

# Creating colour – Q&A with IMEX

**Marcos Valdezate, Vice President of IMEX EU Trading, shared his thoughts on investing into colour, and how it pays off.**

Founded in Japan more than 25 years ago, today IMEX is a huge global operation. IMEX EU Trading began operations in 2004, to better serve the EMEA region. The company invests heavily in research and development, working towards more advanced solutions and even higher quality.

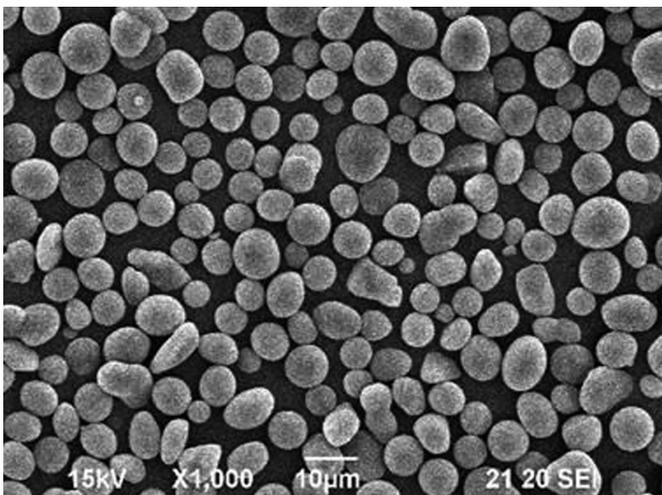
**What can the aftermarket do to seize the opportunity in colour?**

“Probably the obvious answer to this question would be to improve the quality standard of remanufactured cartridges in such a way that customer recognition could be achieved.

“Often, the concept of ‘quality’ can be vague, and to some extent unclear. For the purpose of answering this question, we as an industry should define quality as a means to achieve customer recognition - in other words, what it is that the customer values about aftermarket colour cartridges - and deliver it continuously!

“The fact that the share of the aftermarket is still five to seven percent, according to the various research companies, means that there is still a long way for the aftermarket industry to go.

“In the case of aftermarket monochrome toner cartridges, certain customer recognition was achieved, and it is believed that already a 30 percent share



Toner particle analysis at IMEX

belongs to the aftermarket. To some extent, that is recognition.

“Probably for the readers of The Recycler magazine and other industry insiders, an aftermarket colour cartridge is something very special, and even somewhat emotional, as besides a bunch of components and some fresh toner, a ‘genuine aftermarket cartridge’ has also got quite some hope for the future built into it.

“Regardless of what it means for the aftermarket industry, probably at the end-user level it is simply a means to an end. The end-user regards a cartridge as a writing instrument, and when it works, it’s great news for them, and for the industry. However, when it doesn’t, it hurts future income for the industry, and reassures the OEM.

“The beauty of the consumables business is that it hopefully is a repeatable experience, in the form of repeated orders over a period of time. If the customer perceives certain value in what he gets, he probably would not look somewhere else, and if the aftermarket was his choice, then we should be proud.

“Helping to reduce carbon footprints, reducing printing costs and delivering quality are amongst some of the more general sales arguments that we as an

industry often have. However, believing in what we do helps us in delivering a stronger message.”

**How do you see the colour market over the next few years?**

“If the aftermarket plays its cards right, we should expect additional customer recognition and bigger market share. We have worked hard for this business, but the race is not over just yet; it takes time to convince users to try, and even more to change the end-user’s mindset. IMEX is a great believer in the future of colour, and continues to seek expansion in this area.”

**IMEX has also focused a lot on its thermal fusing technology. How important is this for the future?**

“Such production technology was and still is a cornerstone in IMEX’s strategy; a lot of effort was put in to take this project from a white board to a mass production scale, and a full-capacity and operational toner plant.

“This technology involves shaping toner particles by a means of thermal treatment. What in essence sounds obvious takes a lot of ‘know-how’ and fundamental research to master.

“The effort paid off, and today it’s probably one of the most successful toner production technologies applied in the aftermarket. Everything started from basic research of fundamental technologies, and our engineers were successful in delivering practical solutions to real problems by thinking outside the box. Over the years, our research and development staff stretched the boundaries of this production technology to obtain and shape toner particles in the desired way.

“There have been a lot of discussions about chemical toner versus conventional toners and other alternative production technologies. Probably, there is no right or wrong, but just different interpretations, and this was just a successful example of IMEX’s interpretation.”



IMEX’s Japanese headquarters