

# ENGAGE

*technologies corporation*



# DELIVERING RESULTS

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Written by Jessica Ferlaino

The shock waves and brutal challenges of COVID-19 interrupted supply chains everywhere. But Engage Technologies Corporation (“Engage”) is a leading example of a company that seamlessly adapted and delivered an “essential” product without interruption.

As an American company, Engage was able to overcome the countless challenges presented by a global pandemic. As a global company, it had no choice, says CEO David Mylrea.

“In the last 12 months we have sold product into 51 countries worldwide,” he explains, pointing out that the pandemic had the potential to disrupt the supply chains that Engage and its brands were a part of all over the world. No small threat.

Engage is the parent company of Squid Ink Manufacturing, Inc., Eastey, American Film and Machinery (AFM) and Cogent Technologies. Together, they offer a comprehensive line of packaging systems including coding and marking solutions for traceability, case sealing and shrink packaging equipment, shrink sleeve labeling solutions and other automation systems for countless industries, including a high proportion of those that were deemed essential.







### All aboard the rollercoaster

In late March, as the virus spread around the world and its true impact was becoming known, Engage experienced a huge and sudden spike in demand from customers urgently stocking up on packaging consumables needed to address a seemingly insatiable demand for products like hand sanitizer, disinfectants and cleaning products, bottled water, and paper products.

The surge in demand in the last two weeks of March was followed by a low in the first two weeks of April. Mylrea describes the experience as a “rollercoaster.” He says, “Everything came to a screeching halt, and frankly, we were nervous.” Fortunately, it would only be a temporary lull.

In fact, the many challenges of 2020 did not slow the company in the least, as it introduced a number of new products to the market. Mylrea says that a new product offering, a thermal inkjet printer called The Viper™, “was one of the things our distributors felt we should have in our arsenal.”

Engage has a very structured, customer-driven approach to product development that is founded on a great deal of research, and as such, products are only developed when it makes sense to do so and an existing demand is present.

### Right time, right product

According to Mylrea, “We have a distributor council that we invite to participate in our process of trying to figure out what’s happening next. They help us see around the corner, if you will, and once we’ve assembled the data then we put together the plan for how we go about fulfilling the customer’s needs.”

If the product is deemed necessary and fits in the company’s repertoire, then a solution is engineered and developed. That was the case with its new strapping-machine offering which leverages the prowess of German engineering to offer a “high-end, low-cost piece of equipment,” in its packaging line.

The same can be said about Engage’s new case erector, which Mylrea describes as “the finest case erector in the world, in the price range that we’re offering this product,” as well as a new hot-knife L-bar sealer, a product that improves on an existing offering.

Mylrea goes on to acknowledge, “We also complemented our coding and marking lines, so we have a full line of laser products now – CO<sub>2</sub> and fiber lasers in a variety of different sizes. So we’re excited about that as well.” ►►

## ► Pack Expo turnaround

Each year, the packaging industry gets together in Chicago to network, share ideas, bring new products to market, and engage prospective customers and industry professionals. Pack Expo would have been the perfect opportunity to showcase these new offerings, but like many other events in 2020, COVID-19 had other plans.

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***“The pandemic had the potential to disrupt the supply chains that Engage Technologies and its brands were a part of right across the world. No small threat.”***

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“We were ready to go,” says Mylrea, but there was still some doubt that an in-person gathering of this type would ultimately take place. As a result, Engage used this as an opportunity to update its training materials and resources, and “put video technology to work to highlight our new product offerings.”

Having these resources meant the Engage team wasn’t just ready; they were prepared for a worst-case scenario when the systems used to connect virtual Pack Expo crashed on day one of the event. What could have been detrimental turned out to be the company’s advantage.

“We quickly put links to our own virtual platform to run the live demos, so we were able to do everything at Pack Expo that we would have done had Pack Expo Connects worked,” says Mylrea.

“To date, we’ve generated more new leads for business from this virtual Pack Expo than we have from the regular Pack Expo in years gone by. All these things being equal, it was a tremendous success for us, plus the portals for Pack Expo Connects are open through March, so we expect to see additional new leads or new business through March 2021.”

