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Labelexpo



Part 1 of a major review of the premier labels and web converting exhibition Labelexpo Europe 2003

Analysis



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International Publishing Consultant:

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Production Executive:

Dan Taylor

Circulation Manager:

Michael Hatton

Publishers:

**Tarsus Publishing Ltd,
Commonwealth House, 2 Chalk Hill Rd,
Hammersmith, London, W6 8DW, UK**

Tel: +44 (0)20 8846 2700

Fax: +44 (0)20 8846 2801

E-mail: athomas@labelsandlabeling.com

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USA Office:

**Tarsus Publishing Inc,
16985 West Bluemound Road, Suite
210, Brookfield, WI 53005, USA**

Tel: +1 (262) 782-1900

Fax: +1 (262) 782-8474

E-mail: publications@tarsus-inc.com

USA Mailing:

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Leader



Labelexpo Europe 2003 was a huge success, attracting a record 20,000 visitors. 25 per cent of visitors came from outside the European Union. The good news is that printers are investing in state of the art equipment in anticipation of future growth in the dynamic economic regions of Eastern Europe, Asia-Pacific and Latin America. At the same time label converters in the more developed countries are investing in equipment which will allow them to target higher growth, value added sectors in mature markets where end users are cutting costs and consolidating brand ranges.

This analysis is supported by the press systems on show. We saw a big emphasis on consolidating established technologies, showing narrow web converters how they can target new markets by achieving complex decoration effects, in-line with minimal changeover times. Particularly notable were UV Screen and hot foil fully integrated into print units at any point in the press, better cold foiling techniques, registered hologram on-serting and multi-web laminating/coating/printing systems. Servo drives are now appearing as a mature technology and – in the right application – can be a powerful aid to reducing set-up times, allowing infinitely variable print repeats and managing web tension during radical substrate changes.

“We saw a big emphasis on consolidating established technologies, showing narrow web converters how they can target new markets”

Narrow web converters are having to get to grips with a whole new range of labeling materials such as shrinkwraps, in-line IML, stretch wraps and wraparound - all of which require new converting techniques including heat management and post-print systems for finishing sleeves. We also saw the introduction of pilot UV gravure units, a technology which will open up new possibilities for in-line coating and metallic effects on these substrates.

Digital printing is an increasingly robust technology. HP Indigo demonstrated the industrial-strength ws4000 with powerful on- and off-line finishing solutions, Xeikon are back on form and Mark Andy gave European converters the chance to assess the state-of-the-art in multi-colour UV inkjet and laser die-cutting.

Another pointer to the digital future was on the Creo stand, where in a live link-up over the internet a repro house at a remote site was sharing a high res file, in real time, with an operator on the Creo stand, making and confirming complex amendments. Exciting times indeed.

Andy Thomas
Group Managing Editor



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Kocher+Beck UK Ltd.

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Tel. +44(0)1530-812400
Fax +44(0)1530-815055
info@kocher-beck.co.uk

Kocher+Beck USA L.P.

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Labelexpo Europe 2003

In the first part of our Labelexpo Europe review, the L&L team reports on the press conferences held at the show. Look out for part two in the next issue of the magazine. Reporters: **Andy Thomas, Barry Hunt, Natalie Martin, Katy Wight**



Labelexpo Europe 2003 welcomed over 20,000 visitors – the highest attendance ever – in what was generally regarded as a highly successful show despite the downturn seen in the German and French economies. One quarter of all visitors were from outside the EU, with well over 10 per cent from Eastern Europe. There was also a well attended conference programme with 540 delegates over three days.

Besides being a showcase for self-adhesive labeling, Labelexpo Europe now embraces all the narrow-web labeling

technologies, including product decoration, shrink sleeves, film wraps and in-mould labels – with reel-fed carton printing also figuring largely. In addition, the show reflected a general move from commodity markets into higher-margin alternatives by established converters. At the same time, growing globalization is opening up markets for printers and converters from Eastern Europe and many parts of Asia. Such trends contributed to a dynamic buzz that kept most of the 400+ exhibitors busy throughout the four-day duration.

Jakob Landberg, sales director, Nilpeter, was unequivocal, he said, 'It was the best show ever. I lost a kilo in weight and our sales bell rang 20 times. We had record sales in value terms, with offset in the shape of the new servo-driven MO-3300 being the highest, followed by the new FA-3300 UV flexo press. The show proved that even in harder times people at the mid-to-top end of the market will still invest in products where innovation gives them an edge.'

Klaus Bachstein, CEO, Gallus Group, stressed the need for press buyers to focus on in-line innovations that reduce production costs while allowing product differentiation. He felt that many more visitors had visited the stand compared with other occasions – 'The response to all our presses has been excellent. We should comfortably meet our targets, so I am happy with the overall result.'

Danny Dams, marketing manager for one of HP Indigo's divisions, said, 'We were very happy with the attendance. In the first two days we generated as many leads as we obtained at the whole show two years ago. Labelexpo Europe also proved that digital colour printing is no longer a niche technology, which allows us to focus more on its business opportunities.'

Press technology 1

Nine years after introducing the MO-3300 offset press, **Nilpeter** launched the second-generation MO-3300, again with a 340-mm wide web and platform design allowing freely interchangeable printing and converting units. The latest version features servo drives and a new control system designed

to make shorter runs more economic. The MO-3300 press on show had six offset units and a UV-flexo varnish unit. Also on display was a prototype UV gravure unit, being developed with Akzo Nobel Inks, for base white or high-gloss coating.

The flexographic variant of the 3300 press series, the FA-3300, was shown with a new cold foil unit and a drop-in rotary screen unit. Servo drives and a new process control unit provide fast set-ups for repeat lengths when printing film, speeding changeovers while minimising waste.

Receiving its European debut, the FBZ-4200 was developed jointly by Nilpeter's R&D teams in Denmark and Cincinnati, Ohio (formerly the RotoPress operation). The 420 mm (16.75 inches) wide packaging press handles substrates ranging from

"The show proved that even in harder times people at the mid-to-top end of the market will still invest in products where innovation gives them an edge"

25 micron film to 400 micron cartonboard. The servo-driven machine can run up to 228m/min (750 feet/minute) and features slide-in rotary screen and hot foil units positioned at any print position. It was shown printing cigarette boxes and self-adhesive labels.

Gallus launched a new press, the EM260/410/510S (servo) series, based around the existing 260/410/510 line and able to exchange a number of converting modules. The 'S' press transport has a servo-driven web transport system for substrate flexibility, while the hybrid printing unit allows printing both flexo and screen from the same unit – and changeover between the two without breaking the web. The print cylinder is servo driven and print units feature front loading of both sleeve-based print cylinders and anilox rollers. The 510 S press at the show was shown converting both PS labels and shrink sleeves. Printing speed is up to 150 metres/minute.

Gallus' servo-driven RCS 330 was shown with interchangeable UV flexo, rotary screen and hot stamping foil units, changing between a 90 micron clear PS label to a 15 micron PVC roll-on-shrink-on label with in-line lamination, including a change of format, inks and two processes – including flying imprinter – in 25 minutes. The hot foil unit was changed without tools and without waiting for cooldown. Gallus was also showing a prototype UV gravure unit for the press.

A new hotfoil unit with electronically heated foil drum was shown for the EM280. Gallus says the unit can run up to three

different foils across the web at the same time. It was running with a flexible magnetic die to reduce preparation costs. Gallus also showed a new multi-purpose converting module for the EM280, which allows cold foiling, laminating and multi-web applications at any position on the press.

