

How Kärcher reduces time-to-market with Esko's packaging management solution



Efficient online packaging processes and communication allow more time for creativity and reduce time to market. The packaging workflows enabled through Esko WebCenter at cleaning equipment manufacturer, Kärcher, are saving the company valuable time and money.

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Titus Helmke, Head of Packaging Design



Based near Stuttgart (Germany), Kärcher is the world's leading supplier of cleaning solutions and manufacturer of high-pressure cleaners, steam cleaners, sweepers, wet and dry vacuums, scrubber driers, window cleaning units and pumps for the home and garden premises. Innovation is a key driver behind the company's growth.

Some 85% of its products are five years old or less, and for brand management purposes, every new or redesigned product needs packaging that follows the corporate design guidelines.

The packaging has to convey complex technical information and the product benefits at a glance, and should be as language-

neutral as possible. It also has to stack on pallets and pass a series of rigidity tests to prove it can protect the product from damage on its way to the customer.

“Packaging design has become an essential part of product marketing,” says Titus Helmke, head of the packaging design team responsible for all Kärcher products. “It has to meet very high standards. After all, it isn't only the brand name that persuades customers to buy, but also appealing, well-designed packaging.” Helmke's team designs or updates around 600 items of packaging every year. In total, his department manages about 1,800 different packaging products, including boxes, labels and POS displays.



From Excel spreadsheets to central, standardized online workflows

Until three years ago, Titus' team would write up, edit, scan, fax and print packaging requirements and product management briefing documents using standard Office applications. Drafts and changes were emailed back and forth between product management, marketing, packaging development and prepress as PDF files until the final artwork was agreed. Documents required for the design process, such as photos, illustrations and text, were shared by email and FTP and sent through the post on DVD. The process had significant drawbacks: documentation filled thick folders, emails had to be printed for archiving, and data had to be burned to DVD.

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It was a time-consuming and costly manual process, and Kärcher realized it was time to invest in an efficient web solution.

Before Kärcher installed Esko's WebCenter, the departments involved in the packaging process were invited to summarize their particular requirements in a detailed specification. The main requirements were shorter time to market, more time for the creative phase, greater transparency, increased standardization, better collaboration, faster processes, a simpler deadline structure, fewer review cycles, less errors, complete archiving and reduced costs. With its all-round focus on packaging development and packaging process management, WebCenter ticked all the boxes.

More efficient layout process: no more printing and archiving

All the processes associated with developing new product packaging are now handled in WebCenter. The software provides standardized design briefs, sample forms and die-cut

templates, which can be scheduled, edited and sent to other people via the software. This reduces the workload significantly, and projects are now completed much more efficiently:

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There is no longer any need to create separate project documentation, so any given project is equally transparent to all team members and suppliers. Project documentation is created automatically with the necessary approval statuses. Documents no longer have to be archived separately as everything is stored centrally in WebCenter. The team can use the resources that this frees up for creative work. As a result, more design work can be handled in-house, the quality of the artwork is higher and costs are reduced.

WebCenter also contributes to the management and automation of approval cycles. The software features a viewer for comparing graphics and design drafts. According to Helmke, process times have been reduced by up to 30% simply by replacing most conventional, paper-based review processes with online checking and approval cycles. This typically also results in fewer review cycles and fewer change-related costs.

“If something goes wrong in the workflow, we always know exactly what went wrong. WebCenter enables us to see where there is potential for improvement and we work together to find a solution.”

And the viewer allows designers to review corrections by superimposing different layout versions so that the differences are easily visible. “Little mistakes can't slip in any more. WebCenter makes layout checking faster and more efficient,” adds Helmke.

WebCenter also makes it easier for users to hand over work to another team member because the most up-to-date project data is stored in the software. So if one team member goes on holiday, for example, they no longer have to go through the laborious process of updating a colleague on the project.

As an added benefit, individual tasks can be modified if the requirements change. If problems occur in a particular project, the history function shows where and when the inconsistency arose and who caused it.

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But the principle is always the same – documents are collected, processed internally or externally, approved and then archived. The adaptability of WebCenter is ideal for us.”

