

America bats its lashes

After recent features focused on France and South Korea, the next part of *Plastics in Packaging's* world tour of the cosmetics packaging industry sees the spotlight turn to North America.

Europe's Albéa Group has enjoyed considerable growth across the Atlantic in recent years, and the company operates no fewer than seven plants across the US, Canada and Mexico (out of a total of 31 plants worldwide), while employing more than 2,000 people.

"Tube manufacturing is one of the cornerstones of Albéa Group's presence in the US," explains Kristina Christensen, Albéa's vice president of sales for Tubes America. "We have three factories producing tubes in the US and two in Mexico, along with a strong commitment to sustainability."

In 2020, Albéa produced 1.7 billion tubes and, in the last two years alone, invested \$40 million in its North American facilities. These recent investments in higher-speed equipment allow Albéa to continue to compete on American soil, she adds.

The company offers both laminate and extruded tube technology, with the latter produced in the New Jersey borough of Washington, and Reynosa, Mexico, and the former made in two US plants located in Shelbyville, Tennessee, and Washington, New Jersey. The Tennessee plant is one of the largest laminate facilities in the world, while the New Jersey site is dedicated to the oral care segment. The third laminates plant is located in Queretaro, Mexico.

"Our American footprint provides our customers with flexibility and assurance of supply, while with our footprint in Mexico we leverage for certain types of production and specifications," says Christensen. "In this way, we can effectively address the West Coast as well as the Midwest and the Northeast along with customers in Mexico."

Last year alone saw Albéa launch three "breakthroughs" in sustainable tubes. Leading the way was an "industry-first" co-development with SABIC and Estée Lauder Companies, of high-performing tubes made from certified-circular PP and certified-circular PE. This development paves the way for the use of 'advanced'-recycled (chemically-recycled), post-consumer waste in prestige beauty packaging.

In the last leg of her tour of cosmetic packaging innovation around the world, **Dominique Huret** talks to four major players in the North American market



Top: Albéa manufactures makeup and skin care packaging using all technologies at its Matamoros, Mexico plant. **Above:** WWP Beauty's Eco-Pac Tube was inspired by the need for a more planet-friendly tube option

Another breakthrough was the patented Greenleaf tube technology, which has been recognised by the Association of Plastic Recyclers (APR) in the US and Suez CircPack (Europe) as technically recyclable within the existing, effective HDPE bottle-recycling stream. This tube-making technology uses a single-blown film, thus reducing the product's carbon footprint significantly.

Also in 2020, Albéa launched eco-design sun care packaging in the form of a partially cardboard-based tube for La Roche-Posay. The use of plastics is reduced by 45 per cent compared existing tubes.

"Sustainability is absolutely central now, at all levels," adds Christensen. "Eighty-five per cent of our equipment for extruded tubes is ready to produce tubes made of 40 per cent post-consumer recycled (PCR) plastics, while 100 per cent of our equipment for laminate

tubes is compatible with Greenleaf technology, an APR-certified offering."

Albéa's Matamoros plant, close to the Mexican border, is nicknamed 'the powerhouse'. Carlos Rubio, general manager of Matamoros, explains: "The Matamoros plant is undoubtedly one of the group's flagships for the manufacture of makeup and skin care packaging. It is a 'powerhouse' because we have all the technologies under one roof. We transform all our raw materials into finished goods without subcontractors. That allows us to react in a very short time to market fluctuations.

"We can produce all the packaging needed in-house: jars, bottles, and closures, as well as the decoration technology that goes with it.

Everything that we use in-house is recycled internally, and we are exploring and using PCR resins increasingly in our products.

"For some of our major customers, we have practically eliminated secondary packaging entirely. In a further step towards sustainability, we are investing in solvent-free lacquers to reduce environmental impact."

Controlled growth

In just eight years, the Canadian Knowlton Development Corporation – now called KDC/One – has undergone major changes, with successive acquisitions in several areas of beauty subcontracting.

Created in 2002 from Knowlton Packaging, it employed, at the time, 300 people with a turnover of \$80m. In 2003, the investment fund Novacap took control of the company, and the acquisitions of Tri Tech Laboratories and Body Blue followed within four years.

Further expansion was to follow in 2014, with a number of key acquisitions across the cosmetics sector, including Benchmark Cosmetic Laboratories in California, the Alkos group in France, the Swallowfield manufacturing business in the UK (renowned for its expertise in aerosol delivery systems), Paristry in China and the HCT Group.

