



Extending your artwork management

Who owns and controls your packaging artwork?

White Paper



Navigating a maze of stakeholders

Collaboration is critical for product packaging

Providing controlled access that allows everyone to work from the same playbook, and that allows manufacturers to maintain ultimate control of their artwork, is a must-have for today's organizations. When all of their artwork is stored in one place and accessible to all stakeholders, manufacturers get the consistency, accuracy and time savings that they need.

When it comes to product labeling, there are a lot of cooks in the kitchen and every one of them plays an important role in the overall process. The key stakeholders include—but aren't limited to—marketing departments, graphic designers, design shops, printers, compliance departments and packaging fabricators, all of which contribute to and put their stamps of approval on the final product.



With so many internal and external partners playing a role in the labeling process, it's easy for things to fall by the wayside, get overlooked and be handled improperly. Multiply these mistakes by hundreds or thousands of labels, and the disparate systems, spreadsheets, emails and in-person meetings traditionally used to manage the process can add up to serious time and money losses, among other challenges.

This white paper explores some of the top issues that companies face when using non-standardized workflows and when they don't have a solution or a location for managing all their packaging artwork in one place. It shows how a centralized Artwork Management platform solves these problems, providing centralized access so all stakeholders and partners have controlled access to the workflows and files they need to get the job done.

Six Key Roadblocks for Managing Complex Artwork

Eliminating Manual Processes to Create New Efficiencies

The multifaceted process can't be handled properly with manual processes and disparate technology solutions that increase the chance of errors and delays

Think about how many different stakeholders play a role in developing product packaging. A brand owner creates the right image, a graphic artist or design shop brings that look to life, a compliance or regulatory team reviews the artwork for accuracy, a packaging fabricator manages the die-line information, and the printer makes the physical label. Along the way, other stakeholders may offer input to ensure products have the correct information needed for them to reach their intended destinations.

With multiple projects navigating this maze of stakeholders at any given point, companies need an efficient way to manage their packaging artwork and monitor volumes of complex artwork.



In the past, companies would send printed artwork around for editing and approval by fax, or even by mail or overnight courier. Thanks to advancement in technology, email and PDFs have replaced those older approaches, but they still don't allow internal and external partners to collaborate efficiently on projects. Here are six key roadblocks that email puts up for companies trying to get these stakeholders on the same page:

- 1. With an email-based approach, stakeholders can't view and mark up digital media simultaneously or compare revisions efficiently.**
- 2. The packaging artwork assets are never actually centralized or accessible to all of the internal and external stakeholders involved.**
- 3. Instead, these partners are operating in their own silos, making it difficult to determine who is accountable for what.**
- 4. It's difficult to scale a manual artwork process globally using PDF-sharing via email.**
- 5. Locating consistent artwork that has been approved for use in the specific circumstance is nearly impossible using email.**
- 6. No one knows who actually owns the process and who has control over the assets at any given point.**

Wanted: Better Content Management

Stop Juggling Unintegrated Systems and Approaches

In many cases, companies will use multiple programs simultaneously to manage their artwork projects. For example, product or print operations teams may use Google Docs and Excel spreadsheets to track project progress. Other teams may shift between Adobe Acrobat and email to manage the artwork approval process. Jumping from program to program not only complicates Artwork Management, but it also means stakeholders spend hours working through different email chains to finalize reviews.

This wastes time and minimizes visibility over who changed what and when. Confusing mix-ups like teams working off incorrectly versioned or incomplete documents only exacerbate the problem and create further delays.



If a team juggling many projects is reliant on spreadsheets and other manual approaches, it will likely face undue hardships when scheduling packaging artwork and product releases. And even if they attempt to color-code or use other means to organize their Excel files and data, teams will likely encounter a lack of consistency, human error, or insufficient time to keep documents updated manually.

Without complete visibility over Artwork Management, project leaders don't know where the necessary elements of a packaging pipeline are located. For example, one department might be performing work on time, but the legal department may be struggling to keep pace with approving images and copy. Or there might be external parties, such as printers or designers, that need more time to complete their part of the project.

"Our old method of managing copy development was quite complex and unwieldy with a constant underlying risk of failure. On a good day, the process was only cumbersome – on a bad day it was utterly impossible to manage and had the potential to bring our development processes to a standstill," said one marketing executive. "Implementing datasheets functionality for all our copy management streamlined the process and eliminated the concern of inaccurate, out-of-date content or missing files. All our data is in one place, visible to anyone, and gives us one reliable source of the truth."