## ► Prospering through a pandemic

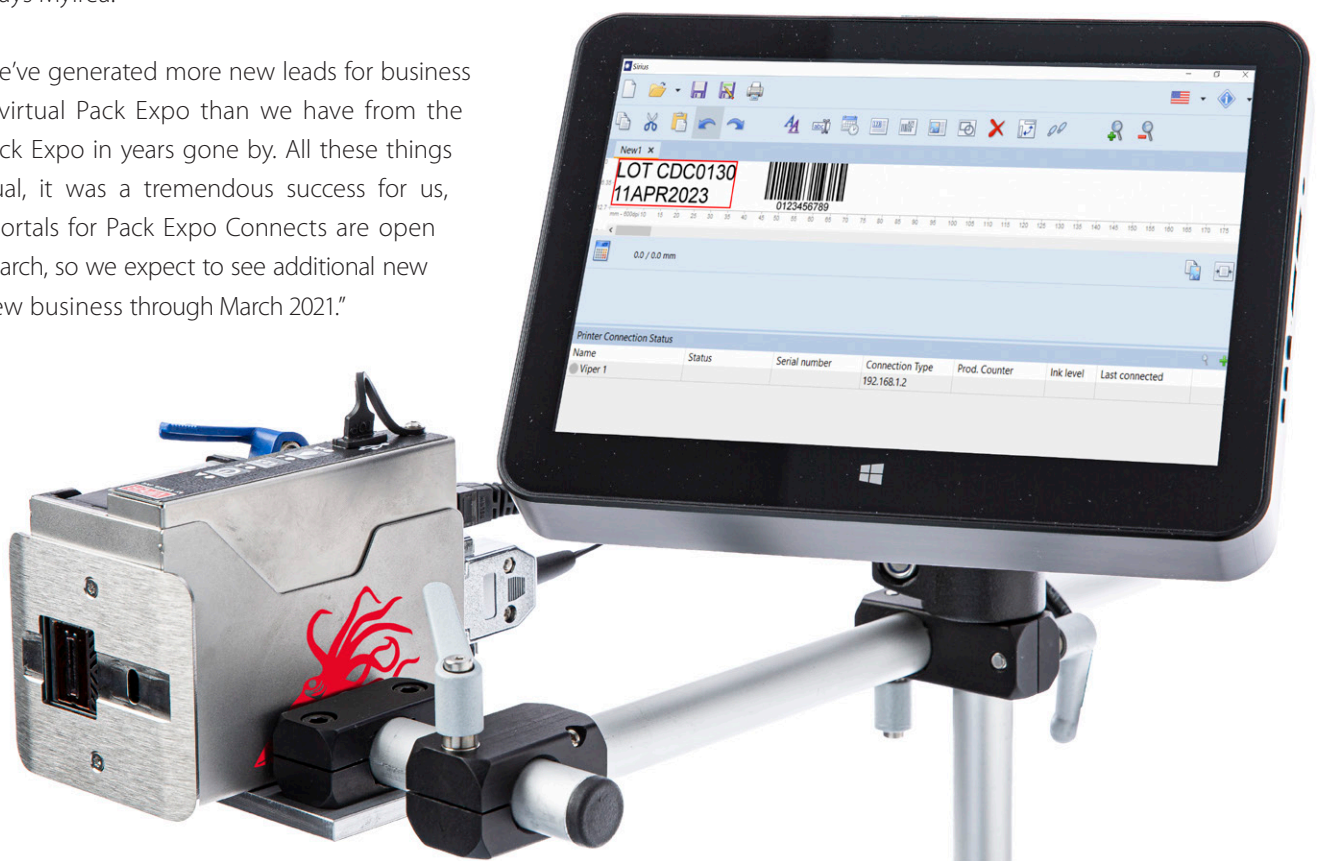
Training has long been part of Engage’s focus, with an aim at building the skills needed to deliver the right products to the right people at the right time, ensuring accurate installation and service for optimized performance and output. Mylrea asks, “If it isn’t working, how do we troubleshoot to fix it, and how do we make sure that the people who need that information are able to get it easily and at no charge?”

