# Stars on the red carpet: Covectra debuts StellaGuard at Interphex

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In 2011, serialization specialist Covectra took on the task of coming up with a brand new security label to help fight counterfeiting of a brand owner's product in Asia. Now, more than five years on, the technology is ready to make an entrance at the Interphex exhibition next week.

Dubbed StellaGuard, the new security label has been designed from the ground up to tackle the three key features of an effective counterfeit deterrent – a unique, serialized code to allow for tracking through the supply chain, tamper evidence and an authentication feature that, according to Covectra's president and CEO Steve Wood, is practically impossible to replicate.

When the customer asked Covectra to find a secure label, Covectra was still firmly focused on its serialization expertise, centred around the company's AuthentiTrack platform for provisioning and management of serial numbers in its cloud-based, GS1-certified EPCIS database.

"We did not believe that 2D barcodes were secure enough because they could be replicated on a label

thousands of times by a counterfeiter, and not get detected by a security inspector or consumer until it was too late," Wood told *SecuringIndustry.com*.

"In our opinion most holograms were not secure enough, so we set out to develop a label that was copy-proof and could be used for reliable authentication and true track & trace, as well as serialization," he added. "Most importantly, the label had to be authenticated by anyone with a smart phone rather than a proprietary reader."

The resulting StellaGuard label takes the form of a unique film incorporating holographic "stars," which are distributed at varying depths and positions within the substrate. The pattern is unique from label to label, and is almost impossible to replicate because of the way the film is manufactured.



The labels can be applied to virtually any package and material at full production speeds (up to 800 pieces per minute). Using a smart phone app - currently available for iPhone and with an Android version due later this year - a user can scan the label to identify and validate the barcode and star pattern within a few seconds. Upon authentication, product information and customisable messages can be displayed on the smartphone screen.

"Our goal was to develop something that is the convergence of serialization using a GS1 standard barcode and smart phone technology to provide a label that allows both rapid authentication and trace-and-trace," said Wood, who noted that label was pretty much ready three years ago but Covectra had to wait for the optical capabilities of smartphones to catch up.

Adherence to the GS1 worldwide standard was "critical for maximum application to many industries and global markets," he added. Covectra can also interface the StellaGuard authentication system with a customer's existing GS1-compliant 2D barcode system if required, further extending the technology's reach.

The looming 2019 deadline in Europe for implementing security features on medicine packs was a huge driver to get the new technology ready for launch this year. "This label is not only tamper evident, but can meet the serialization requirements, and is, we believe, unmatched as an authentication and diversion detection tool," said Wood.

Covectra is well on the way to building on its serialization heritage in pharmaceuticals, infant formula and personal care with this added security layer.

The company is already preparing StellaGuard pilots with partners in four industrial sectors – pharmaceuticals, natural health and wellness, food/beverage and tobacco - which are scheduled to get underway within the next 12 months.

Visitors to Interphex can get a hands-on demonstration of StellaGuard by visiting the Covectra booth (No. 1728).