

The Moment of Reckoning for the Paper Industry is Nigh

An interview with Richard Brooks,
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Published:
Packaging & Converting Intelligence | Spring 2020



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With paper well placed to replace plastic as the de jure material of packaging, there is a struggle developing to understand the workings of its new supply chains, as well as its structural and design limits. Companies like **Solenis**, which comes with award-winning ingenuity and a long history working with paper, will rise to the fore in setting the conditions for plastic's substitution. With paper-based issues around versatility and cost-effectiveness still to be fully determined, Solenis has a great foundation from which to build for the near, medium and long-term future.

Solenis is a leading global producer of speciality chemicals for water-intensive industries, including the pulp, paper, oil and gas, petroleum refining, chemical processing, mining, biorefining, power and municipal markets. The company's product portfolio includes a broad array of process, functional and water treatment chemistries, as well as state-of-the-art monitoring and control systems. These technologies are used by customers to improve operational efficiencies, enhance product quality, protect plant assets and minimise environmental impact.

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Headquartered in Wilmington, Delaware, the company has 40 manufacturing facilities strategically located around the globe, and employs a team of approximately 5,200 professionals in 120 countries across five continents.

Pressure from consumers, retailers and regulators has put the packaging industry on the precipice of change, in response to

the fight against plastics. Major global corporations including Unilever, Procter & Gamble, Nestlé and PepsiCo have all proposed major waste reduction initiatives that will phase out single-use plastics.

But how is Solenis positioned to effectively work with the value chain to embrace more sustainable material options?

The company is focused on developing a portfolio of sustainable barrier products designed as functional replacements for traditional barrier materials like polyethylene, fluoropolymers and waxes.

Solenis was recognised as a winner of the NextGenCup Challenge, sponsored

by major industry brand-owners to develop a more sustainable, recyclable and compostable paper cup.

It is working with major brand-owners to fully commercialise that solution for paper cups. And, as a global supplier, Solenis is also well-positioned to work with brand-owners to implement the solution all over the world.

Paper and board have been hailed as the likely materials to fill the plastics void. But how is Solenis' formulations enabling paper and board to transcend traditional areas of application, and reducing the usage of plastic as much as possible?

Plastic replacement

Solenis enables its customers to innovate and develop paper-based solutions to replace single-use plastics in a number of ways. As the number one supplier of speciality chemicals to the paper industry, it provides technical solutions, such as dry strength and wet strength chemistry, to make paper stronger and to enable lightweighting. Sustainable barrier solutions from Solenis help paper-based packaging meet the functional performance of single-use plastics. Another area that is critical is assuring products meet the regulatory requirements for food service applications. Solenis Regulatory provides significant expertise in this area.

And what are the biggest hurdles for increased use of paper and board in the packaging supply chain, and how is Solenis positioned to help?

Paper-based packaging must provide the strength, protection and resistance to the environment (factors such as moisture, water and grease) that other materials (plastic, metal, glass) provide. Solenis provides technology that improves the properties of the base paper and sustainable barrier coatings that protect

the package, thereby achieving the functional performance expected by consumers and brand-owners.

Many applications are cost-sensitive and, unfortunately, plastics enjoy a good cost position. The paper industry will, however, continue to focus on improving cost through the use of recycled feed stocks, enhanced productivity and increasing efficiency. With over 1,500 highly experienced and trained personnel in the field, Solenis works hand-in-hand with papermakers on a daily basis to help lower costs and drive productivity.

Fibre-optimal

There is an increasing demand for fibre-based packaging from converters and brand-owners seeking to embrace more sustainable materials.

What are the key factors to consider when it comes to paper material formulation? Packaging has three major functions, regardless of the materials of construction. It has to preserve and protect the product; it has to safely transport the product; and it has to promote, identify and differentiate the brand.

For paper-based packaging to replace other materials like plastic, it is essential that it provides all these essential functions at equivalent cost, while delivering greater sustainability. Factors for consideration, then, include the quality and strength of the paper, printability, recyclability and compostability, among other things.

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Making better use of scarce resources like water and fibre, as well as materials from renewable and recyclable sources, are all aspects of increasing sustainability for the paper-based packaging producer.

The changes required in the packaging supply chain to embrace fibre-based packaging offers a unique opportunity for Solenis.

But what differentiates Solenis from other companies in this space? Firstly,

Solenis is uniquely positioned to enable innovation for its paper customers, which are driving the replacement of plastics with paper-based packaging.

Solenis has been developing innovative solutions for the paper industry for over 100 years. In addition to being the number one supplier of speciality chemicals to the paper industry, it is the only supplier

that also includes a broad portfolio of sustainable barrier coatings – meaning it can work with its customers to improve the paper substrate and barrier layer in a synergistic way.

Finally, Solenis is a global player that can introduce solutions for major brand-owners in every region, while tailoring those solutions for regional differences. ●

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