representing 11 per cent of the country's overall beer market. Compare this to overall US beer growth of only 0.5 per cent, then the evidence is clear. The craft beer market is in good health, with continued predicted growth.

Over 500 American craft breweries now package their products in cans, representing more than 1,950 individual beers. And Europe is catching-up quickly too, along with other craft drinks markets also shifting to cans for mixers, ciders and soft drinks.

But with such growth and increasing competition, how can craft breweries ensure that they stand-out in the crowd. In a retail environment, shelf presence is all important. Before customer loyalty is established, a brand has to work hard to be seen and resonate with customers to get the all-important first sale. Many are exploring new technologies



to enable them to retain their independence and uniqueness, while producing high quality bespoke products – beers brewed with varying ingredients, in relatively small batches and created for special events. One such technology is direct to can digital printing.

WHAT YOU WANT WHEN YOU NEED IT

Due to the traditional analogue printing process used for decorating cans and the economic cross-over point of the suppliers, minimum order quantities of around 100,000 with lead times of several months are a huge barrier to the continued growth of small independent brewers offering cans. This

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meant that to change a label to accommodate a local music or sporting event, or to can a new limited brew was simply not possible without planning months in advance and paying for it up front.

But like many other industry's today, specialist digital developers were working in the background to design digital inkjet technologies to answer these issues. One such company is UK based digital inkjet manufacturer, Tonejet. For the last 10 years, Tonejet has been perfecting a new advanced electro-static drop-on-demand digital print system, designed to enable canners and craft brewers to produce short to medium run can jobs – crucially, at high speed with high quality print, and at a low cost.

With sales in both North America and Europe, Tonejet's two-piece Can & Tube Digital Decorator uses nozzle-less print heads for market leading industrial reliability. Digital can printing technology is now opening-up new opportunities for can printers and craft brewers alike, and contributing towards the growth of this worldwide market.

ENHANCED MARKETING AND SALES OPPORTUNITIES

But the benefits of digital can printing are not just restricted to short to medium run economics. With the number of craft breweries increasing almost daily, the competition is fierce and the need to achieve stand-out is a must have capability. As such, the marketing and sales opportunities

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Simon Edwards, VP of Sales and Marketing, Tonejet



enabled by this technology are driving further preference for digitally printed cans.

As a generation, we have long been used to using full colour digital inkjet printers in our homes and offices – printing single sheets or multiple copies depending on our needs. Today, craft brewers using digital can printing technology have this same flexibility. They can now order small to medium can runs, where the design for each can could be different or even personalised to an individual. Craft brewers are choosing to produce different versions of their brews, and crucially, use the larger surface area of a can to further distinguish their brand.

In a retail environment, shelf presence is all important. Before customer loyalty is established, a brand has to work hard to be seen and resonate with customers to get the all-important first sale. For this, cans provide the opportunity for brewers to use the full container height and the full 360 degree circumference of the can. This is much larger than a label could provide cost effectively, allowing brewers to not only explore creative branding opportunities, but to also include other additional information to tell their story and sell their products.

Although traditionally the container of choice for the mass produced lager market, the can is now widely adopted throughout the US craft beer industry and all signs are showing this will soon sweep across Europe. In the UK, some of the early adaptors to canning beer are Brewdog, Camden Town, Fourpence and Beavertown.

Real ale in cans I hear you ask? Well yes, despite many reservations as to the taste of beer from cans and its association with excessive lager drinking, the benefits of containing beer in cans really do stack-up.

INCREASED PRODUCT DURABILITY AND LONGEVITY

For one, the freshness and quality of a beer in a can is better preserved. Unlike bottles, this is largely down to the can's ability to cut out UV light. When beer comes into contact with UV light, even through a coloured bottle, it starts to degrade the hops and can significantly alter the taste of the product. And for any drinker concerned with a canned metallic note, thanks to modern can technology this has largely been eradicated, especially when decanted.

Secondly, and when compared to bottles, cans are easier to transport, stack and store. For craft brewers and the outdoor event market, this is very important. Eradicating the problem of broken glass, event organisers and managers of public places including community halls, beaches and parks, approve the use of cans where bottles are rarely allowed.

THE REAL ISSUE FACING CRAFT BREWERS – REGULATION AND GROWTH

So if technology is no longer the prime barrier to craft beer growth, what are the real challenges facing the market? Well according to many, these are twofold: the issues of managing rapid growth; and local or national legislation controlling the brewing and distribution of craft beer.

Especially in the USA, craft brewers are frustrated at legislation used to control the industry. With numerous restrictions on their ability to serve and distribute beer outside of the wholesale system, craft brewers are looking for support of their future growth, with consistency from state-to-state.

In addition, successful small to medium sized craft breweries the world over are facing issues of under capacity. They simply can't produce enough beer to meet consumer demand. And to change that often means expansion and a question over funding. Finding the right funding model to suit the the vision and long-term aspirations of a business can often be tricky. Fortunately, with the continued rise of the market there are now many investors looking to support craft brewers, and to capitalise on its future potential. Simon Edwards, VP of sales and marketing,



Tonejet, comments: "The craft beer market is an incredibly exciting place to be right now. Thanks to some entrepreneurial brewers and real craft beer artisans, this market has found its way into the hearts of beer lovers worldwide. Digital can printing technology is enabling the availability of many more incredible beers and specially branded products to be brought to market, with the potential to unlock yet more growth from craft beer." It is an area well worth keeping an eye on it seems. [CT](#)

WHY ROESLEIN?

RISK MANAGEMENT

Simply stated, there is no substitute for experience. Identifying potential risks and reducing the chances of those risks occurring on your project is best managed by a company with experience. Roeslein & Associates' project history includes successful installations of 120 can lines in more than 50 countries on six continents with over 80% of our projects coming from repeat customers.

As your total systems integrator, we will put our experience to work for you to identify, anticipate and eliminate potential risks on your project. We will provide you with the most economical, long-term operationally efficient, preassembled & modular solution for your needs.

This year marks our 25th anniversary serving global clients. We are eager to put our experts to work for you.

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