



Labeler performs like a **champ**

Champion Brands revs ahead with a **FRONT-AND-BACK LABELER** for its engine octane booster and other performance products.

Peter Wuerl, Contributing Editor

Superlatives pepper the conversation of David Lowe, president of Champion Brands LLC, as he describes the **Label-Aire** (www.label-aire.com) Inline Series 9000 labeling system in operation at the company's 450,000-sq-ft blending and filling facility in Clinton, MO.

"The Inline 9000 is very robust, easy to operate and extremely accurate," says a satisfied Lowe. **"That's why we chose it."**

Will Hamilton, Champion Brands plant manager, echoes Lowe's praise of the Inline 9000. "It's very user-friendly. The setups are quick, and there's little maintenance required," he says.

An industry leader for more than 50 years, Champion Brands produces and blends more than 300 products

including fuel, oil and engine additives and lubricants for the automotive, heavy truck, agricultural and specialty markets. The firm also does contract packaging for automotive lubricants and chemicals.

The Inline 9000's exceptional performance plays a key role in Champion Brands' success as it continues to capitalize on its familiar red and black checkered bow-tie brand logo that adorns its line of performance additive products. "It's one of the most recognized brands in the automotive aftermarket," notes Lowe. Clearly excited about the brand's recognition factor, he adds, "It's like Coca Cola."

Champion Brands' history dates back more than 50 years. David Lowe's father, Ralph, started the company in 1956 as Lowe Oil Co. In 1998, the company changed its name to Champion Brands. Always on the search for new

markets to enter, Champion Brands gained the rights in 2004 from Federal-Mogul Corp. to use the Champion bowtie logo for a new line of performance additives. The logo had long been associated with Champion spark plugs.

In order to successfully enter this new business, Lowe knew he needed to expand his plant's capacity. The company had been testing other labelers. After trialing the Inline 9000, Lowe knew he had the perfect fit for the company's expanding product line.

The new product line with the bowtie-shaped logo includes Complete Fuel System Cleaner, Octane Booster, Truck/SUV Fuel Injector Cleaner, Power Steering Fluid, Engine Protectant, Fuel Injector Cleaner and Chain Lube. The Inline 9000 applies labels to all of these products, with the exception of Chain Lube, which is an aerosol can labeled elsewhere.

The shaped polyvinyl chloride bottles hold 12 or 16 oz and feature gripper teeth on the side that allow an easy grip when pouring product into an engine or fuel tank. The narrow neck of each bottle is embossed with the Champion name.

Lowe says Champion Brands initially focused its marketing efforts on national retailers, achieving success by capturing shelf space at Wal-Mart. Realizing the need for additional marketing muscle, Champion Brands engaged the national sales organization of Federal-Mogul. More success with national auto parts retailers soon followed.

Champion Brands has 10 production lines at its Clinton, MO facility, which is 75 miles southeast of Kansas City. **The Inline 9000 plays a key role in the line dedicated to Champion's performance additives products.**

In addition to the Inline 9000, other major line components include a Model 400 bottle unscrambler/orienter from Pace, a Speck-Tech automatic rotary filler, and a Kaps-All Model C8 capper. The line also includes an AutoMate Technologies cap sealer Model AM-250, an Accu-Pak drop packer, and a Nordson hot-melt system on the case sealer. The case erector is an SWF McDowell Model 201. **The labeler, running at a speed of 150 bottles/min, uses the wipe-on feature to apply pressure-sensitive labels in a front-back application.** The die-cut labels consist of bright silver acrylic top-coated metallized paper for the front label and pressure-sensitive semi-gloss paper with permanent adhesive for the back label. They're applied simultaneously to the front and back of the bottles from two separate rolls that feed the labeler. The labels are supplied on 12-in.-dia rolls. The labels widths are 3.7187 in. on the 12-oz bottles and 4.187 in. on the 16-oz bottles.



After trialing the new bottle-labeling machine, above, Champion Brands found a fit for its growing line.

No detail is more important than label-placement accuracy, and Lowe is zealous in his attention to this part of the process. "The label must lay in there almost perfectly," he says. "It's very important to us."

To meet Lowe's expectations, the Inline 9000 provides a label-placement accuracy of $\pm 1/32$ in. As the labels come out of the peel plates, they are wiped onto the bottles.

Equipped with quick-change feedscrews, the labeler is married with an infeed and outfeed accumulation system. The quick-change screws allow for rapid changeovers and a "soft-



Champion Brands has 10 production lines that are packing bottles in cases, top, at its Clinton, MO, facility, 75 miles southeast of Kansas City.

start” capability is designed to maintain product surge.

Engineered with a range of top-performing attributes, the PLC-controlled Inline 9000 has two product sensors, one positioned upstream at the input side and one downstream at the exhaust side, tied into the PLC. The machine ramps up and down automatically. If there is a bottleneck at the filler, for example, the Inline 9000 delays labeling until the line starts moving again.

The unit’s 12-ft Delrin chain conveyor has extruded aluminum side plates and a segmented top-trap hold-down to

keep products in place. The bottles are empty when labeled.

