



FILLING & CAPPING

NAILING THE COMPETITION

Beauty products supplier leverages marketing savvy and packaging expertise to maintain leading marketplace status



For young ladies getting ready to go out for a night of frivolous fun, coloring their nails in luscious, attention-grabbing colors is all part of the package that companies like **OPI Products Inc.** are only too happy to oblige.

Based in sunny North Hollywood, Ca., the privately-owned OPI claims to be the world's largest manufacturers of hair- and nail-covering products for professional use by operators of tony salons, beauty boutiques and the like—employing about 450 people at the multi-building, 140,000-square-foot complex sitting on a five-acre lot virtually within a shouting distance of Tinseltown.

And while the business of manufacturing cosmetic products is as serious an undertaking as any out there, OPI vice-president of operations Randy Allen stresses that a large part of the company's marketplace success can be attributed to its firmly-held belief that the cosmetics business is, and should be, all about having fun.

Hence the reason for some of the intriguingly whimsical brand names for its nail-treatment products.

The OPI Japanese collection for example, offers such catchy offering as *Let Them Eat Rice Cake*, *Osaka-To-Me Orange* and *Miso Happy With This Color*, Allen relates, while the Canadian collection is also a real hoot for anyone with basic knowledge of Canada's geography, with brand names such as *You Ottaware Purple*, *Paint Your Toron-Toes Rose*, *At Your Quebec & Call* and, we're not making this up, *Don't Whine ... Yukon Do It!*

"We currently have in excess of 2,000 SKUs (stock-keeping units) that are both professional- and retail-oriented," Allen told *Canadian Packaging* in a recent interview. "Many of our items are promoted on a bimonthly schedule, and we also have two major new seasonal color releases a year that are geographically-oriented."

"This is part of a 16-year-old tradition we began when we entered the color business," says Allen.

"These are the nail-covers that have very imaginative names," Allen remarks, "and are always so much fun to create."

In addition to the nail-coloring products, OPI also produces a broad range of related beauty aids and cosmetics, including acetone, polish removers, soaps and lotions, manicure and pedicure lines and associated products, monomers and acrylic powders for artificial nails. (Picture on the right)

"Our primary focus domestically is the professional nail industry," explains Allen. "This industry or

market does expand the types of products we must offer, but it does somewhat limit our revenues in comparison to a strictly retail-oriented operation, like Revlon.

"However, this is the niche that OPI has carved for itself, and that's the reason we are the leader in the professional market," states Allen, adding that OPI also takes an active role in supporting the cosmetic industry's educational efforts by supplying its products to beauty schools throughout the world.

GLOBAL THINKING

"We currently distribute to schools in approximately 66 countries and growing, which accounts for approximately 17 per cent of our total revenues, and it is also our fastest-growing market."

One of the company's product lines that has enjoyed remarkable market success is the *Nicole Colors* nail-coloring product family, relates Allen.

"The Nicole brand of nail lacquers is a collection of truly extraordinary colors—imaginative, spirited and uniquely beautiful. But mostly they are extraordinary because of their impact," he enthuses, adding that part of the proceeds from every purchase of a *Nicole Colors* product are used to support five international charities, including **Starbright Foundation**, **Rock The Vote**, **Gilda's Club Worldwide**, **Oceana** and **Project Hope**.

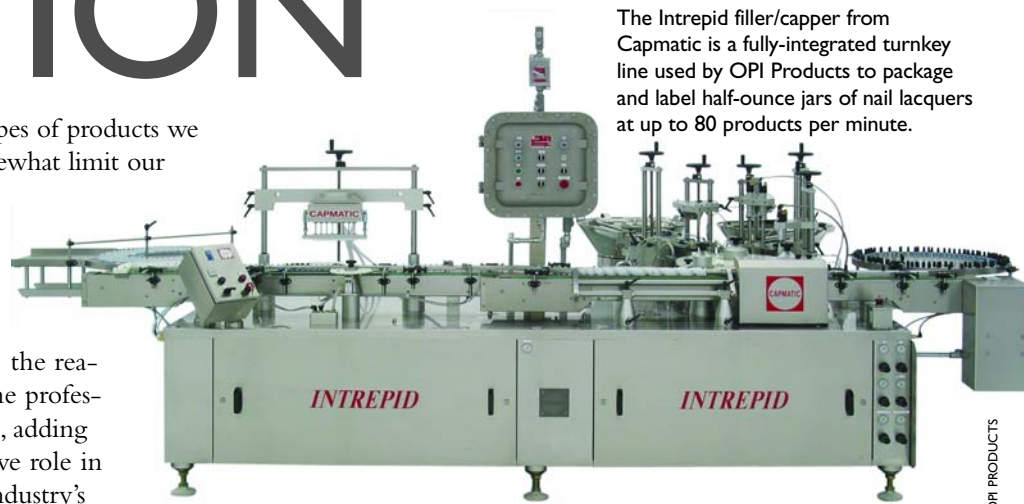
To date, the company has helped raise over US\$1 million for these organizations, Allen notes.

While positioning itself as a market leader is a major achievement for OPI, maintaining that position is a formidable daily challenge, according to Allen.

"We are continually expanding our facility. Last year we completed a three-story, state-of-the-art office and cafeteria project, with the cafeteria working on a non-profit basis," says Allen. "We supply a very inexpensive and broad menu to all employees and guests within a second-storey area that is fully glass-enclosed, including a domed ceiling. The facility also offers an environment for relaxation and entertainment with a flat-screen satellite television and karaoke machines."

All in all, OPI offers compelling proof to the age-old notion that happy employees are indeed the most productive employees, and the company's marketplace success, both at home and abroad, pretty much speaks for itself.

