

# 6 things to look for in a converter

## Why work with a converter?

(BPT) - Tape provides a multitude of useful solutions across a variety of industrial needs. But many manufacturers quickly find that purchasing a roll of adhesive and then attempting to cut it to size in-house is inefficient. Not only is this labor-intensive and time-consuming, but without the proper equipment, you won't get the consistent results you need.

One solution that manufacturers turn to is an industrial distributor with off-the-shelf adhesive products. They offer pressure-sensitive tapes that are cut to specific lengths and sizes. At first glance, these distributors appear to offer that quick and easy solution you need. Unless they carry the specific adhesive in the exact dimensions for your process, you'll be back at square one.

**Here's the better solution:** Partner with a converter when you need custom-sized, pressure-sensitive adhesive.

Converters can custom cut the tape to the size and dimensions you need for the project. Not only that, but they can apply the tape to different substrate materials for you, creating your own custom-made peel-and-stick solution.

But not all custom converters are alike. Before you get too far down the road, you'll want to know something about their capabilities and materials. In the long run, a custom converter can help you become efficient by creating the exact consistently cut pieces you need.

If you haven't worked with a converter partner in the past, use this guide as a starting point to find what you need.

## 1. Are they a preferred converter?

If you're comparing converting fabricators, you may be wondering just what it means to be a preferred partner or a preferred converter.

Not just any company can be a preferred partner. This designation means the vendor (the converter) meets requirements and expectations set by the material provider. This can include:

- Completion of company-provided training and certification.
- Meeting specific levels of sales volumes of the material.

It's hard to overstate the value customers gain from a preferred partnership, but here are some of the pros:

- Right materials, right application: Because of the training the brand provides these converters, preferred partners can offer a greater depth of technical expertise, so you'll know exactly how the materials would work in your application. You'll be getting the backup that you need.
- Quality assurance: An additional layer of quality control comes with preferred partnerships. That means fewer mistakes, fewer defects and fewer problems.
- Access to technical specialists: If your converter partner doesn't have the answers, their contacts at the company can help.
- Expedited timelines: Preferred partnerships put the converting company at the front of the line when it's time to replenish inventory and stock new products.
- Proven track record: You'll get access to materials made by top brands that have decades of success in supplying materials that have built your industry.
- Competitive pricing: Preferred partnerships can also mean preferred pricing. The savings get passed along to you, the customer.

Now that you know the advantages of working with a preferred partner, why put your project at risk with a company that hasn't met the basic requirements to become one?

## **2. What are their packaging standards and capabilities?**

The devil is in the details. As you know, little things add time and cost to your project. Which is why the packaging capability of your converter partner is a critical one.

Here's the problem: Many converters default to placing the finished products loose in a box. Once you receive the boxes, you'll find that you have problems around quality. Contents shift around during shipment. This movement and jostling can damage tape edges, sometimes causing them to stick together, creating a new set of problems:

- Labor intensive: Not only does someone need to put in the time to prepare the products for assembly, they also have to sort through the materials, pulling out damaged products and inventorying the results.
- Project delays: If too many products arrived in a damaged state, that puts your project at risk of not being completed on time.
- Additional cost: Delays and damaged materials add up to higher costs, which can nibble away at your profit margins.

To avoid these issues that add labor, time and expense to your projects, ask your converting partner some simple questions about packaging solutions.

### **How will you package the finished product?**

Which methods will they use to secure your materials and assure protection in shipping and transit?

### **How would you label products?**

Clear, easy-to-follow labeling, especially when converters come in multiple pieces, is critical. Clear labeling saves time and headaches during assembly.

### **Is kit assembly available?**

If your converter project features several pieces, kit-assembly packaging can be a time and labor saver, because it's ready to pull out of the box and set up at the workstation.

## **3. What are their converting capabilities?**

Taking time to understand converting capabilities can change the results of your project. Why? Because the method your converter partner uses to make your product can affect quality, tolerance, even the production timeline.

