



The DATA CAPTURE Report

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Special SCAN: The DATA CAPTURE Report Reprint

Dynic USA President Talks TTR

As always, the thermal transfer ribbon (TTR) industry faces constant challenges. But, our research shows that TTR vendors are experiencing good growth, nevertheless. Recently, we reached out to Shigeru Tamura, president, **Dynic USA**. Tamura shared his knowledge with us in the following Q&A interview:

SCAN/DCR: Some have expressed concerns over an uncertainty in the market. Would you care to define what uncertainties you see and comment on how to work around them?

Tamura: There has been a lot of uncertainty in both the prices and the supply of the raw materials (PET film and solvents) used in making thermal transfer ribbons this year. It's been challenging for all of us. We've seen a slight improvement in supply recently, but we believe the uncertainties will remain throughout the next year.

However, demand for thermal transfer ribbons remains strong. And Dynic's commitment to thermal transfer remains strong, regardless of the challenges.

SCAN/DCR: Are there any vertical markets that are providing new business opps for TTR/bar code

printer vendors? Healthcare? Consumer scanning? Food traceability?

Tamura: Flexible packaging has been the growing market for thermal transfer ribbons for a while now. And even though the U.S. flexible packaging market may not be growing at historic rates any longer, Asia and Latin America are. Dynic USA is continuing to develop new products that can be used in healthcare, food trace-ability, and other flexible packaging markets.



Shigeru Tamura, president, Dynic USA.

Brand authentication ribbons are also an area that is a growth market. Covert and forensic thermal transfer ribbon security solutions can print 2D bar codes. Smartphones can be used to scan the 2D symbols, and when coupled with track-and-trace systems, can provide the brand owners, manufacturers, government, and consumers with powerful information, allowing a product to be traced from cradle to grave, and prove product authenticity. It's a great solution for everyone and something we've spent years developing.

We've also recently launched a new DuraFlex

DF322 ribbon that provides high durability and flexibility in label substrates it can be used on, at a competitive price.

And, we're continuing to invest in developing new ribbons because we believe thermal transfer is a strong market.

SCAN/DCR: There is a lot of talk about the many emerging applications for RFID. That said, we view this as an opportunity for bar code printer/TTR vendors as well. The tags are most certainly going to be embedded in labels with human readable information and probably bar codes too. What is your view?

Tamura: We continue to see RFID and thermal transfer printing as complementary to each other. RFID tags are usually embedded in printed labels. Thermal transfer is usually the technology used to print those labels with a bar code and other human-readable info.

Dynic products play very well in this space. The largest market for RFID has been in apparel tagging. Dynic is the only TTR manufacturer that also makes the coated care label material and the ribbons that were specifically designed to print on the care labels and withstand washing and dry cleaning. We cover the whole gamut, so you could have Dynic products as the care labels, the ribbons for printing the care labels, and the ribbons for printing the RFID labels.

SCAN/DCR: Have petroleum prices settled at all, and how are prices affecting TTR prices?

Tamura: The issues facing the TTR market have not been so much petroleum-based. It's been more an issue of supply and demand. Demand for PET film exploded and capacity shrank. The same thing happened with some of the solvents used in TTR.

SCAN/DCR: What are your resellers telling you about the market?

Tamura: Resellers are telling us that they have more demand for thermal transfer ribbons than they can fill. Applications where only thermal transfer ribbons will work are thriving. But, the issues that have plagued the industry this year have them concerned, and pricing is an issue for everyone.

Chinese-made thermal transfer ribbons are trying to step into that pricing gap. However, the quality on these products just isn't there yet. Consistent product quality is an issue. Where price is the only determining factor, these products may be "good enough." In those types of applications, there are also other technologies they could use rather than thermal transfer. Where thermal transfer really excels is in the higher-end applications, where the ability to withstand temperature extremes, chemicals and solvents, abrasion, and print on more durable substrates and flexible packaging films are requirements. That's where

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thermal transfer has a real competitive advantage over other print technologies.

SCAN/DCR: What does the near- and long-term future look like for TTR vendors?

Tamura: The near-term remains uncertain. That said, we see TTR with a long future ahead of it. Thermal transfer is a great technology. The

breadth of the applications where thermal transfer can be used is amazing. And we continue to see new applications, and ribbon solutions, whether Dynic's or our competitors, occurring all the time.

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