"Domestically, some of our major customers include Regis Corporation, which operates hair salons and beauty supply stores throughout the shopping malls across the U.S. and Canada; Beauty Systems Group, which has acquired many smaller distribution operations throughout the U.S. northeast and



The Intrepid filler/capper from Capmatic is a fully-integrated turnkey line used by OPI Products to package and label half-ounce jars of nail lacquers at up to 80 products per minute.

west; State Services, who supplies the professional beauty industry in the southeastern U.S.; and J.C. Penny salons throughout America," Allen expands, adding that OPI also does a fair bit of business in the U.K., Australia, Russia, France, Dubai, Holland and Japan.

To handle the growing production volumes, OPI is constantly upgrading and modernizing its manufacturing and distribution operations.

At the moment, the company is in the process of erecting a 30,000-square-foot warehouse, with seven-

stages-high racking, that will accommodate approximately 5,000 pallets of product, says Allen, pointing out that the high-tech facility will be maintained by only two employees—thanks to installation of a sophisticated, bar-code-based warehouse management systems (WMS). The company is also planning to construct a new, 40,000-square-foot distribution center (DC) in the next two years on a neighboring piece

of property, adds Allen.

NEW MACHINES

On the equipment side, OPI recently boosted its bottling production line capabilities with installation of the *Intrepid* filling/capping line—used to fill and package half-ounce jars of nail lacquers—from Montreal-based equipment builder **Capmatic Ltd.**, a family-owned, 70-employee OEM (original equipment manufacturer) of jug/jar/bottle/vial/syringe cleaners, sorters, fillers, pluggers, cappers, crimpers and labelers for the pharmaceutical, health-care, cosmetics, food-and-beverage and chemical industry applications.

"We service many companies, ranging from small biotechnology firms to large cosmetics producers in North and South America, the Middle East, Russia and throughout Asia, addressing our customer requirements through a worldwide network of local agencies," says Capmatic's marketing director

Marisa Mancini. "These representatives provide well-informed advice on machine and line design, which is how a company from

Montreal was able to make connections and work with a company from North Hollywood."

Mancini says the OPI installation was a challenging project for Capmatic due to some demanding application-specific requirements—including explosion-resistant filler and capper—and because it called for fully-integrated, turnkey line installation.

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OPI Products recently placed an order for a second LabelStar full-wrap label applying machine.



The Capmatic Vacutill inline intermittent vacuum filler.





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“The fastest OPI line comprises the Capmatic Vacufill inline intermittent vacuum filler, a Capmatic Road Runner twin-turret rotary plugger/capper, and a Capmatic LabelStar labeler,” explains Mancini.

“The Vacufill first inserts two stainless-steel mixing balls and then automatically provides level fills with eight stainless-steel vacuum nozzles, a heavy-duty vacuum generator, and a glass overflow container. The filled bottles are then conveyed to the Road Runner continuous-motion plugger/capper, and onto the LabelStar for clear-label application to the front, back and bottom.”

Allen says he has been very impressed with both the operational performance of Capmatic-made equip-

ment, as well as the company’s after-sales support.

“This machine was purchased to expand capacity, and it operates at 60 to 80 ppm (products per minute).

Additionally, in the past 12 months Capmatic has supplied and installed various infeed filling and handling equipment on the OPI main filling line to increase the speed and capacity of the ‘Road Runner’ mono-block that was installed six months previously,” says Allen.

The **Road Runner** mono-block is a specialized



The Capmatic Road Runner continuous-motion plugger/capper can achieve operating speeds of up to 200 products per minute, inserting brushes into filled jars.

machine—boasting maximum capacity of 200 ppm—that inserts a brush into the filled nail-lacquer bottles, does a quick accuracy inspection, and transfers it to another star wheel, which applies the OPI-branded caps using just the right, specified amount of torque (picture above).

“The machines used to sort, fill, close and label packages must be as versatile as the packages themselves are varied, and our designers understand that today’s packaging requirements hold the seed for tomorrow’s need”

Allen adds that OPI has recently placed new orders for additional Capmatic equipment for its other production areas, including a new LabelStar front, back and full-wrap label applicator.

“This will be the second LabelStar for our liquid filling areas,” states Allen, saying he’s very pleased with the way the system applies eye-pleasing, OPI-branded, clear-polyethylene labels onto the distinct round-shaped, clear-glass bottles.

In addition to the Capmatic machinery, OPI has recently installed a range of other key production machinery, including a new **Norden** tube filler for its pedicure tube-packaged products, and is currently in the process of installing a new boiler, chiller and clarifier for producing more scrub-type products in-house.

In addition, three months ago OPI installed a sophisticated new case-erector—manufactured by **MSG Machine Corp.**—in one of its assembly areas. The machine boasts an onboard vision system for inline orienting of the screened bottles in the window of the carton, at rates of up to 60 ppm.

“This carton-erector increases our efficiency and output by approximately 85 per cent, and it has a total of an eight-month ROI (return on investment),” comments Allen, adding that OPI spends anywhere between US\$500,000 and US\$1 million on equipment upgrades and replacements in a typical year.

For her part, Mancini says she is delighted that Capmatic has been able to benefit from OPI’s proactive approach to capital improvement.

“The machines used to sort, fill, close and label packages must be as versatile as the packages themselves are varied, and our designers understand that today’s packaging requirements hold the seed for tomorrow’s need,” she states.

“OPI is a good customer for Capmatic. Its success in business translates directly to increases in production and more demand for robust, versatile task-dedicated machinery,” Mancini sums up.

“We know that customers like OPI appreciate this, and that they will return to us for more machines as their enterprise expands.” □

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