On the **Mark Andy** stand, the LP3000 flexo press was shown in Europe for the first time, now with the addition of a rotary screen option developed for the press by Stork. This allows the press to combination print at speeds of 100m/min against a maximum speed of 230m/min (for a more detailed discussion of the LP3000 see L&L 4 2003, p.16).

The screen unit features fully automatic screen tension and



screen positioning, no need for operator adjustments for repeat size changes, a patented compact screen 'ring' suspension and single control for squeegee angle and pressure.

The Mark Andy DT2200 Digital Printing and Converting System was also demonstrated – the hybrid press which integrates a UV-curable inkjet-printing module into a 13" Mark Andy 2200 flexo press frame. Speed of the press line is 25m/min, and as at Labelexpo Chicago, the press incorporated the DT laser die cutting module developed with LasX Industries.

Mark Andy Comco made its long awaited move to servo drives on the ProGlide MSP, adding a servo-driven plate cylinder.

As promised, **GiDue** showed its UniPro 730mm wide packaging press. The press was not running at the show, but L&L will carry a special report on the new press in the next issue. The company also demonstrated the versatility of its servo-driven E-Combat press, switching between applying in-line holograms to a carton and in-line IML production. The carton converting and IML converting stations come on interchangeable, moveable trolleys. New also were hotstamp and screen units delivered to the Combat press on multiple process trolleys.

MPS launched its Effective Flexo press range, an 'entry-level' version of its Effective Printer UV flexo press. It shares many key features with the EP press including 'Crisp Dot' printing and multi-servo drive technology, with the web transported

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independently of the printing/converting process. Each converting function, including printing, die cutting and foil blocking, is driven by its own servo motor. The press is claimed to handle substrates from 25 – 250 micron and can be fitted with Stork RSI Screen units as an option.

Focus Machinery launched a new generation of compact in-line flexographic presses designed to bridge the gap to its larger Webflex range of machines. The modular Proflex 250 is available in 2, 4, 6 or 8 colour configurations. The print modules are supplied with the same quick-change cartridge system as used for the compact Centraflex CI range, whilst retaining the versatility of the larger Webflex press to incorporate Cold Foil systems, Turn-Bar, Delaminating.

Automatic plate throw off and constant turning anilox rolls are standard features, whilst twin nip roll drives ensure register stability is fully optimized. Concentrated impinging air assists drying on the substrate, with excess air exhausted away from the web.

Edale showcased its new shaftless packaging press, the Sigma, demonstrating a UV flexo shrink sleeve application. Heat management of the substrate was handled with a sophisticated water-cooled UV drying system supplied by IST. For a more

detailed description see L&L 4, p.24.

Edale also demonstrated a 4-colour UV flexo Alpha, producing a high quality cosmetic label on self-adhesive PP. The press was running in line with a Matho waste management system which chops and compacts the matrix.

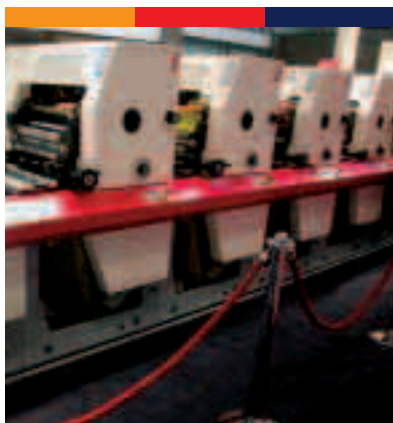
Omet demonstrated its Varyflex direct gearless drive press – one of the first narrow web press series to be built specifically to handle sleeves. Jobs can be changed over in around five minutes on this press, which is designed specifically for unsupported film and carton work (the latter using Xynatech rotary cut/crease system).

More Labelexpo press news page 27



(Top) Focus Machinery

(Top) MPS Effective Flexo press
(Below) Gidue Unipro 730mm press



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American way

North American exhibitors were overjoyed with the number of leads gained at Labelexpo Europe. For some, it was the first time exhibiting, and even for those who weren't, the response far outweighed expectations. **Natalie Martin** and **Katy Wight** report



From left to right:

Jakob Landberg, sales director, Nilpeter; Carsten Weinstein, director sales and marketing, technical films, Klockner Pentaplast; Joseph Caparello, technical sales, Rotoflex; John Price, president, sales and marketing, Karlville; Raul Matos, executive vice president, sales and marketing, Karlville; and Lars Eriksen, president, Nilpeter.

Karlville

Label printers looking to gear up with new equipment to convert shrink sleeves from a label into final product went straight to Karlville. As a first time exhibitor to Labelexpo Europe, Karlville, involved in the 'secondary converting' stages of shrink sleeves, was a storming success.

They teamed up with Nilpeter, Rotoflex and Klockner Pentaplast to demonstrate how to print and convert shrink sleeves.

'We did not hesitate to get involved in the project,' says

Joseph Caparello from Technical Sales (Special Applications) at Rotoflex International, 'because Rotoflex believes that the growing shrink sleeve market will be huge in the near future.'

'Customers that visited our booth saw that the manufacturing of shrink sleeves is a way to increase their product line.'

With converters acknowledging the need to diversify, Caparello is not the only one who thinks that shrink sleeves will be big business.

'Everybody at the show wanted to enter the sleeve business, especially those who up to now have printed pressure sensitive labels,' says Carsten Weinstein, director sales and marketing, technical films, Klockner Pentaplast.

'They came specifically to learn about the process,' he adds. 'We were asked questions about the standard production procedure, the market, grades, applications, technique, machine and ink suppliers.' Other issues raised included controlling the tension when rewinding heat sensitive films and using cool UV.

'We had great success working as a team to achieve a total solution we could offer our customers,' summarized Caparello. Nilpeter sales director Jakob Landberg added: 'The demonstration generated a lot of interest for the product and Nilpeter sold several film presses at the show.'

Karlville proved the secondary converting process was easier than label printers originally thought. 'Printers were surprised to learn they are already 80 per cent there. We are just the final 20 per cent,' says Raul Matos, executive vice president, sales and marketing, Karlville.

'A lot of printers did not understand what it took to get into shrink sleeves – we enlightened many companies.' Karlville admitted that attendees to the show even turned up with live



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projects and challenges, hoping to find a resolution. 'We will now audit those companies to help take them to the next step,' enthuses Matos.

Karlville believes the market will expand through the penetration that label printers have in this market. 'Next year we will have higher speed machines with turret unwinds/rewinds. The direct injecting system has brought attention to the importance of high quality in a seaming process.'

'It's an extreme indication that this market is growing. We were overwhelmed by how many people showed an interest in shrink labels/flexible packaging. It was an amazing feat to co-ordinate it all. We are very excited about new opportunities in the European market. The show was a total success and far exceeded our expectations.'

Propheteer

Duane Polkinghorne, president of Propheteer, couldn't believe that the crowd was such a 'serious' one. 'Money is loosening up, the industry is coming back strong.'

Polkinghorne decided against bringing a press, and only put in a presence at the show to service his existing customers and distributors. He says, 'I met new customers. The comfort level that has been missing in the last three years is back.'

Polkinghorne received enquiries from Indians and South Americans as well as Europeans.

Akzo Nobel Inks

'With a major event like Labelexpo Brussels, you go in with high expectations,' says Niklas Olsson, global brand manager narrow web, Akzo Nobel Inks, 'but I'm glad to state that the 2003 show exceeded our expectations, both in the number of visitors and the level of commitment we got from them.'