“If something goes wrong in the workflow, we always know exactly what went wrong,” says Helmke. “WebCenter enables us to see where there is potential for improvement and we work together to find a solution. In the paper era, too much simply disappeared.”

WebCenter grows with requirements

WebCenter handles multi-page PDF files, which means longer brochures can now also be processed in WebCenter. The company already has plans to use the software to help manage its photography and translation workflow for the many different languages it handles.

“The WebCenter functions are ideal for various creative workflows,” explains Helmke. “But the principle is always the same – documents are collected, processed internally or externally, approved and then archived. The adaptability of WebCenter is ideal for us.” Kärcher also plans to use 3D packaging visualization with the help of Esko.

For a global brand like Kärcher, WebCenter offers a powerful tool for packaging management with its end-to-end process solutions for online collaboration, project mapping and task management.

It provides a basis on which to network, control and rationalize complex processes in the packaging development lifecycle. WebCenter serves as a single platform for all project data and all communication between product managers, buyers of packaging and print products, designers, external printing companies and downstream processors.

Kärcher introduced the SAP interface for WebCenter. In the case of packaging products for which data transfer takes place in SAP, this interface eliminates the need to transfer scheduling data manually, saving time and increasing efficiency. There are currently 140 internal and external people at Kärcher working with WebCenter.

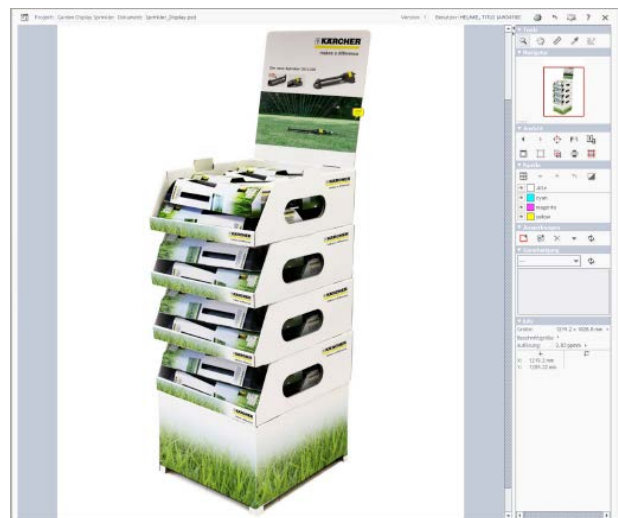
Depending on their user rights, they can edit and add comments to projects or simply view them. Most outer packaging still comprises folding boxes made of laminated corrugated board – currently 60% – with the rest made up of accessory packaging, sales displays and signs, labels, blister packs and bag packaging.

Time is money

Since introducing WebCenter, Kärcher has made its packaging design process simpler, faster and more standardized. All internal and external users are very pleased with the new platform and make much use of it.

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For Helmke, the much-talked-about paperless office has become reality and piles of print-outs or stacks of folders lying around the office are a thing of the past!



Kärcher display in 3D design.

Esko Packaging Management brings benefits for Kärcher:

- Shorter time to market
- More creativity
- Greater transparency
- Increased standardization
- Better collaboration
- Faster processes
- Simpler deadline structure
- Reduced workload
- Automated and fewer review cycles
- Less errors
- Complete archiving infrastructure
- Reduced costs **W**



Esko Packaging Management can help your organization

WebCenter enhances your specification & communication

The dynamic forms and collaboration tools in WebCenter help to enhance data sharing and communication between all partners in the packaging and printing supply chain. Work virtually, in real-time, with your internal creative, marketing, package design and engineering groups, external vendors and suppliers.

WebCenter streamlines your business process

The powerful workflow and easy to use process management tools help you to manage your business process effectively and also helps to remove redundant steps in the process.

WebCenter: a window for your external stakeholders

WebCenter helps you securely manage and automate approval cycles supported by a fast and accurate online viewing tool. WebCenter's smart approval and annotation framework, easy to use interface and packaging intelligent tools make it the best platform for the management and approval of both graphic and structural files.

WebCenter: a central place for digital files

WebCenter Projects can contain any type of document: CAD files, graphic files, spreadsheets, proposals, purchase orders, customer specifications... It automatically maintains versions of every one of these documents and its history.



esko.com/webcenter