Criminisi Ice Cream Ltd Case study

Criminisi Ice Cream Ltd streamlines gelato production with a bespoke NEXUS 20 tub print and apply system

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Criminisi Ice Cream Ltd is a long-established, family-run ice cream producer and wholesaler based in Coventry, supplying parlours, restaurants and foodservice operators across the UK. Founded over 60 years ago by Pina and Joe Criminisi after relocating from Sicily, the business is now run by their sons, Lillo and Pietro, and continues to build on its heritage of quality and craftsmanship.

As demand for premium desserts has increased, Criminisi has experienced significant growth, particularly within its gelato range. Over the past two years alone, gelato production has grown by around 60%, placing increasing pressure on manual processes within the production environment.

> **"We're still very much a family business, but we're growing. As the gelato side got bigger, we needed to look at automating parts of the process if we were going to keep up."**
>
> Lewis Whitby, Assistant Manager

Prior to automation, labelling was a time consuming, manual task. Labels were applied to tubs and boxes in advance of production, often requiring three to five members of staff to spend several hours preparing packaging the day before manufacturing.

> **"Whenever we were producing, we had to assign staff the day before just to label trays and boxes. It was happening two or three times a week, and it started to become a real bottleneck."**
>
> Lewis Whitby, Assistant Manager

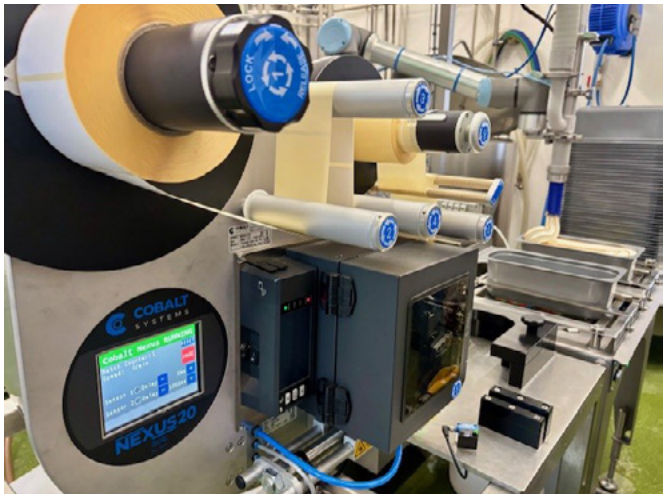
Not only was this labour-intensive, but it also diverted skilled staff away from their core roles. Criminisi needed a solution that would integrate into a compact production area, operate reliably in a cold environment, and label both gelato tubs and outer boxes consistently and accurately, all while supporting future growth.

After evaluating several suppliers, including visits to the PPMA Show, Criminisi chose to partner with Cobalt Systems based on previous experience, system reliability, and the professionalism of the team.

> **“I’d worked with Cobalt systems in a previous role, so I knew how reliable they were. We shopped around, but when we spoke to Cobalt at PPMA, it just made sense.”**
>
> Lewis Whitby, Assistant Manager

Cobalt supplied a bespoke tub NEXUS20 print and apply solution, designed specifically for Criminisi’s gelato production line. The system applies labels directly to the gelato tubs as well as to the outer boxes, complementing existing workflow rather than as a separate, manual process.

The system uses specialist labels supplied by Cobalt, designed to perform reliably in Criminisi’s –25°C freezer environment, ensuring labels remain secure throughout freezing, storage and distribution.



Despite space constraints, the system was engineered to fit neatly into the existing layout. “We were conscious of the space available,” says Lewis. “But the design team at Cobalt were really helpful. They came on site, surveyed the area, and made it work. The footprint is very compact and exactly what we needed.”

The solution was also designed with flexibility in mind. Interchangeable components allow the system to handle different box sizes and product formats, giving Criminisi the option to adapt as their product range evolves.

Since installation in early 2025, the bespoke NEXUS 20 system has fundamentally changed the way Criminisi manages gelato production. “This new labeller has completely changed the way we run that side of the business,” Lewis says. “We don’t have to worry about preparation the day before anymore as it all happens during manufacturing.”

By automating the labelling process, Criminisi has been able to redeploy staff into more value-adding roles across the business. “We can use people where their expertise is actually needed now,” Lewis explains. “Some were delivery drivers, some were office staff. It’s freed everyone up.”

Consistency and reliability have also improved. Automated application removes the risk of human error and ensures uniform label placement across every product.

> **“The Cobalt labeller has enabled us to make the case labelling operation more efficient, increase product traceability and give our products a more professional presentation.”**

Overall, the impact has been both operational and cultural.

> **“It’s reduced stress levels. Managing production is much easier now, and it’s actually allowed us to grow because we’re not restricted by time anymore.”**
>
> Lewis Whitby, Assistant Manager

With dispensing and labelling now automated, Criminisi sees further opportunities to enhance efficiency in the future, potentially exploring automation in tray handling and packing as volumes continue to rise. “We’re really happy with everything,” says Lewis. “As we grow, more automation will naturally follow.”

By partnering with Cobalt Systems and implementing a bespoke NEXUS 20 tub print and apply solution, Criminisi Ice Cream has future-proofed its gelato production, maintaining its traditional quality while embracing modern, scalable automation.