As an ink supplier, business success from the show cannot be quantified as easily as a press manufacturer – it's not measured in 'units sold' for example. But with a consistently busy stand, the signs were good.

'Most of our visitors wanted to know what was new. With two major product launches – Flexocure Σ and UvoNova – we had this covered,' says Olsson, 'but the products that we have under development – UV gravure and UV ink jet – also got lots of interest.'

Flexocure Σ is a universal flexo ink for PS labels that adheres to a wide range of substrates and machine and cast coated papers. It can also be used on unsupported films such as those used in in-mould and wrap-around labels.

UvoNova is a universal UV curable letterpress ink that can be used on a variety of substrates such as coated and uncoated papers, PE, PP and similar films, and self-adhesive labelstocks. It can also be used on PVC and BOPP for in-mould applications. UvoNova can also be foil blocked, overprinted by thermal transfer and used in direct thermal applications for self-adhesive, in-mould and wraparound labels.

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Graphic Systems International

'We had always wanted to sell our machines on this continent. Labelexpo Europe was the perfect venue for rolling out our line to the European market,' says Matt McCardell, president of Graphic Systems International, a North American exhibitor.

Not knowing how its fully automated ink dispensing system for the narrow web market was going to be received, McCardell said:

'This is unusual for us. Enough leads were generated to keep us busy for months to come.' With five potential sales coming from Australia alone, plus sales to India, he adds: 'What surprised me most, was the number of qualified buyers we met from other countries, not just Europe.'

Appleton

With 'security' being the buzz word at Labelexpo Europe, it's not surprising that Appleton took over 100 new business leads. Originally serving the carbonless paper market with security products targeting documents and checks, Appleton decided to launch a security label, first shown at Labelexpo Americas 02, and bring its product to Europe. 'Brand owners, especially from the pharmaceutical industry, are turning to label/packaging providers to come up with an integrated security solution,' says Joe Pleshek, brand protection market manager at Appleton. 'Our product is seamless.'

Appleton introduced AssurMark Security Label Substrate to Labelexpo Europe. The label stock combines a highly destructible

face stock with non-reproducible covert security fibers. AssurMark labels cannot be removed without showing visible damage. The security fibers, which are part of the paper itself, simplify authentication because they are invisible under ordinary light but readily visible under ultraviolet (black) light. By combining security fibers with tamper-evident characteristics, brand owners can tell if someone has placed a fake label over the top of an authentic AssurMark label.

Pleshek makes the point that re-marking fraud is a growing problem at all levels of the supply chain: 'Criminals are increasingly replacing product labels with counterfeit or altered copies in schemes to backdate expired product, overstate potency of pharmaceuticals, pass off counterfeit goods, misrepresent product or model designations and inflate pricing.' The paper is already built in with a security feature. He adds: 'Typically you want a layered solution, you have a security platform with which to build on top.'

AssurMark Label Substrate is available only through Appleton-authorized secure label and packaging converters. The product is manufactured and stored in secured facilities in accordance with proper chain of custody procedures. 'You have to know where each and every inch of paper goes. You can't just sell it to everyone. We have to audit and track it,' says Pleshek.

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Show Review

The other product line includes a range of thermal transfer label security papers that include its TechMark taggants and read/write threads, offering the opportunity to authenticate barcodes and print-on-demand security labels.

Sohn Manufacturing

Sohn Manufacturing showcased the model AUTO REG-5, a tabletop laminator and rotary die cutter that works alone or with any roll fed printer. It promises to make print on demand labels more durable. The AUTO REG-5 reregisters to pre-printed labels, laminates and converts the labels in a continuous motion. Registration of the rotary die to the pre-printed material is held in a tight tolerance and has a variable speed drive. Many web widths and speeds are available.

Martin Automatic

Martin automatic unveiled its new spinning turret splicer (STS). It was the first time the design has been shown in Europe and its rotation effect certainly raised eyebrows.

Like the established Martin MBS splicer, the flexible STS design not only reduces the wasted materials and time incurred during the slowing, stopping and starting of manual roll changes, it also takes up half the required space at a much lower price.

'We had quite a few customers who wanted to automate their press and process rewinds,' says vice president of sales David Wright, 'but didn't have the space for a conventional splicer. So we set out to build a compact splicer that would fit in a smaller space.'

The result is the roll indexing design that gave the splicer its name. Its two cantilevered spindles rotate about a vertical axis, enabling the operator to load new rolls and prepare splices from a single aisle position.

In addition to taped butt-to-butt splices, the STS will make taped overlap splices. It can be equipped to make tapeless heatseal overlap splices with no leading or trailing edges. In-register splicing is available for preprinted webs or for splicing between die-cut labels.

Standard STS models are available of web widths to 13 inches (330mm) and roll diameters to 31.5 inches (800mm). Wider web widths coupled with smaller roll diameters can also be engineered. Martin is also currently working in conjunction with a major US label converter to develop a spinning turret rewind (STR).

'With the STS and its companion automatic rewinder, the STR, we're excited to offer non-stop production to an even larger number of label converters,' says Wright.

Xynatech

Fifteen different companies in narrow web were interested in



The STS spinning turret splicer from Martin Automatic

getting into the folding carton market. Sales leads were made with companies from Africa, Middle East, Turkey, India and Russia.

Arpeco Engineering

Allan Prittie, president of Arpeco was delighted with visitor response. 'The warm reception that we received from our many international customers and industry associates at the show was most encouraging and certainly appreciated.'

Arpeco showcased its Premier Inspection Slitter Rewinder. Running at speeds up to 285 m/min (940 fpm) the Premier featured a Dynatrac count and control system with auto set-up, automatic unwind and rewind tension control and 100-job storage capability. States Brian Ivens, sales & marketing director, 'the continued respect of the industry for Arpeco was strongly endorsed with the receipt of several orders for finishing machines as well as an order from a prominent folding carton manufacturer for a fully fitted Cartonmaster press equipped with our award winning Injector die-cutting system.'



Time is Money: The New Gallus RCS 330

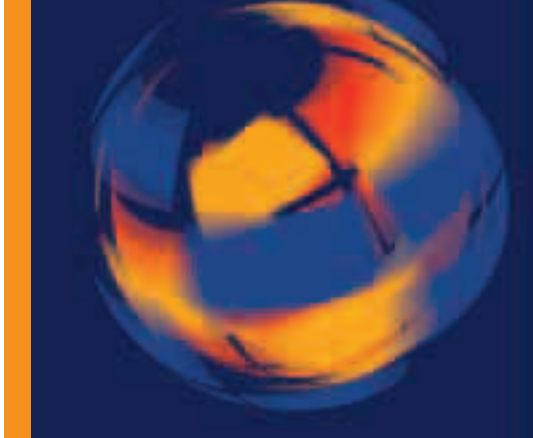
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Ink developments on the right tack

Barry Hunt examines recent developments in narrow web inks and coatings, including some launched at Labelexpo

Press operators expect a lot from printing inks. They must show consistent colour strength and viscosity levels, exhibit good on-press performance and, where required, offer high levels of gloss and scuff resistance. The fact that the industry can deliver such properties is typified by developments with water-based flexo inks, which have played a key role in establishing this process worldwide. Here, the advances stem from improved acrylic resins and acrylic emulsions (or 'binders'), stabilisers and other additives to compliment the pigments.

