

WHITE PAPER

Gable-Top Cartons Considerations For This Container Choice



Carton Service

Quality. Packaging. Solutions.

Are High End Graphics and a Quick Turnaround Realistic for Gable-Top Cartons?

A Little History.

Like many multifaceted printers serving food, pharma and consumer packaged good (CPG) categories, our customers' requests can vary widely. We try to keep our facility and equipment state-of-the-art so we can accommodate a wide range of specifications. In the last five years, we started noticing a trend.

Our customers wanting gable top cartons always seem to have the same request – how can I get high end, creative graphics with quick turnaround? Customers using the larger sizes of gable top cartons (the gallon size for example) and customers using heavier, coated paperboard (more commonly called milk stock) especially found their printing choices to be limited to flexographic printing, less sturdy paperboard and low quality graphics. We heard major challenges such as print registration being so poor that you couldn't even read an ingredients list.

The reasons for choosing gable-top cartons were clear to us - customers want the billboard space to tell their story. Cartons give you room for branding and selling. And gable-top cartons can be significantly more affordable, costing up to 30% less than their plastic tub counterparts. If you use plastic to contain your product, you are limited to options and subjected heavily to the petroleum market.

After hearing some of these challenges, Carton Service decided to take a look. We evaluated the market and our capabilities and found that there might be an opportunity to help an underserved market.

Choosing The Right Press and Standard Operating Procedures

Our large format eight color offset press allows us to fit gallon size cartons in an efficient layout along with smaller sizes on entire width and length of the print sheet. We have found that efficient layouts and runs prove to be competitive.

Since we already serve the pharmaceutical industry, we are used to following strict government guidelines in our standard operating procedures. From color controls to critical copy, we successfully meet our customers' strict requirements on a daily basis. So it is not any kind of a change to provide these same production controls on large size gable top cartons.

We heard our customers the most when they complained that gable top users have been limited to simple graphics and a lack of creativity. Feeling pressure from the infusion of Whole Foods and boutique food stores, our customers were very concerned about their poor shelf presence. Once again, we feel we had a strategic advantage - our creative services team is able to provide options to the gable top user even recognizing the parameters of all the specifications. We are able to push color and graphics choices and design the carton that our customers told us they did not think was possible. As our customer list in this area grew, so did our capabilities and our experiences began to help new prospects who wanted to push the parameters of this container choice.

A Need for Flexibility

Since we serve the retail market and entrepreneurial start ups, we are able to provide quick turnaround for small volume runs as well. This has particularly proven to be a competitive advantage for new companies.

The difference in Carton Service and the large company gable top producer's is best summed up by one of our associates, Mr. Mike Robinette. Mike comments, "There are liquid packaging companies that make gable top cartons. We are a custom folding carton printer that produces gable top cartons."

That paradigm shift for the industry means more customers can consider using gable top cartons to more creatively package their products. It also means more colorful cartons hitting the retail shelves with high impact graphics. Ultimately, that means that consumers can select a very useful package which really protects its contents while maximizing messaging space.

The Questions To Ask, The Answers To Hear

1. Q's:

How much polyethylene coating do I need on my paperboard? How is my milk stock measured?

A's:

To determine the base amount of low density polyethylene you need for your product on both sides the board (what makes us call this type of paperboard "milk stock"), there are standards available. These standards are based on what type of product you are putting in the container and the amount of pounds the container will weigh. Your paperboard is typically measured in points or millimeters, the poly extruded on both sides of the board is measured based on how many pounds of poly there are per 1000 square foot of board (commonly called MSF). Typically, the poly coating will be thicker on the side of the board which is the contact side for your container's contents.

2. Q's:

What is skiving ?

A's:

A skived flap is trimmed with a knife and then folded over and glued the entire length of the edge that forms the fourth side of your carton. The skived flap can be adhered in face-to-face contact with the exterior surface of the blank to ensure that the contents of the gable top carton do not directly contact the edge of the paperboard material, thereby preventing wicking of liquid through the paperboard material.

3. Q's:

When do I need to or not need to skive my gable-top container?

A's:

Skiving is required for any aseptic cartons and anything that is anticipated to be on the shelf for more than 30 days or anything that has an acidic ingredient (i.e. vinegar or citrus) because these ingredients can permeate into the raw edge of the board.

Dry ingredients do not require skiving in most cases nor do non-acidic semi-solid food such as potato salad or cole slaw unless they contain vinegar.

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