



Area firm helps hotels certify rooms are clean



JON CHAVEZ
The Blade
jchavez@theblade.com

SEP 26, 2020 8:48 AM

BOWLING GREEN — If you’ve stayed in a hotel room anytime in the last seven months there’s a chance you may have noticed something different when you reached the door — a sticker sealing the door that indicates the room has been sanitized for the coronavirus.

Demand for such stickers this year has boosted the fortunes of a small Bowling Green company that makes holographic stickers, tamper-evident stickers, security tape and seals, and other products that authenticate items and foil counterfeiters.

“It’s popular now with hotel chains. I’m not sure how many we’re selling to but they’re using our labels that don’t leave a residue. When you open the label, it will say open or void but there’s no residue on the surface,” said Mike Messmer, president of NovaVision Inc.

NovaVision, which was founded in 1994 and used one printing press owned by another company, now operates from a 41,000 square foot factory, has 64 employees, and plans to add 12,000 square feet next year.

Until last March, the company’s products could be found on gasoline pumps, ski lift tickets, pharmaceutical/drug packaging, security badges, hospital items, currency, and dozens of other items needing security.

But the hospitality industry wasn’t much of a user, Mr. Messmer said.

Then the coronavirus struck and hotel rooms went empty as customers worried about cleanliness.

Then, in March and April, the phones at NovaVision began ringing with hotel operators wondering if the Wood County company could apply to doors indicating a room had not been entered after it was cleaned.

I don't know how many we got, but I know that we did get them because I talked to our sales team about it. There were no big chains, just smaller groups and individual hotels," Mr. Messmer said.

But what started with the smaller chains appears to be catching on with the larger chains.

According to a spokesman for the American Hotel & Lodging Association, the Hilton Hotel chain has begun attaching blue stickers on its hotel room doors as part of its "CleanStay" antiviral program.

Mr. Messmer said proprietary agreements prevent him from disclosing who his clients are, but the market for clean-room stickers could be strong for another two years at least.

"They used to put a paper band around the toilet to give your reassurance that was clean," Mr. Messmer said. "It's the same thing with our labels. You're trying to create trust with the consumers and trust in what the hotel operator is doing."

The market for sanitized security might be growing.

Bill Schoenherr, NovaVision's general manager, said the company has received inquiries about producing tamper-evident security stickers for college dormitory rooms.

"We haven't sold them for dorm rooms yet, but I know there's been discussion. We have sold them to a number of different clients for hotel room sanitizing, bathroom sanitizing, and minifridge sanitizing," Mr. Schoenherr said.

Mr. Messmer said rental car companies also are talking about using stickers to indicate that their vehicles have been sanitized and stayed closed until their customers open them.

"Once I heard that the hotels were doing it, it made sense that the rental car companies were looking at doing it," he said. "I think it's sticker on the door."

NovaVision has multiple competitors nationally, but it holds multiple patents and reinvests in its machinery and processes to help stay ahead of its rivals. In 2016 it

was named one of the Top 100 small businesses nationwide by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

Its holograms are printed on shiny aluminum film with a thin coating. The film acts as a prism, with a spectrum of colors reflecting off the image that can be incredibly complex and hard to duplicate.

Because of the products' importance to customers looking to secure their items, NovaVision's business has remained stable in 2020 even with the pandemic.

"I don't think we'll see major growth this year but we don't expect any decrease this year. It will be about the same as last year," Mr. Messmer said.

And 2019 and 2018 were both successful years for NovaVision thanks to the growth of the cannabis industry.

Retailers and suppliers both sought ways to secure that their cannabis products were both genuine and untampered, and NovaVision's products offered solutions to both issues.

"That market is just unbelievable. There's a tamper-evident label demand to help with branding," Mr. Messmer said. "Branding is created to have a certain quality image in that industry and to avoid counterfeiting by black market growers."