Higher pigmentation levels obviously give 'stronger' products and should allow reduced ink levels on the press with lower drying energy levels. The main aim is to achieve fast drying on the substrate without the ink drying on plates and rollers to affect print quality. Furthermore, water has a higher surface tension compared with a solvent so the formulation will include small amounts of a wax surfactant to lower the tension. This also allows the ink to adhere to non-paper substrates with a low

surface tension (of course, on-line corona discharge treaters and/or top-coated filmic grades allow water-based flexo inks to adhere to filmic label or packaging films).

The improved drying properties of modern water-based flexo inks have extended their appeal to wide-web packaging printers who print paper and paperboard packaging on high-speed presses. Unlike solvent-based inks they do not produce volatile organic compounds (VOCs) emissions. Water based flexo inks are not completely free of solvents. They include small amounts of ethanol/glycol to control drying speeds, act as an anti-foam agent and to assist flow-out.

While water-based flexo inks have established a strong momentum, UV flexo has caught up to present a strong alternative in certain label printing applications, says Niklas Olsson, global brand manager for Akzo Nobel Inks: 'Water-based technology keeps improving and growing in use. We have had sales growth close to 10 per cent per annum over the past five years. However, it's not the double-digit growth the industry has seen with UV technology, so in relative terms it feels as if it is stagnating.'

Certainly, UV flexo has overcome its initial shortcomings, although its adoption still requires careful planning and clean pressroom conditions. As with other UV-cured processes, near-instant drying allows operating efficiencies, brighter colours with glossy finishes, reduced downtime and no VOCs. Again, the possibility of higher pigmentation raises colour strength levels, while the latest UV flexo formulations have improved flow characteristics to obtain colour consistency throughout the run.

Bob Mittins, Sun Chemical's marketing director for UK Liquid Inks, agrees: 'The print quality of UV flexo is now so good that UV letterpress printers now look to this process as a viable alternative when they consider their next investments.'

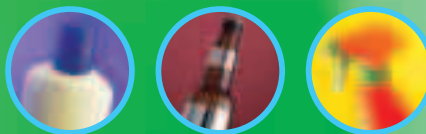


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'Major advances have happened with ingredients like resins over the past five years resulting in inks with better runnability and minimal odor levels,' he adds. This last aspect is seen to be a big step in opening up options in secondary packaging and food labeling.

Screen inks

White UV flexo inks come nearest to competing with UV rotary screen, but this process is really unrivalled when an opaque white background coating is required. The key lies with the titanium-based pigments that help to improve the aesthetics and text legibility of the finished label. A side issue to this, is the question of how UV flexo inks react with screen inks. As Niklas Olsson explains: 'While opaque white screen inks have been used successfully for years with UV



letterpress, printing UV flexo over a screen ink has historically given poor results, with low colour strength and poor dot reproduction.' This largely stems from their differences in surface tension levels. With Akzo Nobel's Uvoscreen II CombiWhite the dot gain of an overprinted UV flexo ink is said to be as low as that printed on a white PE with no difference in comparative density values. Supplied at optimal viscosity, Olsson claims the new ink offers 20 per cent greater opacity than comparable screen inks. It can also be overprinted with most UV letterpress and UV offset inks, as well as hot/cold foiling.

Several ink makers are addressing the overprinting issue and some are developing screen inks technology for radio-frequency identification (RFID) smart labels, based on the conductivity of solvent-based silver inks. Stork Prints is working on a low-cost, yet effective, printed replacement for the etched copper antennae commonly found in paper-based

RFID labels. DuPont Electronics Technologies adds credibility to the project with its Polymeric Thick Film (PTF) technology using inks based on silver conductive particles. Low resistivity values restricts the maximum read/write distance to 100mm and RFID systems with a frequency of 13.56 Mhz. PTF materials can be screen printed on a range of substrates.

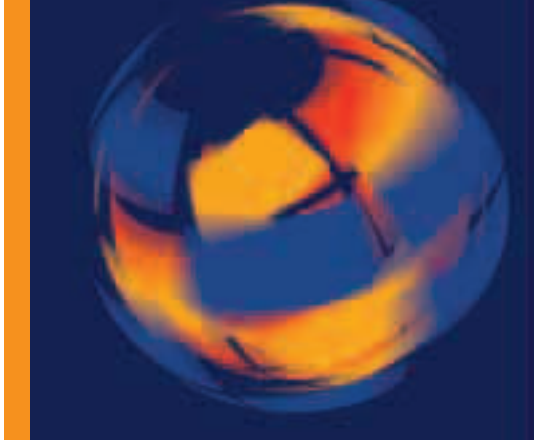
Other companies examining the potential of 'smart inks' include Sun Chemical and Flint Ink Corp. The latter says it has a multimillion dollar commitment to become 'the leading provider' of conductive and advanced printing inks and printed electronics technology and processes.

Screen printing is also suitable for printing a mirror effect using solvent based inks and a reverse-printed negative as an economical alternative to hot and cold foiling. However, the

"These developments not only reflect the highly fragmented nature of narrow-web label and packaging converting, but also highlight the need for adequate inventory control"

most widely used option to foiling, or metallised papers for that matter, is to use metallic-effect inks to brighten up a label or item of packaging. New inks from Intercolor and Akzo Nobel Inks are said to offer substantially brighter effects on either coated or uncoated papers, as well as various filmics, than those achieved with traditional metallic inks.

These developments not only reflect the highly fragmented nature of narrow-web label and packaging converting, but also highlight the need for adequate inventory control. Even quite small operations will hold large stocks of unused and part-used inks and coatings, including inks matched for specific brand colors and kept on the shelf for possible order repeats. That represents unused money, which soon mounts up, especially where expensive UV inks are concerned. In fact, help with inventory control now figures as a vital part of the various ink management packages offered by suppliers to augment day-to-day troubleshooting and other consultancy-



based services.

Many companies now offer a web-based interface. A recent example is the Customer Service Help Desk introduced by Sun Chemical - UK Liquid Inks (www.sunchemicalhelpdesk.com). The extensive facilities also include health and safety information and a database of technical articles. Similarly, Avery Dennison Roll Materials Europe and Akzo Nobel Inks have collaborated to form INK Link. It gives customers free and detailed advice on the compatibility of the respective companies' label materials and inks in seven languages. The service is accessed at www.europe.fasson.com under the 'Products and Services' hyperlink and includes a one-stop ordering facility for both inks and labelstocks.

Color management

Color management has risen up the agenda, especially for flexo inks. 'Converters tend to invest heavily in the latest press technology, but often ignore colour management techniques, yet they are vital for obtaining the consistent colours that brand owners now demand when producing sophisticated designs', says Gary Barnes, Sericol's segment marketing manager for packaging. One of the problems is that flexo ink characteristics differ widely from those pertaining to letterpress and offset inks. Both have internationally-recognized color measuring standards governing color strengths, ink rheology and ink transparency to aid customer and printer alike. Several flexo organisations in Europe and the USA are addressing the problem, including the European Flexographic Technical Association

and the Flexographic Printing Technology Group, working with the Welsh Centre for Printing and Coating in Swansea.

Global branding

The fact that labels and packaging form a key role in expanding global branding initiatives has made the matter more urgent. Furthermore, a complete brand range involves many types of labels, often supplied by label or package printers in different countries. Some global brand owners work closely with ink makers and suppliers. The larger supermarket and food processing groups now encourage converters to work with their own ink suppliers for own-brand labelling, based on stringent specifications, including food contact, color match and consistency.