Wayne Swanton, KDC's president for beauty and personal care, sketches out the scope of the company: "We currently operate 24 manufacturing facilities, 26 R&D labs and innovation centres, with more than 15,000 employees around the world. We provide a network of capabilities designed to offer bespoke solutions that appropriately scale with our customers' needs.



▲ Kristina Christensen, Albéa's vice president of sales for Tubes America

▼ Carlos Rubio, general manager of Albéa's Matamoros plant



▲ SGB president Shoshana Gibli

▼ WWP Beauty's chief executive Josh Kirschbaum



▲ Lauren Gibli is responsible for sales and development at SGB

"HCT Group is one of the prestige cosmetic industry's leading packaging design and production firms. This addition to our portfolio buoyed its presence with prestige colour and skin care brands and enhanced our ability to provide a 'one stop shop' for those clients seeking a full-service solution encompassing both package and product."

Crimple Tube Technology (CLT) was launched at the end of 2020 as a part of HCT's new tube collection. It has been designed to eliminate the typical limitations of tubes by unlocking new aesthetic possibilities and functionalities.

No longer restrained by 2D crimped ends, HCT's CLT is said to 'revolutionise' tube design. They can now stand like bottles, while being more flexible than traditional versions. Much like traditional tubes, the CLT collection allows for a thick formula to be dispensed. Also, a unique shape can be applied on the ends, says KDC, for a more sophisticated and coherent brand image throughout the packaging.

Service in full

Based in New Jersey, SGB, which stands for the company founder and president Shoshana Gibli, is keen to showcase itself as an environmentally-conscious producer.

In plastics packaging, the company promotes sustainable alternatives such as rPET, bio resins, and what it calls 'circular sources'.

"Our portfolio of airless packages, ranging up to 250ml capacity, is available in 25 per cent and 50 per cent PCR, and bio resin," explains Gibli. "The recent arrival in our group of Ponzini, an historic Italian manufacturer in the field of brow and mascara brushes, completed our portfolio of products with a range of 30 new standards that meet volume, separation and thickness requirements.



Albéa produced 1.7 billion tubes last year

"Our 2020 launches give you an idea of how often we do this," adds Gibli. "In addition to our range of rPET (with 25-100 per cent content), there is our Baia range of airless sprays with 50 or 70 per cent PCR. The Livstick sampler, meanwhile, is a single-use applicator for cosmetics and lipsticks, allowing customers to try cosmetics before buying while accommodating sanitary expectations."

"We have found that Covid has generated a lot of new opportunities for packaging to evolve, especially in the sampling space," concludes daughter Lauren Gibli, who is responsible for sales and development.

Another American full-service provider in the cosmetics sector is WWP Beauty. Chief executive Josh Kirschbaum explains that the company acquired Cosmetic Design Group

(also a full-service provider) in 2019, and fully integrated it to form WWP Beauty by the end of 2020.

"This integration was about expanding our capabilities to include a full-service offering of packaging, formulation, full-service turnkey and accessories, and increasing our global footprint with the openings of our EMEA office in Paris, France and our APAC office in Shanghai, China," he says.

Two of WWP Beauty's recent sustainable packaging launches are the Eco-Pac Tube and the ColorVue Lipstick. The Eco-Pac Tube was inspired by the need for a more planet-friendly tube option, offering a distinctive design that saves on plastics, while still offering all the flexibility and performance of traditional tubes.

The lightweight design of the Eco-Pac Tube results in the use of 19 per cent less material per tube and up to 93 per cent fewer emissions per piece, claims the company. In addition, the tube is made from 100 per cent bio-PE, derived from sugarcane.

The company says that the ColorVue lipstick features a mono-material design and a patent-pending mechanism that uses up to 12 per cent less plastics. This design is said to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by up to 85 per cent, when compared with a standard lipstick component of the same size. Additionally, since the start of 2021, the company has launched a Refillable Body Stick, Refillable Multi-use Face Stick, Refillable Bottle, and a Square Tube available in PCR material.

"While the economic and health crisis has been a challenging time for businesses across the world, we recognise that consumers are still investing in their beauty routine, with a newfound responsibility to the environment," says SGB's Shoshana Gibli. "This is encouraging and pushing us towards ever more responsible packaging." P