For example, there's a frequent mindset that die cutting is always the best method. There are many reasons behind this. Die cutting offers quick production and brings those highly consistent, high-quality results that you're after. However, it's important to consider the converting partner's full range of capabilities.

Digital cutting, for example, can make products that are just as good as those made from die-cut, but it offers several advantages, depending on the material you're using.

- Eliminates the step of creating die-tooling
- Reduces costs associated with designing and making a custom die-tool
- Speeds up your production timeline because creating the design is significantly faster
- Rapid prototyping brings faster completion of the final design
- Offers room for design flexibility and new iterations for significantly less cost

Taking time to learn about the full range of converting capabilities can unlock new possibilities for your project — and future ones you work on together!

## **4. What are your quality management standards?**

Quality is everything when it comes to the finished project. And different customers have different ways of evaluating quality.

Some customers have a quality review process, so they'll be requesting specific procedures and documentation from their vendors. But not all companies require this of their converter partners. If your firm lacks an official quality review process, there are other ways to evaluate your potential converter partner.

Ask your converter about the certifications and credentials they have earned. Doing this assures that your converter partner is committed to using consistent procedures and controls. In many cases, a third party evaluated their adherence to a set of criteria. Knowing this can streamline how you evaluate and choose vendors.

As an example, ISO 9001 sets the criteria for quality management standards, so businesses can achieve more efficiency and improve customer satisfaction. This ISO standard requires organizations to address standards in the following areas:

- Leadership
- Planning
- Support
- Operations
- Performance evaluations
- Making improvements

When you work with a company that's ISO 9001 certified, you'll experience the following benefits:

- Expectations met
- On-time delivery
- Cost management
- Reliability
- Customer satisfaction

Bottom line: When converters are certified ISO 9001, that is a good indicator you're working with a reliable company committed to creating a great experience.

## **5. Do they offer versatility and flexible terms?**

When choosing the right converter partner, it's good to dig into their parameters for accepting projects. As an example, many larger converter companies have tight requirements on minimum volume. Others will not accept customer property as converter materials. When you're searching for the right fit, asking those extra questions will ensure your converting partner is set up to meet your needs.

### **Do they have the flexibility to support your small volume projects along with the large ones?**

Many companies have strict guidelines on the minimum volume they'll take on. Sometimes, they may be part of a larger conglomerate, and don't have any leeway to make exceptions — even for a good, established customer.

### **Do they have the broad converting capabilities to work with your chosen material?**

A strong converter partner can usually get the materials you need at a great price. But there are times when a customer might get the materials for less. Or maybe there's a new material that you'd like to convert with a PSA-backed material, so you can create a product that's ready to

peel and stick. If these special circumstances are a possibility, ask your converting partner how they can meet your unique needs.

## **6. Can they collaborate and advise in the final design phase?**

A converting partner isn't going to design your product for you. But the best converters are willing to collaborate so you take your design over the finish line. When it's ready to order, you'll have full confidence of getting a high-quality product that works. Here are just a few questions you can ask to help you evaluate their commitment to helping you get the design you need.

- What's your expertise on substrate materials and pressure-sensitive adhesives?
- Can you recommend alternative materials — substrates and PSAs — that might improve the application or quality of the product?
- Can you create a prototype of the converter product?
- Can you create a ready-for-assembly kit so the order is ready for production?

## **Bring your vision to life with Evans EVCO**

- We're a Preferred Converting Partner of 3M, which is their highest designation of preferred partnerships. This partnership gives you access to 3M's high-quality materials and the technical information to make the right selection.
- We also have decades of experience in custom packaging solutions. Precision in packaging and labeling assures products that arrive in perfect condition, ready for assembly.
- Our dedicated and experienced production and service support staff can help, whether you're finalizing your converter design or selecting the right materials.
- Our broad converting capabilities and flexibility can make us your go-to solution for multiple projects.

Ready to get started? Contact [Evans EVCO](#) today.