A recent initiative is to use the color mixing principles of the offset based Pantone Colour Matching System and adapt them to conventional and UV flexo. The formulae are based mainly on using standardised pigments to obtain specified Pantone colours. Several approaches have been developed. Sericol, for example, has a software-based system using Pantone matches and off-line 'proofing' devices to fingerprint presses to save downtime. Encouraged by its screen inks background, the company has produced hard-copies of UV flexo volumes for customers based on nearly a thousand hand-matched Pantone formulae (swatches are printed on the laboratory's own Nilpeter FA-2500 flexo press).

In Charlotte, North Carolina, a commercial collaboration between Pantone, the Flexographic Trade School and eight



vendors resulted in a Pantone colour guide for water-based and UV flexo applications for use by printers and designers. It shows how a selection of 48 of the most popular flexo colours will appear with high-gloss UV varnish versus a water-based overprint varnish on coated and matt-coated labelstock. The project involved Environmental Inks & Coatings and Akzo Nobel Inks.

Measuring colour

Intercolor now offers Remote Colour Matching. Customers with the company's in-plant blending systems, including UV ink colour bases and dispensing equipment, can measure their colour sample with an X-Rite SP64

spectrophotometer and transmit the data over the Internet. Once matched in Intercolor's laboratory, the data is downloaded to the customer's dispensing equipment. Correlated colour monitors are located at both ends. Mark Bowman, sales director, says the system requires exceptionally consistent ink colour bases: 'The highly pigmented bases are quality controlled to a tighter specification than is normally encountered in the industry. Customers can therefore have special colours on the press without delay and with confidence.'

Technically, it's worth noting the efforts to overcome the limited colour gamut of CMYK for high-quality flexo printing. Intended more for packaging printers, Pantone's Hexachrome six-colour printing process is now available to licensed users. Arguably more relevant to wide-web printers is the Opaltone seven-colour system, which adds primary red, green and blue to the secondary cyan, magenta and yellow colours, while retaining their densities, with an ordinary black. Opaltone's Australian developer is licensing the software-based system to global flexo printers.

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As for color matching on digital color presses, HP Indigo now offers an IndiChrome ink mixing service, allowing users to order ink simulations or mix their own, which overcomes the standard CMYK restrictions. The former uses a web-based link to give a five-day service for specially mixed and matched colors in five days rather than the previous six weeks. HP says it can supply colors in 97 per cent of the Pantone range. For security printing applications, HP Indigo has added a UV-activated invisible ink that fluoresces to a bright red to its range of security options.

Finally, several ink makers offer products to obtain special effects, such as pearlescent types. Similarly, there are photochromic inks that intensify in color strength when exposed to sunlight or other intense light sources. The colorants are either invisible or only slightly colored prior to exposure. Thermochromic inks respond to changes in specific temperature ranges, changing back and forth from a coloured to a colorless state when the temperature changes significantly.

A selection of some of the latest ink products

- Akzo Nobel Ink's Flexocure range now includes Gemini-Low Odour. FlexOnic is a new cationic ink (the properties of its essential oligomer and monomer compounds are different), as opposed to a conventional free-radical UV flexo ink. It is suitable for printing shrink sleeves requiring a high degree of shrinkage (it compliments Hydrofilm 4000, a water-based alternative for the same application.) Metalglow ML gives a bright metallic silver effect and is available for various narrow-web processes. UvoNova is a 'universal' range of UV letterpress inks for paper and filmic labelstocks.
- Eckhart has developed aluminium pigments using a vacuum-vapour process that are said to overcome certain limitations of conventional pigments. Its new metallic inks have increased gloss levels with greater coverage and optimal printability, while raising rub-off resistance.
- Rotaprint from Encres Dubuit is a new Pantone-based rotary screen UV ink with a high resistance to water and alcohol that needs no overprint varnish. It is compatible with other UV ink systems and accepts hot foiling without needing an additive. It is said to have good adhesion to most top coated PP and PE films, as well as metallised and vinyl grades.
- Environmental Inks & Coatings' Ultra Flex III can print process colours on 800 to 1000+ line aniloxes and line/solids with 600 to 800 line aniloxes. A high colour strength is complimented by a very low viscosity, said to overcome foaming, cavitation, excessive dot gain and small spits of ink penetrating the doctor blade.
- Intercolor (Zeller+ Gmelin) has introduced Uvaflex Y7, a practically odourless ink for secondary packaging and food labelling. High Lustre Silver from Intercolor is one such example. Complimenting this is the company's innovative PC-based Lustre Index, which quantifies the level of reflective effect gained on any substrate using spectrophotometric data. The software measures and controls both colour and reflectance.
- Paragon Inks has launched Uvolution, a range of flexo inks for the packaging market.
- Known for rotary and flatbed screen printing inks, Ruco has extended its UV range with the UVR series of low viscosity UV flexo inks. It also offers the 010 series for rotary letterpress. Ruco's range also includes the range of 050 UV Toray inks. They are formulated for overprinting the Series 983 UV opaque white screen inks.
- Sericol's improved UVivid UV flexo series is said to have the low viscosity of water-based inks while featuring 'ultra-high' density colours. The inks are said to cure to a high-gloss finish that exhibits excellent scuff and chemical resistance. Also, they do not foam or cavitate in the ink pan and ensure optimal ink transfer from the anilox rolls. There is little-to-no plate swelling to assure image consistency throughout long print runs.
- Sun Chemical Inks' new Onyx brand covers eight mainstream narrow-web applications. SunJet is another new division, this time specialising in process colour and spot colour UV-curable ink jet inks for label printing. Sun Chemical has also introduced water-based and UV-curable SunCare FR flexo inks and coatings for Pantone's Hexachrome six-colour printing process. It eliminates the need for additional spot colours, giving fewer wash-ups, less downtime and opportunities to batch different run jobs on the same form.

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Pressing ways to add value

Changing markets and tougher conditions have influenced press designs. **Barry Hunt** examines some of the latest innovations, including those shown at Labelexpo Europe

Narrow-web press technology has seen some astonishing advances in recent years. Functions that give greater automation and control over printing, web handling and converting – combined with the essential advances in UV curing, inks, plates and substrates – have introduced new levels of sophistication into the industry. Now it looks like catch-up time as the industry takes stock of what is happening all around it. Pricing issues aside, survival in these hard times would seem to involve more than fast-turnarounds and quality-led service. Of course, they remain as vital as ever, but it is innovation and flexibility of production that collectively form the inside track to success.

It's not hard to see why. Converters face many external challenges related to the effects of globalization. Increasing consolidation among brand owners, multiple retailers and other major end-users have completely changed the way they do business with their suppliers. Many are rationalizing their brands, including giants like Unilever which plans to reduce its consumer brands from 1,600 to 400. The pressures on converters in the face of smaller margins on commodity items and escalating costs is now a fact of life.

It's one reason why more converters are examining the production of alternative film-based products, such as wrap-around labels, shrink sleeves, in-mould labels, lidded products, sachets and stand-up pouches. Other opportunities

include tags, swing tickets, small folding cartons, phone cards, blister pack cards and foils, as well as a host of security related labels and tickets linked to anti-counterfeiting and deterring retail theft. VIP labeling already accounts for almost one half the annual volume of self-adhesive materials used and is set to expand further as end users place more emphasis on supply chain economics. The great unknown is low-cost RFID involving smart labels and tags. However, efforts by major users like Wal-Mart to require its top 100 suppliers to use the technology at the case and pallet level is a sign of things to come. Some converters now compete effectively with sheet-fed printers to produce non-label products, such as medical dressings and test devices, industrial decals, membrane switches, automotive seals and gaskets.

