

The Tape College bridges knowledge gaps across the tape value chain

Adhesive tape performance depends on a chain of interlocking decisions. At ETW 2026, Afera's 12th Tape College shows how those decisions connect across materials, production, converting, testing and use.



Adhesive tape is simple to apply but complex to engineer. Behind every finished product sits a connected system of polymer chemistry, adhesive formulation, backing selection, release technology, coating, drying, converting, surface preparation, testing and regulatory requirements. A weakness at one stage can affect performance further down the line. This is the gap the [Afera Tape College](#) is designed to close. Returning for its 12th edition

during [European Tape Week 2026](#), from 21–23 September at the Pestana Douro Riverside in Porto, it provides a concentrated technical overview of how adhesive tapes are designed, produced, converted and used.

More than an introduction to tape

The Tape College is particularly valuable for people who are relatively new to the industry, but its role extends beyond onboarding. Employees often develop deep knowledge of the part of the value chain closest to their own role while having limited exposure to the steps before or after it. A formulation specialist may know little about converting, while a salesperson may understand applications without seeing how coating conditions constrain product design. Marketing, purchasing, quality, regulatory and management teams face the same issue from different directions: They need enough technical understanding to ask the right questions and recognise the consequences of decisions made elsewhere.

The College provides this wider frame. It is relevant to R&D, technical service, engineering, production, quality assurance, sales, marketing and management, as well as to manufacturers, suppliers, converters, distributors, end users and research organisations. It also gives experienced professionals a structured way to refresh their knowledge and look beyond their own specialism, creating a shared technical language across disciplines and across the value chain.

A tape system taken apart — then put back together

The [2026 programme](#) follows four clusters: *Why tapes?*, *Tapes deconstructed*, *Tape production* and *Tape use & testing*. Across three days, more than 20 presentations, discussions and technical exchanges move from first principles to production and application. Afera President Evert Smit opens with how and why tapes work, followed by Caroline Sperling of tesa with an introduction to pressure-sensitive adhesive (PSA) technology.

The programme then breaks the tape down into its main technical elements. Philipp Ernst of Henkel will compare solvent-based and UV-hotmelt acrylic PSAs, while Dr. Christoph Scholten of Synthomer will trace the route from emulsion polymer to finished tape. Further presentations cover SIS block copolymers, hotmelt PSA formulation, silicones, viscoelastic behaviour, polymeric foams and release systems. Together, they show that performance depends on the interaction between adhesive, backing, liner, substrate, production process and application conditions.

Where current industry pressures enter the programme

Several sessions connect established technical principles with current pressure points in the European adhesive tape value chain. Lukas Berger of Sekisui Alveo will examine polymeric foams as backing materials for technical tapes, while Mikko Rissanen of UPM Specialty Papers will address value-chain co-operation in designing for recycling. Jürgen Pomorin of Evonik will cover release-coating chemistry, followed by Michael Ortner of Mondi on how release coatings are applied in practice.

These subjects sit directly within current discussions on circularity, material efficiency and product redesign. Changes to a backing, coating, adhesive or liner can affect converting behaviour, release force, ageing, application performance and production efficiency. Sustainability decisions therefore need to be evaluated across the full construction rather than one component at a time. The programme also links these technical choices with Afera's broader work through the [Afera Flagship Sustainability Project](#) and our [regulatory affairs activities](#).

From formulation to the factory floor

The production session moves from materials into industrial execution. Sven Schuhardt of INDAG Maschinenbau will address dynamic inline mixers, Konstantin Martynov of KROENERT will cover coating and drying in roll-to-roll production, including UV crosslinking, and new-entry Peter Harendt of Lohmann will examine tape conversion technology.

A promising formulation still has to coat consistently, dry or cure within an efficient process window, tolerate handling and conversion and reach the customer in the required form. This part of the programme shows how laboratory decisions meet machinery, throughput, energy use, web handling and converting requirements.

The thumb test is not enough

The final session brings the system into use. Dr. Andreas Groß of Fraunhofer IFAM will examine modern surface-treatment methods, while Afera Standardisation consultant Karsten Seitz will address reliable tape testing, an area in which Afera works to improve reproducibility and comparability through its [test methods and standardisation activities](#).

Informal evaluations can be misleading. Finger tack is not a substitute for a defined test method, and laboratory results are only useful when they relate to the intended application. Temperature, humidity, surface energy, roughness, contamination, dwell time and loading conditions can all affect performance. The closing sessions add Afera's latest regulatory and sustainability work and Michel Sabo of Nitto's overview of the PSA world, completing the route from material selection to application.

Knowledge that does not sit neatly in a slide deck

The programme includes panel discussions, audience questions, lunches, coffee breaks and the Tape College opening dinner. These exchanges matter because much of the most useful technical knowledge is based on experience: which variable to question, where a compromise will appear later in production or why a construction that looks convincing on paper may behave differently on a coating line or customer substrate.

By bringing material scientists, tape manufacturers, equipment specialists, converters, application experts and newer professionals into the same conversation, the College provides a form of knowledge transfer that is difficult to reproduce through internal onboarding, supplier presentations or isolated online training.

What companies miss by staying away

A company can access technical data without attending the Tape College, but isolated information does not show how decisions interact across formulation, production, converting and use. For newcomers, the programme compresses months of fragmented learning into three structured days. Specialists gain exposure to constraints and developments beyond their own fields, while commercial and management teams build the technical grounding needed for more credible discussions with customers, suppliers and colleagues.

By connecting expertise across the full tape system, the College helps participants identify problems earlier, make better-informed decisions and work more effectively across the value chain.

Further information

- [Afera European Tape Week 2026](#)
- [Full ETW 2026 programme](#)
- [Registration and participation details](#)
- [About the Afera Tape College](#)
- [Afera test methods](#).
