

Pride in Print entries judged

Standards rise as packaging becomes the new glamour product

THE NEW BELL TEA PACKAGING, ONE OF MANY ENTRIES COMING IN FOR CLOSE SCRUTINY BY JUDGES. ROB COATES DESIGNED THE GRAPHICS. THE PRINTER WAS CARTER HOLT HARVEY, PENROSE. THE AWARDS WILL BE JUDGED IN WELLINGTON ON MAY 28.

When the New Zealand Pride in Print Awards began 11 years ago, annual reports and corporate profiles provided the highest number of entries.

But packaging has taken over as the glamour section of the New Zealand printing industry awards, according to Pride in Print manager Sue Archibald.

"New Zealand is a food producing company with markets on the other side of the world and our exporters are constantly looking for an edge and ways to add value," Ms Archibald said.

"We no longer send sides of mutton wrapped in cheesecloth to the British housewife. Now we have giant meat disassembly plants that produce dozens of different cuts

as packaged product direct to the world's supermarket shelves.

"Meat production plants are now so sophisticated that one lamb can end up as many different packages with foreign language cooking instructions for half a dozen different countries."

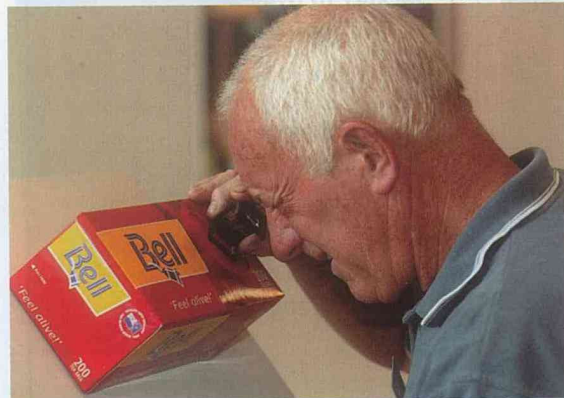
WORLD STANDARD

Ms Archibald said this meant New Zealand printers had to be as good or better than the rest of the world and produce packaging that reflects our national image of clean, green and safe food producers.

Food industry clients were always looking for ways to be more innovative on the retail shelves with point of sale, product competitions and branding the stand out areas in packaging over recent years. It was becoming a popular misconception that New Zealand packaging printers were disadvantaged because of a small domestic market with short run production.

"Our printers have turned this around by investing in new technology, plant and print machinery. Now we compete on short runs and simultaneously deliver a higher quality of print product because we've got high specification machinery."

Companies are looking for alternatives to print and many shareholders wanted instant electronic delivery of company information, she said. Printers had responded to the trend by moving their business into other areas of print.



MORE COMPANIES ENTER

Ms Archibald said while the number of entries in the 2004 Pride in Print Awards was about the same as last year, 55 new companies had entered the awards this year. Bigger companies were being more selective, while smaller companies were recognising that they could compete.

"This reflects the benefits printers get from being Pride In Print winners and is recognition that quality is the key to ongoing customer satisfaction. Some of the trend was driven by big print buyers recognising that price isn't everything," she said.

Generally this year's 53 judges thought there had been a noticeable lift in quality. One judge Warren Fabien thought it was probably driven by market forces, with companies seeing packaging as a way of gaining an edge over competitors.

Chief judge Warren Johnson said the benchmark goes up every year. "The quality is rising because people are realising that the jobs are being looked at very closely by experts and poor quality is going to be very quickly rejected, which I think is good for the industry."

He said entrants have got to use the recognition they gain from their peers in the industry, i.e. using their gold medal to promote themselves.

COALFACE JUDGES

Rising standards were making judging more technically demanding. Using retired judges was no longer good enough.

"Today we've been big enough to realise that to get the real technology evaluation, we have to get people who are still at the coal face, who are actually working the latest

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