One obvious effect of all this is to kick standardized presses into the long grass. Jakob Landberg, Nilpeter's sales director, agrees: 'Converters now demand complete production systems to meet their own customers' demands. There is no longer a sole emphasis on print processes, press manufacturers have to work with customers and design customised solutions that will help them to innovate out of today's unsatisfactory market systems. In our case, we have even found ourselves collaborating with brand managers on complex projects involving new types of production solutions.'



This approach also influences how presses are designed for specific customer groups. 'Nowadays, nobody wants to order the same type of press. They all want different configurations and leave far less to chance', says Glenn Miller, technical sales director at Ko-Pack International (Europe). 'We certainly build more customized presses for global markets now, including some wide-web packaging presses that use UV-curable, water and solvent-based inks. Perhaps it implies a deeper knowledge of the market, but it's a trend that is certainly driven by the end users.'

Hybrid technology

With the industry in transition, there is a greater accent on innovative web handling within a shorter-run scenario. It involves a wider range of options, such as ink jet modules, web delaminators and relaminators, turner bars and in-line adhesive coaters. Web cross-over and slitting devices allow twin-web production of leaflet-labels, multi-ply products and much else. Some converters manufacture peel and read labels that involve two passes; electronic inserters align the top printed web, unwound from a secondary unwind unit, with the bottom carrier web. Refinements in dieless cold foiling make it a cost-effective alternative to hot-foil stamping to achieve a varied mix of metallised effects for short-run work.

By the same token, delivery options have also widened, such as running webs into a sheeter/slitter with batch counting. Output can be shingled to delivery tables or conveyed into a shrink-wrapper. Data label and ticket operations may require in-line or off-line folders, including continuous zig zag folders with delivery tables. Two new types of finishing modules were shown at Labelexpo, this time for processing in-mould film or synthetic paper labels. Most are still printed on sheet-fed offset presses. Web-fed methods have been hampered by overcoming problems associated with label delivery, static build-up, label curling and stacking. GiDue's answer is a dedicated IML converting section with batch counter, called the Endless Delivery Line (EDL), running with the new E-Combat shaftless press. Dan Mekano's approach is the servo-driven Multi Processor 420 CDP (Controlled Die to Pack) stacking system designed to run in-line with a label press or off-line with its own unwinder. It was demonstrated on the Nilpeter stand, converting in-mould labels previously printed on an M-3300 offset combination press.

As the separate items on new press launches show, many may remember this year's Labelexpo as the show when servo-drives – on narrow-webs – came of age. It's commonly



accepted that they offer independent control over print and ancillary units, allowing stable web tension and accurate control over print lengths. There is a smoother relationship between print and converting stations because there are no mechanical links to a line shaft. The important issue here is that synchronized servo drives can control tension zones and make it easier to print unsupported films or foils. The net result is a shorter time to achieve saleable products because set-up times for print register and repeat lengths are reduced, while wastage levels are lower.

Of course, removing the need for mechanical drives, gearboxes, brakes and clutches may appear attractive, but servo-driven alternatives are certainly not cheap and demand access to suitably qualified maintenance services. Many people argue that servo drives are not cost effective on conventional label presses. Others argue that gains in short-run flexibility and reduced set-up times more than compensate for the extra costs that electronics bring.

While it is hard to define it as a trend, another development is the higher exposure being given to gravure. With quick-drying solvent inks, it is a useful package printing process for laying down solid white backgrounds, as in reverse-side printing of flexible packaging products, as well as printing metallic effects on a wide range of substrates. Chesnut Engineering, CMR and RDP Marathon have long offered gravure and flexo combination presses in various widths, but gravure's role as a secondary process could grow. The development of quick-change sleeves within a laser etched, digital pre-press environment opens up the process at the premium-quality end of the market.

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(left) Flying Imprinter unit on Gallus RCS330 (Right) Mark Andy DT2200

During the past two years Nilpeter has sold 15 or so gravure modules for its offset-based M-3300. Comco also offers a gravure option for the ProGlide MSP range of multi-substrate presses. The latest development is to print solvent-free UV-curable gravure inks. Nilpeter showed a prototype module that needs no enclosed ducting using inks currently being developed by Akzo Nobel and Sicpa.

Variable data

Most attempts to make on-demand printing of variable numbering, barcodes, text and other data on the press have foundered. Available systems have either been too expensive, too slow or lacking in quality. Ink jet fans say piezo drop-on-demand print heads, as used in on-press digital print modules, provide an economical VIP solution in a production sense. For on-site end user VIP applications direct or thermal transfer printing methods still dominate over other methods.

One of the more ambitious VIP offerings is Mark Andy's DT2200, billed as a complete four-colour digital printing and finishing system for very short runs. Its DT ink jet module was developed by dotrix (former Barco Graphics) and uses electro-piezo drop-on-demand technology. It forms part of a Mark Andy 13-inch Model 2200, equipped with four or more conventional flexo units. At Labelexpo this hybrid combination ran with Las-X Industries' LaserSharp digital die cutter. The print engine gives full width, 300dpi resolution with eight levels of greyscale for 100 per cent variable information. It prints CYMK and two spot colours or hexachrome with UV-cured inks at a top rate of 25 m/minute.

Domino UK, a pioneer of variable data ink jet technology in the packaging industry, showed its Domino-ON-Demand for in-line use. Depending on print width, the retro-fit system

offers up to 16 print heads and uses Pantone matched inks, with a UV-curable option, to print variable data on several types of substrates. The system can include additional pre-press, proofing and estimating modules and offers high-speed coding of date and batch information.

The stand-alone VP2020 four-colour ink jet engine from VIPColor Technologies offers another angle on short-run, variable data tags and labels and is combined with a laminator and the new Digicut die-cutting unit with matrix rewinder. GRE Engineering Products in Switzerland is the distributor.

Gallus offers the digital Flying Imprinter station as an option for the servo-driven RCS 330 flexo and screen press. Users can change large blocks of copy, such as multi-lingual label text, at full production speed by using two imprinter stations placed anywhere on the press. The text plate is changed in the idle print station while the press is still printing. The servos then bring the plate cylinder up to press speed and switch it into the press without stopping the web.

Variable data print engines and new types of converting ancillaries are sure to become more commonplace as press manufacturers strive to make their products more flexible, while hopefully not making them overly complex. More converters will want to augment conventional label production with alternative multi-product technologies against a background of ever-shorter print runs. Several options exist, including the setting up of complete label production plants near to the point of packaging as shown in a few cases. We are also likely to see a greater fusion of conventional and digital colour printing. The latter has already moved into the mainstream of web-fed production and, more critically, gained end-user acceptance, whether consciously or not. In the final analysis, the nature or form of

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the technology matters less than the owner's ability to exploit it to the full by meeting customers' demands, while simultaneously making a reasonable profit too.

Labelexpo press highlights

Ko-Pack showed a seven-colour Euroflex 400 press with chilled central impression drum, which now combines hot-air drying and UV curing. It was shown running with a Domino ink jet printer for variable numbering a filmic label. Also shown was another Euroflex, this time with 12 colours, producing wrap-around labels for drinks bottles printed six colours on each side of the web; the reverse side could carry promotional matter. After the show the press went to a Russian printer serving the PET bottle market.

