

# Building a Grassroots Movement

## *Digital Printing Is a Natural Fit for Health & Beauty*

Launched in 2005, the Grassroots brand from the BeautyBank division of Estée Lauder offers “naturally-sourced products to add joy to your everyday life.” Exclusive to Kohl’s in the United States, Grassroots has a variety of products in seven categories—face, body, hair, post pregnancy, baby, kids, and pets. The Grassroots line features ingredients like rosemary, chamomile, grapeseed extract, and blends of antioxidants that appeal to today’s health-conscious consumers of all ages.

Allan Hafkin, executive director, packaging development, BeautyBank, explains that the very breadth of the product line presented several challenges to budget and quality requirements for labeling. “The sheer amount of labels needed—around 1.5 million over approximately 76 products—was an operational challenge,” Hafkin says. “That first run was a large quantity but not for a great number of any single item. The cost of plates and dies alone would have been astronomical for a small brand with that many SKUs.” Hafkin explains that the images are the most important aspect of these packages, and that the graphics provide the focus for the products.

Hafkin says that when he saw what the designer was trying to achieve with the labels, he thought of digital printing because of the resolution it could achieve while running various quantities cost effectively. “I never used digital printing before, but I had tested it with Dow Industries so I was aware of it,” says Hafkin. “However, most suppliers were using digital printing exclusively for proofing and sampling. I called Dow because I knew they had actually been doing some production



digital label printing. We tested some of the artwork and the results were terrific.”

Dow Industries in Wilmington, MA, has two HP Indigo Presses ws4000. CEO Walter Dow points out that these digital presses, which print directly from files and thus avoid the entire platemaking process, are ideal for both prototyping and production runs when the product requires multiple SKUs and high quality. He notes that Grassroots labels continue to be run digitally.

### **Color Challenges Met**

Although the HP Indigo Press ws4000 can run seven colors, the Grassroots project’s fresh, clear colors are actually produced using four-color process for even more economy. “We could have gone with six or seven colors, but it was more efficient and more economical to use four-color process,” says Dow. “With HP’s IndiChrome technology, we can also do spot colors—but we were able to manipulate the files to give them what they wanted using CMYK.”

“I was a bit skeptical about four-color process only because of the solid color bands across the top of each label,” Hafkin says. “There were consistency issues in the solids to overcome, but the people at Dow worked hard to fine tune the process. When you have to achieve a solid color two-inch band for almost eight inches across and keep that color consistent for 10,000 in a row, you have a tough challenge.”

Tom Sands, Dow’s prepress supervisor, says that they used Scope workflow modules from Esko-Graphics to further manipulate the files, including putting in special marks for offline diecutting, before sending them directly to the HP Indigo Press ws4000. At the press, they also increased the resolution of the files. “We believe the initial launch order was the largest order to date for digital labels in the health and beauty segment,” notes Dow. “What’s more, their shorter ongoing production runs continue to be digital because they want higher quality than flexo can achieve.”