



The European Adhesive Tape Association

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## Afera hits 5,000 Twitter followers, expands adhesive tape market through product designers and mechanical engineers

**The Hague, The Netherlands, 14 November 2018**

[Afera, the European Adhesive Tape Association](#), announced today that its *Design that sticks: scanning the web for next product design* Twitter account [@ ProductDesign](#) has drawn an audience of more than 5,000 multi-industry design and process engineers who are only just learning about the use of tape as a multifaceted bonding solution. Created in July 2014, the *Design that sticks* social media platform is 1 of 2 Twitter accounts, and a LinkedIn account, hosted by Afera, with the overarching purpose of connecting European adhesive tape businesses with potential customers. This social media milestone comes on the heels of Afera's announcement of its new future-proof strategy for 2018-2025 at its successful 61<sup>st</sup> Annual Conference held in Athens this past October.



### Adding tape to the design process



“Product design and mechanical engineering end-users are increasingly spending their creative journeys online,” commented Jacques Geijsen, Afera Marketing Committee Chairman and Managing Director of American Biltrite, Inc. Belgium. “Afera’s *Design that sticks* Twitter account was set up as part of our content marketing strategy to reach out to those who may not realise that tape could be the integral element that optimises the design and production of their product.”

[Afera's past market research](#), as well as the results of a recent study carried out by the [Pressure Sensitive Tape Council \(PSTC\)](#), Europe's counterpart organisation in North America, confirm what tape industry blue ocean strategists love to hear: General awareness of adhesive tapes as a fixing and



joining method in products and processes is relatively low at about 60-70%. Furthermore, 20-30% of competing bonding solutions identified in the aerospace, marine, railway, automotive, white goods, building and construction,

electronics, medical and other manufacturing, fabrication or component assembly industries could be converted to tapes.

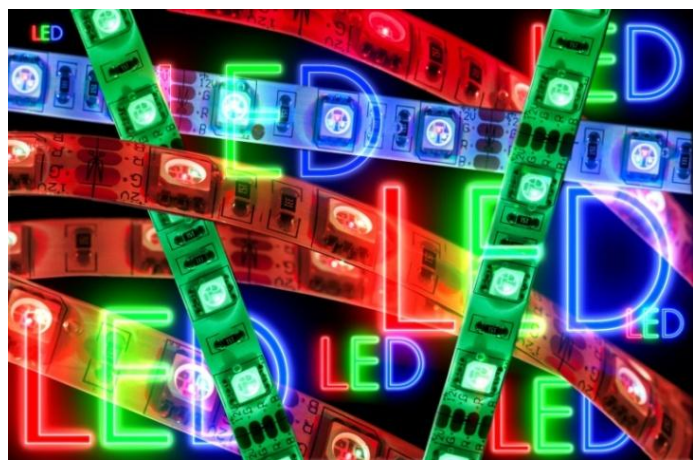
## Tape is a functional sheet

What product design, process and architectural engineers are discovering through Afera's targeted social media awareness initiatives is that tapes provide functionalities beyond classic fastening methods and the traditional capabilities of simply bonding, masking, packaging, mounting, bundling, repairing and splicing. Adhesive tapes can be virtually weightless and invisible, don't weaken or fail and don't stain or corrode even in extreme conditions. They can also provide functionalities such as sealing, insulating, shielding, conducting electricity, controlling light and communicating critical information.

With tape, products like electronic devices, flat screens, cars, white goods, windows and architectural panels, biomedical electrodes and I.V. dressings, to name a few, can be made thinner, lighter and using fewer and less expensive materials. "For example, if you look at your smartphone, without double-sided adhesive tapes and optically clear films, you wouldn't be able to design a device so small, lightweight and with such sharp visibility," 3M EMEA Area Division Manager for Industrial Adhesives & Tapes Lori Cherry explained in [a lecture on her company's innovation programme](#) at Afera's Athens Conference last month.

## Growing the tape market online

The European tape industry's goal is to convert interest in the Twitter page *Design that sticks* to [Why tape?](#), a section of [afera.com](#) launched in March 2017 and dedicated to inspiring design and process engineers with the broad functionality and range of advantages of adhesive tape. Ultimately, inspiration and insight lead to enquiries, which can be made via [Afera's member directory](#), the page receiving the most hits of any on Afera's website.



Generating social traffic and conversion is part of Afera's forward-looking integrated communications strategy, which the Association has been developing, rolling out and improving upon over the last 5



years. Its primary goals comprise growing the market for tapes, improving Afera member businesses and embracing the range of interests of the entire tape value chain, which includes tape manufacturers, OEMs, suppliers (raw materials, machine and packaging), converters, distributors, research institutions, universities and national tape organisations.

A ground-breaking website and social media working

group was set up in order to pool knowledge, expertise and other member company resources in which to explore, develop and optimise content marketing in the European adhesive tape industry. The group's focus is content creation, website best practice and social media activity triggering new interest in utilising tapes that can be connected back to Afera members.

"Afera's content marketing initiative has always been ahead of the curve in our relatively conservative business market," said Evert Smit, Afera President and head of R&D at Lohmann GmbH & Co. KG. "What makes the working group especially rich is that it is made up of marketing experts from both multinational and SME member companies, so everyone learns from each other's different experiences."

