

Markem

Low-cost thermal transfer coder
opens new markets for Markem

SAGENTIA



An 18-month collaborative development project involving Sagentia and its client Markem has led to the successful launch and sales of a low- cost industrial coder.

Established almost 100 years ago, Markem is one of the world's leading industrial printing and coding companies. The company's decision to develop a low-cost thermal transfer coder specifically for developing markets was based on market research that showed a strong potential demand for such a product.

With a full in-house portfolio of on-going new product developments, Markem concluded that an external development and design partner would be the most efficient use of resources. In particular, the partner had to demonstrate a track record in design for low-cost projects. Following a competitive tender Sagentia was chosen as the development partner, with the project commencing in April 2005.

The approach, adopted from the outset, was one of collaboration: Markem undertook voice of the customer research, product validation testing and additionally provided application knowledge. Meantime, we were responsible for all product design, development and introduction to manufacture. This included the selection of both Chinese component manufacturers and the final assembler.

The new printer, which is specifically designed to print onto film packaging 'in process', comprises three units: a printer, local user interface and power supply. To meet market requirements for a low-cost solution, we actively controlled costs by undertaking a careful trade-off analysis of features and benefits versus cost throughout the specification and design phases. This, coupled with our management of production tooling, component manufacture and final assembly, ensured that we were able to deliver within the cost parameters set out by Markem.

We also met the time deadlines set by Markem. From our initial meeting with the client through to product launch took just 18 months. Within the first three months we completed an initial concept design along with a supporting business case. Design for prototype was achieved by month eight and a first fully functioning prototype was available 10 months into the project. A fully representative sample was delivered to Markem after 15 months. To achieve this ambitious target, we fielded a 10-strong team comprising product designers, electrical and mechanical

engineers, software specialists and production engineers.

Since its launch towards the end of 2006, the coder has been well received in the marketplace and generated strong initial sales.

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