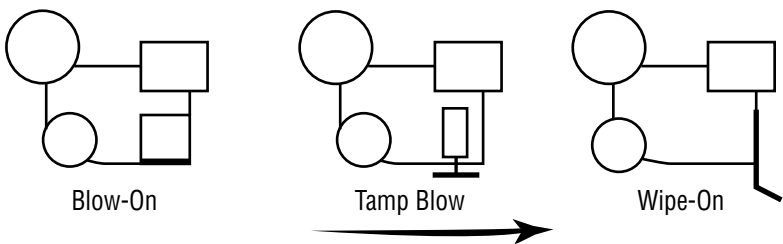
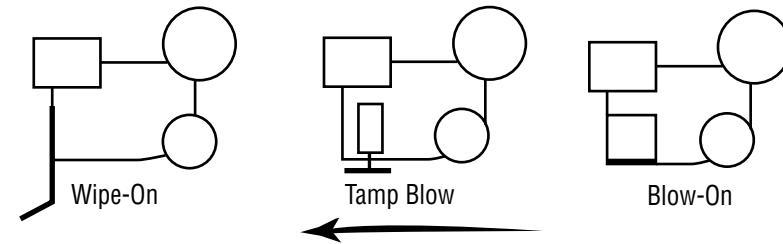
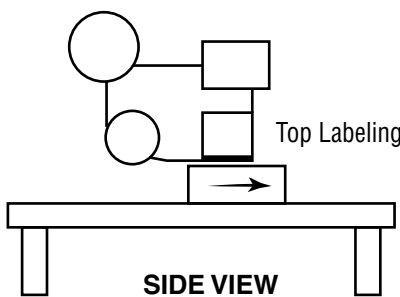
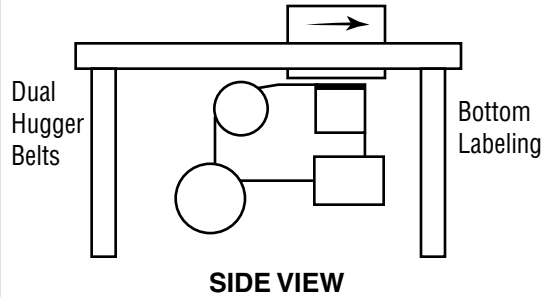
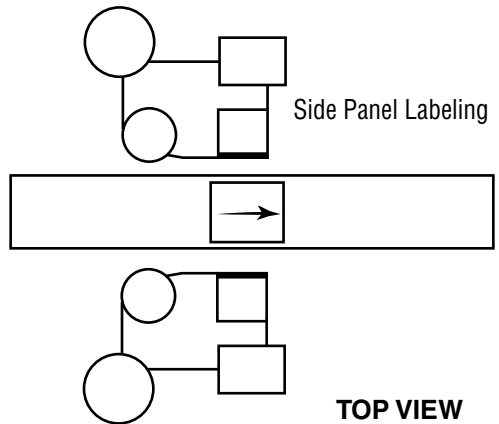
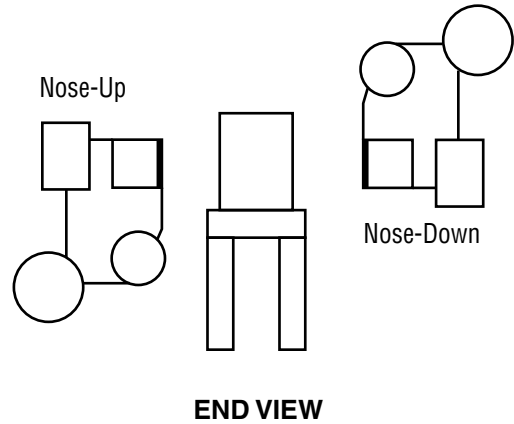
“The top trap stabilizes the bottles and holds them in position so that the label goes on in the same position every time,” says Hamilton. The swing-arm control panel with dual R3 digital displays contributes to safety by enabling an operator to check label status without the need to go over or under the conveyor.

The Inline 9000 has had no trouble keeping up with line requirements and a speed of 150 bottles/min, “I’m a very loyal Label-Aire customer,” Lowe says.

More information is available:

**Label-Aire, 714/441-0700. www.label-aire.com (Labeler manufacturer)
U.S. Tape & Label, 800/569-1906 www.ustl.com (Labeler sales, service, and label provider)**

Handing & Attitudes

<p>Applicator Handing The hand of the applicator remains the same regardless of which side of the conveyor it is located on or how it is positioned (i.e., upside down).</p>	
<p>Right Hand</p>  <p>Blow-On Tamp Blow Wipe-On</p>	
<p>Left Hand</p>  <p>Wipe-On Tamp Blow Blow-On</p>	
<p>Applicator Attitudes Attitude generally determines the orientation or location of controls, gauges, tubing, decals, supports, etc. Be sure to specify attitude whenever possible.</p>	
<p>Upright & Above</p>  <p>Top Labeling</p> <p>SIDE VIEW</p>	<p>Bottom Up</p>  <p>Dual Hugger Belts Bottom Labeling</p> <p>SIDE VIEW</p>
<p>Reels Up</p>  <p>Side Panel Labeling</p> <p>TOP VIEW</p>	<p>Nose-Up/Nose-Down</p>  <p>Nose-Up Nose-Down</p> <p>END VIEW</p>

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