"Very often what the group engages in is ahead of what any of the individual member companies is doing, so everyone benefits from working with Afera at the helm," Mr. Smit added. The working group includes Tom Garcia (global marketing manager, industrial, at Scapa Group plc), Alicia Tissot (senior marketing communications executive at Advance Tapes International, Ltd.), Thorsten Petersson (global digital change consultant at tesa SE), Bert van Loon (independent strategist for Afera) and Bathsheba Fulton (independent communications specialist for Afera) and is headed by Elke Verbaarschot (Marketing Manager for Afera).

One of Afera's marketing communications goals is to build a broader base of media outlets and voices, including old and new media platforms, mechanical and electronics engineering bloggers, architects, design experts and other process engineering and manufacturing contacts. This list is also under development for the purpose of being shared with all Afera members for use in their individual businesses.





## Making the European tape business future-proof

Hitting 5,000 Twitter followers comes just following Afera's announcement of its [new strategy for 2018-2025](#), which was recently determined during live working sessions with Afera's incoming 7-member Steering Committee and reported by Melanie Lack, business manager of tapes and labels at H.B. Fuller, at the Association's [61<sup>st</sup> Annual Conference in Athens](#).

Our new vision: Afera is widely known and valued as the go-to community of the European tape industry for both industry and non-industry stakeholders. Stakeholders connect within the Afera community to address current and future key topics, which individual stakeholders cannot tackle themselves. The Association's new mission centres on uniting stakeholders along the value chain of the European tape industry, to ensure and increase the relevance of the tape business in the world of tomorrow.

In the 2-tiered strategy-setting process, best- and worst-case scenarios were drawn up and prioritised according to likelihood and severity of impact on the industry. What the SC determined to be most important is focusing on the tape industry's sustainability, i.e. making the tape business future-proof: resilient to the effects of the shocks and stresses of future events and unlikely to become obsolete.

"This is a goal which Afera's social media programme directly supports, but actually on different levels," explained Astrid Lejeune, Afera secretary general. "In order for our member companies to survive and thrive in the industry, they are going to have to work together—become even more transparent—and the dedicated website and social media working group both offers and promotes this."

Other Association goals for the next 5-7 years include growing the market for the tape industry, acting as the voice of the tape industry to end users, policy-makers and educators, enabling member companies to keep one step ahead, initiating member networking opportunities in a neutral environment, putting adhesive tapes technology in the educational curricula of engineers and designers, and educating industry newcomers.

## Afera leaves 61<sup>st</sup> Athens Conference participants with powerful takeaways

Ms. Lack's industry collective strategy presentation was one of a rich working programme focussed on "Innovation and digitisation in adhesive tape technology" and its impact on suppliers, sales channels, product development, converters, supply chains, business models, technology and the application process at [Afera's 61<sup>st</sup> Annual Conference](#) held in Athens last





month. The popular event brought together over 120 professionals from 14 European countries and the U.S., the best and brightest of the European and American tape industries. Afera active member company delegates made up 35% of attendees.

Over 3 days, participants experienced a cutting edge lecture schedule, lively Q&A sessions, an exciting [first edition of Tape Olympics team building](#), and stunning views and tastes of Greece. Mr. Smit noted the most potent statements gleaned from the 3-

day networking and learning event and summed up the main takeaways:

*“How connected you are is how competitive you are.” Afera wants to be that connector.*

*“We cannot assume that tapes will just always be used.” We have no time to sit back and let it happen. We have to participate actively in building our future.*

*“Where there is harmony, there is no innovation.” Afera meetings are a podium for discussion and debate, not just presentations.*

*“The best way to predict the future is to create it.” We always need to be in the driver’s seat, to be on top of trends and developments and to be heard. In doing this, we ensure our continuing relevance.*

According to digital feedback provided by attendees through the free Afera Community app, networking was by far the most valued aspect of the event. The most popular lecture was [“The European economy: continuing expansion or gathering clouds?”](#), delivered by renowned Oxford University economist Andrea Boltho: “I see clouds, but barring a major European crisis, we should have moderate growth in the range of 1.5% to 1.75% in the eurozone, maybe less in the U.K. because of Brexit.” This was followed by EVRYTHNG’s Andy Hobsbawm’s presentation “The internet of things (IoT): how smart products transform brand relationships, business operations and service experiences”. More Annual Conference output is available [here](#).

Afera’s upcoming events include the biannual [Committee Meetings](#) on 4-6 February 2019 at the InterContinental Düsseldorf, Germany, and the [9<sup>th</sup> Tape College](#) on 8-10 April 2019 at the Brussels Marriott Hotel, Belgium.

Click [here](#) to visit *Why tape?*

Click [here](#) to visit Afera’s Twitter page for designers.

Click [here](#) to visit Afera’s Twitter page for members.

Click [here](#) to visit Afera’s LinkedIn page.

Click [here](#) if you have a question.



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Astrid Lejeune  
Afera Secretary-General



Evert Smit  
Afera President

[Afera, the European Adhesive Tape Association](#) unites stakeholders along the value chain of the European tape industry, to ensure and increase the relevance of the tape business in the world of tomorrow. The go-to community of the European tape industry is comprised of over 100 member companies from 20 European countries that include adhesive tape manufacturers, suppliers (raw materials, machine and packaging), converters, national tape organisations, research institutions and universities. With the goal of making the tape industry future-proof, Afera actively studies and involves itself in relevant market, standardisation and regulatory issues, provides platforms and programmes for discussion and learning, and facilitates contact among its members and all other pertinent bodies at national and international levels. Founded in Paris in 1958, Afera has operated with its head office in The Hague, the Netherlands, since 1999 under the management of Lejeune Association Management.



**For more information, please contact:**

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