He adds, “I’m not sure, without the pandemic driving our effort, that we would have put as much time into that endeavor as we did in the last eight months, so I think long term that will have great value to our company. Short term it’s tremendous because the people who want to buy our products can easily find out which product to purchase that fits their application.”

Mylrea credits the sales, marketing and service teams for their role in the effort to digitize the content, saying, “They were very proactive anticipating what the issues would be with the pandemic, and then not waiting, but stepping on the gas to make sure that we had all of our products, and all of our services, fully documented.”

As if all this was not enough to undertake during a pandemic, Engage also achieved ISO:9001:2015 certification, which has served it well, both in terms of safety practices and protocols to address COVID, further entrenching the company’s commitment to quality and safety.

 Viper TIJ 600DPI Printer, Squid INK







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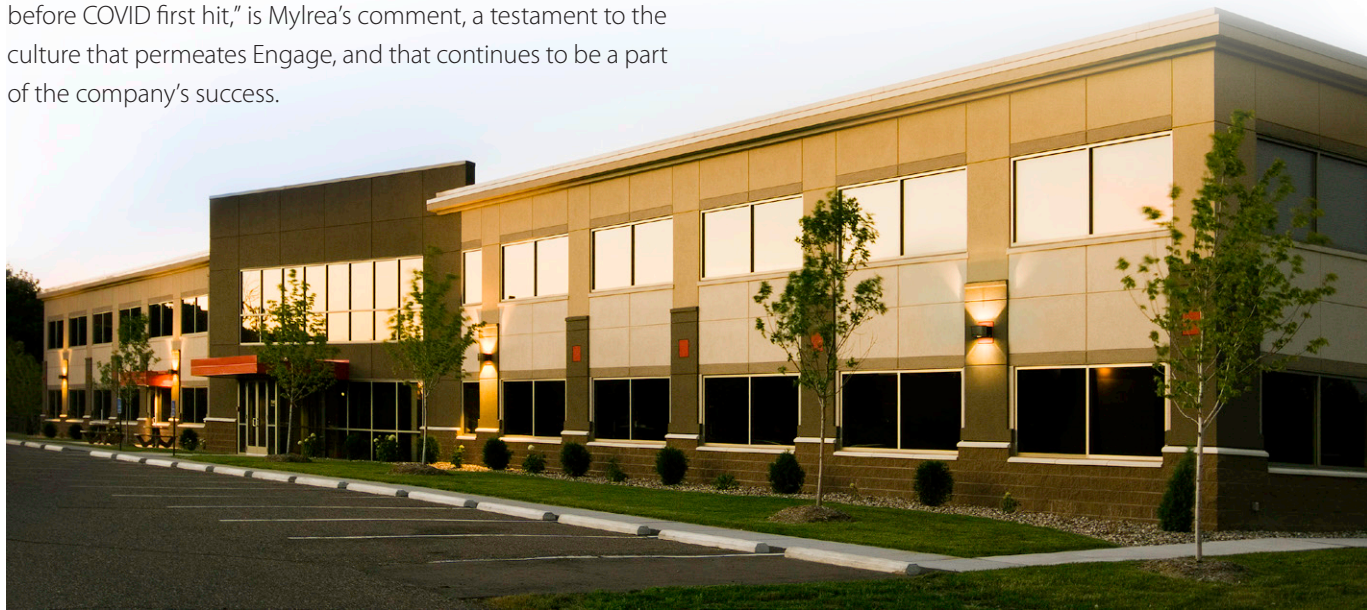
“Part of the ISO certification process is that we adopted formal plans, policies, and procedures to deal with almost any potential business issues,” says Mylrea. This includes closing facilities to visitors, masking, and social-distancing mandates, as well as additional cleaning and safety protocols, and work-from-home orders where possible. This has resulted in minimal interruption to productivity and maximum safety for its employees.

“We continue to provide a safe and comfortable working environment for our employees, which we have been doing since before COVID first hit,” is Mylrea’s comment, a testament to the culture that permeates Engage, and that continues to be a part of the company’s success.

It’s remarkable how far Engage has come since it began in Bill Hoagland’s garage in 1991. By offering superior products, viable innovation strategies, and leveraging challenges as opportunities, it has become an important part of supply chains around the world.

Most of all, it has delivered results, even during a pandemic. ■

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