



Better Packages Case Study: Niche Retail, LLC

This Michigan-based provider of e-commerce solutions reinforces its core competencies and its core values by adding water-activated tape and electric water-activated tape to its packaging process

Background

Niche Retail, LLC develops B2C e-commerce solutions for businesses looking to maximize the online retail sales channel. Niche Retail builds clean and easy-to-navigate websites that reinforce brand value while generating revenue for its clients, which include major brands such as Kestrel Meters, Suunto Watches and Lafuma Furniture. They also build category sites where online shoppers can comparison shop among various brands for products such as jogging strollers, car seats and high chairs. After building a website, Niche then assists the client by providing customer care, e-marketing, outsourced logistics and merchandise management of the branded products.

“Our clients expect Niche Retail to protect the integrity of their brand image,” says R. Tyler Smith, co-owner of Niche Retail, “from the virtual shopping experience to the warehouse all the way through to the online shopper’s doorstep. We view each step in the process of supporting that experience as being equally important.”

Mr. Smith agrees with Better Packages’ belief that “packaging not only plays a critical role in how a product is received, but also in how a brand is perceived.”

The Challenge:

Niche Retail ships an average of 400 cartons per day and uses about 100 different box sizes for the various brands they represent. They began experiencing several shortcomings with their carton sealing methods while using imprinted plastic “security” tape applied with handheld applicators. For Niche, plastic tape presented the following challenges:

Weak Seal, Poor Image: Their packaging professionals were using several strips of plastic tape to keep the cartons closed, which hardly seemed cost effective and definitely didn’t project a professional image.



Adversely Affected by Temperature: Because Niche Retail is located in Michigan, the frigid winter temperatures were causing the plastic packaging tape to shrink and separate from boxes.

Fragile Applicators: Although the company invested in what were labeled “heavy-duty” plastic tape applicators, they were easily damaged or broken during normal use.

Not Environmentally Friendly: One of the company’s core values focuses on taking a leadership role in environmental responsibility. Because plastic tape requires fossil fuels to manufacture and presents difficulties in recycling, it does not support their efforts toward sustainability. Niche Retail continuously researches ways to cut down on waste and unnecessary spending, in order to improve the integrity of their carton seals and “green up” their packaging.

The Solution:

Intrigued by paper water-activated tape (WAT) for some time, Mr. Smith was already somewhat aware that this carton sealing method added to the package’s strength and security. It wasn’t until he saw the Better Packages segment on the TV show “Made in America” that he realized WAT and Better Packages could easily resolve all carton sealing challenges Niche Retail faced.

Better Packages and WAT delivered the following solutions:

Strong, Secure, Professional Seal: The “Made in America” segment’s “man in the box” demonstration proved that only one strip of reinforced BetterSeal Secure WAT is needed to provide a secure, strong and professional looking carton seal. A seal so strong that it can lift an average sized man off the ground.

Unaffected by Temperature Extremes: Once applied to a carton, BetterSeal Secure WAT is unaffected by temperature extremes—the adhesive absorbs into the carton and forms a permanent bond. Plastic tape simply “floats” on the carton’s surface (i.e., the adhesive doesn’t form a capillary reaction with the carton) and can crack and peel away from the carton in cold temperatures.

Robust Dispensers: Better Pack brand electronic dispensers are rugged and easy to operate. Investing in a Better Pack dispenser delivers long-term cost savings—the average age of electronic models in use today is over 16 years.

Clean and Green: Because BetterSeal Secure tapes use paper and a plant-based adhesive, they are completely biodegradable. Reinforced styles are easily processed during repulping and then recycled.



Niche Retail began their switch from plastic to paper and purchased one Better Pack 755 and two Better Pack 555e series models, both equipped with Tape Aerials and one with a Foot Pedal. The additional use of the Tape Aerial and Foot Pedal keeps both hands free for applying tape rather than reaching, struggling and straining with awkward handheld plastic tape applicators.

The Results:

“Within six or seven months, we were almost exclusively using water-activated tape to seal our cartons,” says Mr. Smith. “Our packers were using three layers of plastic tape. Now, with just a single strip of BetterSeal Secure tape we know our cartons are properly sealed, and leave our facility with a very professional appearance. Plus, the giant rolls of tape last much longer than the small rolls of plastic tape, so we don’t have to replace them as often.”

Niche Retail still uses a banding machine and occasional staples, but they’ve completely eliminated plastic tape and handheld applicators from fulfillment and packaging areas. They report a recognizable cost savings, as well as a reduction in broken seals.

According to R. Tyler Smith, “You guys are a great company!”

For more information on Better Pack® dispensers, BetterSeal Secure Tape® and the complete line of Better Packages products, visit www.BetterPackages.com.