



Based in Mühlthal near Frankfurt in Germany, REA Elektronik GmbH offers a complete product range for contact free industrial marking and coding from one source. Elisabeth Skoda spoke to Michael Neuschäfer, the company's managing director, to learn more about the company's one-stop shop solutions it will be presenting at Interpack in Düsseldorf.



CODING AND MARKING SOLUTIONS READY FOR INDUSTRY 4.0

Within its brand REA JET, REA Elektronik GmbH offers a wide portfolio of contact-free industrial coding and marking for packaging which is also suitable for direct print on products. In the latter case, different application technologies are used depending on requirements.

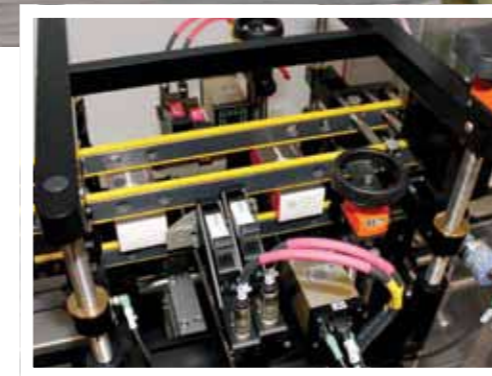
REA has been in business for over 30 years and is active in many areas. Apart from making a name for itself in the area of cashless payment systems in Germany, the company's biggest investments have been made in the area of REA JET and REA Verifier. REA is proud to be able to provide 300 highly qualified jobs.

"We are in a position to offer our customers the right system for low and high resolution print jobs, but also labelling systems as well as systems for surface treatments from

one source. On top of that, with REA Verifier we also produce measurement equipment for quality control of machine readable codes, so we can offer extra value to our customers who print bar codes and multi-dimensional codes on packaging and products, Mr Neuschäfer reports.

Catering for 'Industry 4.0.'

Integrated machinery technology and digital information flow are playing an important role in modern factories. Production and packaging speeds are increasingly growing, and more and more companies exchange production relevant data at high speed. This development is referred to as 'Industry 4.0.' or the 'fourth Industrial Revolution.'



Requirements for the individualisation of packaging for traceability through printing are particularly demanding. Many older technologies cannot keep up any more. The pharmaceutical industry has to implement an EU Directive by 2017, in order to print products with safety features, i.e. concrete serialisation dates.

REA is therefore presenting a range of products at Interpack 2014 which are suitable for Industry 4.0.

"Our new laser and ink based printing systems are technologically advanced, and especially made for the needs of machinery construction. The focus lies on ease of integration, cost efficiency and environmental friendliness within the factory. We have a unique cross technology operational concept on the same user interface. It features an intelligent interface management, numerous free configurable digital inputs and outputs, an XML-based data structure as a supplier-independent communication standard as well as True-type font capability. There is the possibility for remote maintenance and operation via internet – yet another way how our systems provide admission to the world of Industry 4.0." Mr Neuschäfer says.

Staying ahead of the competition

Focusing on keeping the entire supply chain in house and concentrating on long term partnerships with their distribution partners has paid off for REA, as Mr Neuschäfer explains.

"We develop, produce and distribute the products from our site in Germany. We train our distribution partners here and thus keep flexible in order to be able to cater for concrete customer wishes. We only have to cover short distances, our employees are highly skilled, and therefore we are often that bit faster and more flexible when it comes to implementing customer needs, which makes us more customer oriented. More and more happy customers thank us for that."

Quality is the key

REA focuses on high quality and value for money. "We gain our customers not because we have the lowest machinery prices, but because of cost efficiency due to less errors and less machinery failures during operation. Our customers are prepared to pay a slightly ▷



higher price for quality. As it is so often the case in life, quality has its price and cheap does not automatically constitute good value,” Mr Neuschäfer points out.

With the customer in mind, the company offers robust everyday usability, little or no need for maintenance, and the lowest possible use of solvents and chemicals while using state-of-the-art, future proof technologies.

Mr Neuschäfer sees plenty of growth potential in the area of high resolution marking technologies and around integrated systems, track&trace, counterfeiting safety and consumer safety as well as inline checking and/or verification, and thinks that there is a big pent-up investment need in the industry.

“As an example, Continuous Inkjet systems are widely in use; however with the HP based TIJ technology we offer modern and better value alternatives. Replacement investment is a driver of our growth, and both our customers and ourselves end up emerging as winners.”

At its headquarters in Mühlthal, REA has modern state-of-the-art production and research and development sites.

“Just recently we expanded our development and production capacities. A new building on an area of 5000m² was recently completed, and it will serve as a training centre and conference facility for our distribution team. However it is important to us to not just grow at all cost. We want to remain at a healthy size in order to not over complicate procedures unnecessarily. Direct contact with the customer has to remain the central focus of our actions in order to avoid just thinking of our business in terms of quarters and turnovers. We want to continue to be a provider of exceptional technology Made in Germany,” Mr Neuschäfer says.

Varied markets

REA is delivering worldwide and is present in nearly all industries, not just the packaging sector. The main markets are currently in Europe and the USA.

“I often jokingly say that apart from liquids and gases, everything has to be coded and marked. But of course all industries need packaging technology, and therefore marking

technology, mainly in the fields of food, pharmaceutical and cosmetics, automotive as well as the building materials, steel and plastics industries.”

Using a network of trusted, long-standing, mostly local suppliers with production sites as close as possible to the factory, REA is able to cover short distances efficiently. The company also works closely with universities and colleges in order to stay fit for future customer wishes and device generations.

“We are working on expanding our global distribution structures, in order to be able to provide our customers with contacts and support on location. Our production depth in-house is comparatively high, and we are very proud of this fact especially since we are a typical owner led medium sized company, unlike some of our competitors,” Mr Neuschäfer explains.

“There are certainly many more innovations to come in the future, especially in the field of marking technology, and we have a major development team working intensively in that area,” he adds. “We look ahead to the future with optimism, as a constant change requires the kind of technologies we are able to provide.” □

