

News and Numbers

The Changing Landscape of Cards



Cards—like everything else have their benefits and challenges. As consumers request more customization and options in their personal lives, the desire for personalization of their cards changes too. Cards have evolved from standard magnetic stripe PVC cards to EMV chip cards and are now moving towards powered, intelligent and interactive cards with displays and batteries incorporated on a variety of materials. New challenges arise for card manufacturers and suppliers with each reinvention. In recent years, card innovation has happened more rapidly than any other time in history. No more are consumers happy with a basic plastic card that gives them buying power. Consumers, if given the choice, want cards that show status, have benefits, impact the world, make a contribution while performing correctly EVERY time.

The change from PVC cards to metal & hybrid cards has brought a challenge to label manufacturers and converters, making sure their products are strong enough to hold the cards to their carriers, without ripping the carrier or damaging the signature panel or magnetic stripe. This leaves many card manufacturers looking for the right custom solution and the right label converter to partner with them to create it.

With announcements by American Express to make their cards out of recovered ocean plastic pollution, as soon as June 2019, and Mastercard to reduce first use plastics, card suppliers need to work proactively to make sure they adapt to the changing card landscape. It's no longer a "one solution fits all" industry. The materials needed must be functional and technical. They need to perform their job without leaving residue or damage behind.

The longer life span of cards also has an impact on the industry. For decades, cards have had a three year life span. Now with the increased cost of producing cards, in some cases 8-14 times the cost, cards have a longer life span of five years. 2019 will be the first year to see this impact of these longer expiration dates. The longer valid use dates bring more wear and tear on the card. The card materials and cards themselves have to hold up all the rigorous wear and tear it goes through. The magnetic stripe needs to last almost 70% longer. Some of the things that wear out the card are the number of times it is removed from a wallet, swiping the magnetic stripe or inserting EMV chip technology. The leading edge of the card in chip readers gets more use than ever before due to inserting into card readers. The average consumer uses their debit, credit and prepaid cards over 525 times per year.