Now celebrating 40 years in business, Omet introduced an upgraded Varyflex shaftless flexo press that now allows users to 'plug-in' screen printing units between any two flexo units. Each print unit has two servo drives, allowing direct drive to the screen head with no other mechanical intervention, with both flexo and screen sharing the same UV lamp unit. A new register control unit is integrated with

the shaftless drive to minimise set-up times for multi-substrate production. A trolley-based slide-in die cutting/slitting module with three-stream delivery is available. The entry-level Omet Flexy, available in widths of 255mm, 330mm and 420mm, incorporates several new features, including UV curing with chill drums for producing film products and servo-driven plate cylinders.

Among those making a case for offset as a film-printing challenger to UV flexo and gravure was Drent Goebel. It featured live demonstrations of its Variable Sleeve Offset Press (VSOP) for printing self-adhesive labels, in mould labels and flexible packaging using a satellite connection between the show and its factory in Eerbeek, Holland. Job changes involving new sets of plates and different substrates took under ten minutes.

Only two lightweight sleeves need be changed when switching between variable repeat lengths of between 381mm and 762mm on web widths up to 850mm. The VSOP comes in maximum web widths of 520mm and 850mm and prints up to 400 m/minute in wet or waterless offset.

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Raflatac's commitment to North American market

In the wake of the U.S. Department of Justice's decision to block UPM-Kymmene's acquisition of MACtac, **Natalie Martin** recently interviewed senior vice president, Americas, Jouko Lähepelto, president, Raflatac, Inc., Dan O'Connell, and North American business development manager – Films, Kari Virtanen, to discuss Raflatac's future developments in North America

Speaking about the Department of Justice's decision, Dan O'Connell commented, 'The decision was a disappointment. A positive decision would have left us in a different position full of new challenges.' However O'Connell believes that it was out of their control and Raflatac will now continue to drive its business in North America.

In 1985, Raflatac, Inc. started out as a slitting company in Fletcher, North Carolina, importing master rolls from Europe. Increasing demand for locally produced, high-quality products led Raflatac to invest in a North American manufacturing operation. By 2001, Raflatac, Inc. was fully equipped with a new, state-of-the-art manufacturing facility. (See Issue 4, 2002, pgs 16-18 – 'Raflatac doubles US market share').


Continues O'Connell, 'When Raflatac first arrived into North America, people couldn't even pronounce the name, whereas in Europe, we were a recognised market-leader. As a start-up company in North America, in its infancy stages, we experienced the usual bumps along the way. However, after experiencing years of tremendous growth, Raflatac is now in a position to expand its product offering.'

Lähepelto told this writer that last Spring Raflatac, Inc. had a stand-alone business plan to make investments. Obviously these plans were not executed prior to the DOJ's decision regarding the acquisition, but now they are in process. He says, 'Our parent company, UPM, is fully committed to supporting our business. Now we will focus on developing our product offering and expanding our geographical coverage.'

Film developments

As such, Raflatac is well on its way to making a big impact in the North American film market. 'Our target is to be a leading supplier of film products in North America, just as we are in Europe. With our global resources, we're able to develop new, innovative and cost efficient products, including new release liners for films. We're strengthening our role as a full product line supplier and a true global player,' says Lähepelto.

Raflatac, Inc. has met its quality and efficiency targets for its start-up paper labelstock production, so now it can concentrate on further satisfying its customer demand for film products which have traditionally been imported from Europe.



'Producing film materials locally will significantly shorten our throughput time in the development of new products for the US market and allow us to provide better service to meet the requirements of our customers,' adds Lihapelto.

To reinforce this position, North America business development manager – Films, Kari Virtanen, says that Raflatac has made a commitment to further develop its product range in North America. Says Virtanen, 'Our production in USA has been underway for over two years, mainly manufacturing paper based labelstock. Films is a natural continuation to further extend and strengthen our entire product range.' Raflatac maintains that the use of film products is progressing rapidly, at a rate of more than twice that

of paper-based materials, with film products making up an estimated 23 per cent of pressure sensitive labelstock consumption in North America; the greatest demand for pressure sensitive films being in the home and personal care, food & beverage, and industrial chemical market segments.

Raflatac has also carried out an extensive research and development programme targeting the introduction of a fully squeezable film to the North American market. PE is one of the major films used in Europe, whereas it is not so popular in the USA. 'The market is looking for a cost-effective alternative in squeezable films, and we believe Raflatac is able to offer it in the near future. It's been a long process, but after allocating



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our global R&D resources to the project, the end result looks promising,’ continues Virtanen. ‘We’ve made a commitment to strengthen our position in the film market. We will continue to evaluate and develop our product portfolio and find ways to offer more value added solutions to our customers.’

With end-users demanding high-quality products worldwide, Raflatac feels it is in a position to offer the same consistent product around the globe. For example, its European film customers have been using a high-density glassine liner and now Raflatac has begun offering the same liner to its customers in North America. Besides being a more cost-effective solution



(Left) Jouko Lähepelto, senior vice president, Americas
(Right) Dan O'Connell, president, Raflatac, Inc.

than a Polycoated Kraft or PET liner, Virtanen indicates that the high-density glassine liner has excellent die-cutting properties and enables high line dispensing speeds.

‘The consumption rate of film labelstock per capita and the end-use applications are at the same level in both Europe and North America. However, film labelstock constructions utilized in Europe have traditionally been different in regard to both the face material and release liner. With our global expertise in films and knowledge of the different geographical market areas, our ultimate target is to develop a product range that could be offered globally,’ concludes Virtanen.

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In our obsession with technology, it's easy to lose sight of the importance of meeting the customer's needs. BP Labels in the UK has targeted its investments to tie customers into the business by the innovative use of new technology.

Andy Thomas reports

Customer focused

Innovation in customer service can still reap dividends in the pressure-sensitive industry. BP Labels managing director Andrew Wood puts it bluntly: 'It's not about technology – it's about delivering what the customer needs. That's the big mistake we make as an industry. How many printers send end users their plant lists, when those end users neither understand the press technology nor care about it! It's not surprising that we're driven by technology, with all the time we spend fighting to get these tools to work. But what matters is to give the customer what they want in the way they want it.'

Consider first the sectors BP Labels serves. Around 35 per cent of the company's business is pharmaceutical, with 33 per cent toiletries & cosmetics, and 32 per cent household & electrical.

The immediate goal is to develop synergies between the dynamic pharmaceuticals and toiletries & cosmetics sectors by moving decoration and production techniques between them.

'Customers love this approach,' says operations manager Keith Postle. 'With the growth of the Over-the-counter (OTC) sector, pharmaceutical companies are reinventing the way they market their brands. BP Labels has successfully applied toiletries & cosmetics decoration techniques to this sector - particularly in the Nutraceuticals market, where shelf impact is increasingly important. We can try out something which has worked in one market for the other, like applying holographics developed for security and tamper evidence in pharmaceuticals to high value toiletries & cosmetics brands.'

In production terms there is a growing demand across all sectors to supply direct to the packing line, without an additional quality control step. These are techniques BP Labels has perfected in the pharmaceuticals sector and is now applying to toiletries & cosmetics. 'End users also need to work on their own systems to make this work,' points out Keith

Postle. 'If their forecasts are inaccurate it makes it hard to deliver straight to line.'