Visibility is the Key to Accountability

Keeping All Stakeholders on a Level Playing Field

In many cases, visibility is the key to accountability. For example, poor visibility can create bottlenecks when workflows and deadlines aren't clearly communicated across teams and individuals. If all the stakeholders on the product packaging team can't see the status of workflows, projects, and stakeholders, the bottlenecks will continue and result in unexpected delays that could have easily been prevented.

A standardized Artwork Management platform automatically keeps a permanent record of the entire process including all approval points, status, dates and users associated with any critical path. At the same time, it monitors performance and streamlines processes across internal departments, external partners, supply chain partners and customers.



One consumer packaged goods (CPG) company that implemented a unified Artwork Management solution reduced its artwork approval and review times by 80% by centralizing its entire artwork production process. Today, a central group manages projects from top to bottom, which increases efficiency across the board. The company also brought all the external contributors and providers onto the standardized system, which is being used across the CPG's global operations.

Today, everything happens seamlessly, with external users interacting with the system as effortlessly as internal users. Along with the massive reduction in artwork review and approval times, the company has also reduced its number of review rounds from five to two; enhanced stakeholder accountability for improved collaboration; and integrated internal and external content contributors for seamless collaboration.

"There's always something that's going to come up that we need to be able to react to quickly," said one of the company's creative marketing team members. "Nothing can wait 10 days—it has to have structure and it has to be quick, and there's no way to do it without this system. It does everything I tell it to. If a workflow doesn't work, it's because I did something wrong. That consistency is extremely important to our business."

Automating, Standardizing and Centralizing

Regain Control of Your Processes and Your Content

A digital Artwork Management process eliminates the need to switch back and forth between different emails, PDFs, spreadsheets and software programs. With all required documentation and artwork stored in a centralized location—and with changes and versions automatically tracked for the user—version control nightmares fade, teams regain control of their assets and rework is eliminated.



With user-friendly dashboards, stakeholders get real-time project updates at their fingertips, which means no more emailing to find out when an approval is coming, what revisions need to be made and/or whether a printer is still on time or running late. When all partners have the same view of the schedules and projects on their dashboards, deadlines are no longer missed, and partners no longer have to spring into action to handle tasks that were overlooked.

When relying on disjointed processes or working with a printer's Digital Front Ends (DFE) instead of your own configured workflow process, you lose ownership and control over your content. Each time you switch printers, this approach requires you to re-establish your process and deliver all relevant pieces of content.

Because they no longer rely on DFEs, users also have ownership of the artwork files. They can manage packaging artwork and the end-to-end business processes, mitigating risk, improving control, compliance, traceability and reducing the overall complexity of the Artwork Management process.

Configurable and scalable, modern Artwork Management systems transforms project management, streamlining the packaging concept to shelf procedure by bringing accountability and structure to the process.

About Loftware Smartflow

The industry's most powerful Artwork Management solution Loftware's configurable and automated Artwork Management software, Smartflow, lowers costs, reduces mistakes, improves collaboration, and reduces time to market. Smartflow transforms project management, streamlining the packaging concept to shelf process by bringing accountability and structure to the process. Loftware's comprehensive Smartflow platform enables you to manage packaging artwork and the end-to-end business processes, mitigating risk, improving control, compliance, traceability and reducing the overall complexity of the artwork management process.

Loftware developed Smartflow from the ground up in the Cloud in 2007. The solution is used by over 65,000 users in over 80 countries and is used for brands of all sizes and needs across Consumer Goods, Life Sciences, and private label and retail. Loftware is the global market leader in Enterprise Labeling and Artwork Management Solutions with more than 5,000 customers in over 100 countries. Offering the industry's most comprehensive digital platform, with SaaS, cloudbased and on-premise solutions, Loftware redefines how enterprises create, manage and print complex labeling and packaging artwork and scale across their operations.



Loftware is the world's largest cloud-based Enterprise Labeling and Artwork Management provider, offering an end-to-end labeling solution platform for companies of all sizes. Maintaining a global presence with offices in US, UK, Germany, Slovenia, China, and Singapore, Loftware boasts over 35 years of expertise in solving labeling challenges. We help companies improve accuracy, traceability and compliance while improving the quality, speed, and efficiency of their labeling. As the leading global provider of Enterprise Labeling and Artwork Management, along with Clinical Trials Labeling and Regulated Content Management, Loftware enables supply chain agility, supports evolving regulations, and optimizes business operations for a wide range of industries. Those include automotive, chemicals, consumer products, electronics, food & beverage, manufacturing, medical device, pharmaceuticals, retail and apparel.