



NEWS RELEASE

RRD Report: Smart Packaging Implementation Lags While Sustainability Remains a Top Business Priority

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- Smart packaging remains a future goal: Eighty-four percent of respondents plan to move to smart packaging, but only 1% have already made the shift.
- Sustainability endures: Seventy-four percent of packaging respondents ranked sustainability as the top major motivating factor for packaging changes.
- E-commerce drives advancement: Nearly all organizations (96%) now operate an e-commerce channel, making it a standard component of modern business.

CHICAGO--(BUSINESS WIRE)-- A recent survey of 400 packaging, labels and supply chain leaders conducted by RRD revealed a wide gap between intent and full-scale adoption of connected packaging. While awareness is high, most industry leaders have not implemented smart packaging components and data-driven logistics. Sustainability also remains a top business priority, despite economic headwinds and shifting external global narratives.

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The Smart Packaging Implementation Gap

RRD's 2026 Integrated Packaging Report points to a future where

packaging is a data touchpoint, yet implementation across functions is slow.

- The starting line for smart packaging: Over the next one to three years, most respondents plan to definitely or probably transition to smart packaging, which involves integrating a wide range of technologies such as RFID labels, QR codes and other IoT-enabled tools. However, only a narrow segment has begun implementation. Of the few who don't plan to make the move during that period, half cited concerns that it would be too complex

for their IT and/or other infrastructure.

- Investments in AI and other data-centric tools: Investments in AI within packaging, labels and logistics operations are rapidly maturing, with respondents committing investments in Internet of Things (IoT) (87%), predictive analytics (85%) and real-time visibility (84%), illustrating heightened focus on operational and data-centric tools.
- E-commerce growth requires optimization: Nearly all respondents reported that their organization has an e-commerce operation and 80% expect their e-commerce business to grow within the next one to three years. That growth increases the pressure to develop packaging optimized for direct-to-consumer fulfillment that requires robust tracking and smart labeling.

Sustainability as a Core Design Requirement

While technological integration is a competitive differentiator, RRD's 2026 Integrated Packaging Report confirms that environmental consciousness is an inherent part of design and sourcing strategies:

- Sustainability drives strategy: Internal sustainability goals were ranked as the top major motivating factor for packaging changes by 74% of packaging respondents, while nearly half (49%) of overall respondents indicate sustainability and environmental regulations will impact their organization's operations in the next one to three years.
- AI meets sustainability: When asked how AI is or will be used in operations over the next one to three years, sustainability optimization ranked as the highest priority (62%).
- Commitment to goals: A net 77% of respondents in a packaging role expect their operations to move their company closer to its sustainability goals in the next one to three years, solidifying sustainability as an enduring operational priority. This follows a continuing trend. In RRD's **2024 Packaging & Labels Insight Report**, 83% of packaging respondents said their organization has moved toward its sustainability goals and 81% said their packaging operations played a role in that progress.

"Digital transformation is no longer a question of if, but when," said Lisa Pruett, President, Integrated Packaging, Labels and Supply Chain at RRD. "In the race to smart packaging, preparedness is the key to success, not merely speed. For most brands, that means implementing connected packaging solutions that merge goals for supply chain transparency, operational efficiency and sustainability."

To learn more about RRD's 2026 Integrated Packaging Report, visit: <https://go.rrd.com/integrated-packaging>.

About RRD

RRD provides a complete portfolio of marketing, packaging, print and business services to the world's most respected brands, including 91% of the Fortune 100. The company's proprietary technology, advanced data

analytics and established expertise fuel organizational decision-making, from strategy through execution. With operations in 30 countries, global organizations and regulated industries trust RRD to reduce complexity and drive audience connections across the entire customer journey.

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Source: RRD