



# Blister Boom

**Chakravarthi AVPS**, MD & CEO, Ecobliss India Pvt. Ltd. explains why new product owners are choosing blister packaging and how his organisation is taking the concept to the next level

By Niranjan Mudholkar

**You started your entrepreneurial journey about 13 years ago in 2007. What was the motivation behind turning an entrepreneur and how has been the journey so far?**

I always feel proud to be a packaging professional, since I passionately believe packaging is the most contributing sector to the society. I started my career in 1984 in one of the country's largest Papermills. For almost a decade I was in paper and paper board (BILT) industry. The real packaging saga started in 1994, when I was invited by Balarpur Paper boards to Akerlaund & Rausing packaging, a Swedish global packaging firm, the innovator of expresso and liner cartons. Since then, I have been associated with packaging industry. Well, the technologies were old those days, but enthusiasm and spirit were always futuristic. We were making quality lined cartons for brands like AMUL, Brooke Bond Lipton Tea, Tata Tea, Heinz, Rasna, MDH masala etc. and exclusive expresso cartons to Reckitts & Benckiser. Memories are still fresh, of working with likes of Nick Hammer from Unilever on migration free packs for Wall's international ice cream. Well, we have come a long way since then. Meeting the man of 'White Revolution' Dr. Kurien was a great experience.

A packaging convertor's satisfaction cannot be measured in terms of turnovers and profits he achieves. I believe it comes out every time he lives up to his customers' expectations, when he becomes part of a product innovation or a successful launch of a product with a great packaging in terms of aesthetics, design, and performance. Luckily, such instances are abundant throughout my career. Credit goes to my wonderful team members for all those achievements. Recognitions from likes of Mahashay Ji of MDH a quarter century ago to CEOs of many pharma and FMCG companies of today's industry are unforgettable forever. Technically, I became an entrepreneur in 2007 after establishing Ecobliss India, an Indo Dutch joint venture. The decade and half long assignments before were also of independent nature. It's the collective effort of my colleagues (many of them have been with me for two dec-

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ades or more) and the inspiration from Mr. Ron Linssen of Ecobliss International helped in setting up the organisation.

**How important have been innovation and technical know-how in this journey?**

Product packaging is considered as the silent salesman. An innovative package has an ability to attract the attention of a customer and boost product sales. Throughout my journey, my quest has been to think out of box, along with satisfying the basic needs packaging i.e., protect, preserve, and promote.

I could recall one such instance where we made some nice 'transparent blister' packs for tomato seeds, cotton & watermelon seeds. The combination of paperboard, plastic and aesthetically designed graphics aided the sales message silently yet very effectively. With this, customers could see the product before buying. I was fortunate to receive personal appreciation from Mr. Vindi Banga, the then president of Hindustan Lever Limited and his agribusiness head Mr. Venugopala Rao. I could recall Mr. Banga saying and I quote "Well done! जो दिखता है - वो बिकता है!" (That sells, which is seen).

**Packaging is the first selling point of any product. Since Ecobliss specialises in pharmaceutical and healthcare packaging, what role do you think packaging plays for**

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**the products of these sectors?**

Pharmaceutical industry approach today is more user-centric and has personalised focus evolving from traditional methods. Sensitive and potent drugs are on the rise! The designing of packaging and its labelling are being decided right at the product development keeping in view many factors like convenience, safety, patient adherence etc.

And those days the pharmaceutical packaging was limited to simple blisters and mono-cartons. With increasing demand of patient convenience, patient drug adherence, and new regulations, we specialise in the pharmaceutical wallet packs, physician samples etc., using a simple cold seal technology which was developed in Netherlands by my friend Ron Linssen. Ecobliss wallet pack has a unique advantage i.e., as long as the last tablet, capsule or drug is consumed, the entire packaging is with the patient itself. This is not the case in regular monocarton. It acts in its own way as a tamper evidence and aids the patient in drug adherence. For brand owners, it is a silent salesman.

One of the latest packaging

which we have introduced lately is called Locked4kids where the packaging is designed to prevent children to access dangerous drugs yet adults can easily access. This concept won several international awards including CPHI pharma awards, Worldstar President award, Ameristar best of show award etc.,

**What is your analysis of the blister and high-visibility packaging sector in India?**

During 80s and 90s, we could hardly find any blister packaging in shop shelves or in stores of supermarkets. Today, we can find several supermarkets for every street and a shopping mall with in 3kms in cities. This means that consumers walk into these shops having plenty of options and brands to buy. Well, it is the ability of packaging and branding to attract the consumer within fraction of seconds. And what better way to promote your brand rather than showing the actual product itself. And this done with the help of blister packaging. New product owners are choosing blister packaging for its ability to show their product and as well as to print their well-designed

graphics and sales message. Another major development in Indian market is tray packs for fresh/processed foods. And these come with opaque/semi-transparent lid labels as per the product need.

**Besides pharma and healthcare, which are the other sectors that Ecobliss is catering to?**

In case of high visible blister packaging, the usage of plastic is always more than 90 percent. With increasing demand to attract customers at the shelf, the importance of suitable graphics and product presentation is on rise, the use of paperboard has also increased – be it a face seal blister card or a fold-over blister card pack and resulting this combination as a chosen option for many product developers. Cold seal blister products are used in segments like pharmaceutical, electrical electronics, automobile, FMCG, food and agriculture, textiles and apparels, cosmetics and healthcare and so on.

Ecobliss, the blister pack manufacturing company, has expanded the product range of blister types like heat seal blister products, Ecostrong tamper proof blister products and other high visibility packaging.

**Tell us something about manufacturing capacities and capabilities**

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**of Ecobliss.**

At this moment, we are having the ability to produce 20 million packs per month. This is aided by a host of high-speed printing machines, screen printing machines, post press equipment and high-speed automatic thermoforming machines from Germany. And in coming days, we are hoping to expand further in our manufacturing capabilities keeping our traditional principles of business intact i.e., product packaging innovation.

**Industry 4.0 is acquiring a lot of significance across industry sectors. How is the packaging industry responding to it? And what is Ecobliss doing in this context?**

Well, Industry 4.0 is not just a buzzword but it's a reality today. If someone says I am not aware, he does not belong to this generation. Certainly, there has been a radical change in factories and businesses operations since the term 'Industry 4.0' became omnipresent. We witness trends moving towards total customisation, optimising the processes etc. Well, adopting Industry 4.0 straight into a packaging line may bring in lot of

advantages like better data management and improved efficiency. However, replacing a complete production line may not be a viable option for packaging companies which are already operating on slim margins. Having a total introspective into the current process, making small changes to current facilities can also result in efficiencies getting boosted significantly. Ecobliss has been focusing on innovative value-added operations which help to improve efficiency in manufacturing processes.

Recently Ecobliss delivered a new Starview BSC12-1818 blister packaging machine to OSRAM in Europe. Fully automatic, including feeding of all cards and blister cups, with an output of 90 completed packs per minute. Due to COVID-19, it was installed and put into operation by the technical crew of Osram themselves, without any problems! This proves the robustness and the ease of use of machinery provided by us.

**For many years now, the plastics industry has been in the focus for all the wrong reasons due to the negative impact of plastics waste**