Management information

As well as this end user-focused approach to sector requirements, Andrew Wood has also implemented a management information system (MIS) focused on managing end users' inventory and making them interactive partners.

'We try not to talk about price, but about total acquisition cost. We like to take schedules and not orders and lower the supply chain cost, holding stock for call-off where necessary,' says Wood.

This is realized using the Imprint MIS system. Customers can go into BP Labels' production system via Imprint's e-commerce module and see what stock is left and call it off. Some customers have their own quotation packages on the website, cutting out the manual estimating step altogether.

Although this setup is not unusual these days, the next step is truly unique in this writer's experience.

'We often deal direct with packaging technologists who just have a rough drawing of a concept and need to know a unit cost,' explains Andrew Wood. 'They can come in via the website and play with various production scenarios, which are linked through to information we hold on different label formats and materials. For example, they can reduce the size of the label to make more efficient use of the press; they can reduce the number of colour and plate changes; or they can see how different repeats affect the number of cylinder changes. It even tells you if the right cylinders are available. This software saves our estimating department 80 per cent of the time they used to spend on what can be very frustrating tasks. The designer or packaging technologist can get ten quotes in an afternoon, and we don't even know they are doing it! Our estimators then produce the final quote.'



BP has been proactive in bringing label buyers and technologists to its site for training. 'Our customers bring whole teams onto the site and use it as a Buzz Tool'.

The Imprint MIS also provides the key to managing a very tight schedule of short-to-medium run length jobs. BP Labels averages 800-1200 jobs a month, with 32 pallets of work-in-progress going through the plant when L&L visited. Yet there are remarkably few pallets of raw materials.

'Since installing the Imprint MIS system BP Labels holds 50 per cent less stock while producing 50 per cent more jobs, as well as shifting to JIT delivery – simply from the system knowing what's in stock and managing it effectively,' enthuses production manager Jeff Smith. 'We were going to put in 84 rack bays, but now we don't have to because we're not holding raw stock. In fact, keeping finished stock levels down is our biggest challenge.'

All materials are weighed as they arrive and coded into the MIS system to determine the number of linear metres available. Part-used rolls are weighed again to calculate the exact amount of material left. 'This also means that if one customer has problems with a label substrate, we can immediately see which other jobs have used that same roll and warn those people,' says Smith.

Each job is held in the Imprint system with a complete manufacturing spec, including S&R, colours and materials through to delivery dates and destination. A separate Imprint module handles complex split or part delivery requirements, with a colour coded display for what has already been shipped, what is due to go out, and items not available or approved for dispatch. The system automatically generates multiple personalised invoice forms, delivery notes and box labels with or without barcodes.

Integrated MIS is also important for traceability in the pharmaceuticals sector, and was a key tool in BP Labels' achievement of certification to The Pharmaceutical Codes of Practice addition to ISO 9002 4 years ago.

Technology

BP Labels has made the transition from Letterpress to UV flexo with the recent addition and upgrading of two Nilpeter FA 3300 presses, a four and five colour, with two rail-mounted screen units, in-line lamination and hot/cold foil capability. They are specced with a cold cure UV system which means there is a zero degree gradient through the press, theoretically allowing the printing of unsupported film down to 12 microns. Trials are now being undertaken, and films down to 35 microns have been successfully printed.

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On the press floor the Imprint MIS allows press operators to enter reasons for machine downtime, which saves time filling in timesheets and allows an accurate assessment of press performance and cost-per-hour.

BP Labels makes its own flexo plates, which are mounted on off-line cassettes using a Heaford plate mounter. The repro department is based around an Artwork Systems' Artpro pre-press system outputting digital files to an Agfa Accuset 1500 film imagesetter. BP is now trialling hybrid screening techniques using Artwork Systems' FlexoCAL calibration software and Cell patterning. 'This allows the simulation of one per cent dots by positioning 3 per cent dots further apart – so you don't have to hold 1 per cent dots on the plate and press,' says Jeff Smith.

Interestingly, BP also makes its own rotary screens. 'Pharmaceutical companies do not like subcontracting, and traceability is key, so being able to make and reclaim our own screens is very important,' says Jeff Smith. BP is currently looking at tactile Screen varnishes which could replace an emboss/deboss station on the press.

BP blends its own inks using a Vale Tec computerized mixing system and has a sophisticated system for measuring consistency of special colours (see Judgement Day below). Eckhart metallic inks are proving an effective complement to the cold/hot foil units. 'We are replacing hot foil in some cases – the silver looks fantastic on synthetic stocks,' says Smith.

Judgement day

Given the importance of brand, or special colours, it is extraordinary how few companies in the supply chain have implemented scientific systems to verify the correct shade is being printed. BP Labels has tackled this head on by implementing the Passport ColorJudge system. Supplied by the Closed Loop Consultancy and its authorized dealers worldwide, ColorJudge consists of a spectrophotometer and software which measures a printed colour ('Trial') against a target ('standard') to assess whether it falls into a given CIELAB e-delta tolerance.

'This gives us a scientific target to print against,' notes Jeff Smith. 'This saves a lot of time in the approval process. It's not a swatch – it's an absolute reading based on standard CIELAB parameters and e-delta deviation of 4, which seems to be emerging as the limit of where humans perceive a colour difference. The result can be printed out as a QC certificate or e-mailed. For example, we have to colour-match the labels for a vacuum cleaner manufacturer. The manufacturer e-mails the color specification to us, then doesn't have to come here to sign the label colours off. Verification is up to us.'

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 No.127

What makes a good salesperson?



When we seek to recruit better and more qualified salespeople for the labels industry, what are the qualities we should be looking for? Here

David Harrisson,

Skanem's pan-European sales director gives his personal view

Like every other industry, the labels business is changing to meet the needs of the 21st Century. As some of us who are old enough to remember, what started out with a small, mainly local industry has evolved into a global business. And that is why we need a new breed of salespeople – people who are highly trained and motivated. Only by elevating the role and responsibilities of our sales force will we succeed in a highly competitive marketplace.

Here at Skanem we have a set of values which embrace continuous improvement, trust, team spirit and entrepreneurship. These are the basic ingredients for success.

But what are the qualities we all should be looking for in our salespeople? First and foremost, they must believe in the company and the products they sell. Then they must have an in-depth knowledge of their companies and what it is they are selling to their customers. And above all else they must have integrity.

All of this might sound like basic commonsense but it's more than that. It should become the creed for every sales force. There are no shortcuts in our business and our customers know that. We need to be dedicated, enthusiastic and tenacious, hardworking and reliable – all the ingredients for success!

A highly-trained salesforce won't let you down. To succeed they must understand their customers' needs and expectations. They must be open and honest in their dealings and never over-promise. A salesperson is, in effect, a part of supply chain management, where everything from order to delivery is fine-tuned to create value for customers.

What then are the basic characteristics which a customer looks for when

purchasing labels? More often than not, there are several requirements which come into play and all need to be considered carefully. They can be summed up:

- Reducing complexity and shortening lead times in the extended supply chain
- Going to market with innovative solutions for their products at the lowest cost
- Eradicating price differentials in geographical areas to provide the most competitive pricing
- Implementing a supply chain Asset Management System
- Providing consistent and outstanding service
- Evaluating new technology to provide competitive advantage
- Generating quantifiable and visible cost-savings

In short, to be successful you need to think like the customer. Go into the meeting with the objective, discuss, confirm and follow-up as required.

Also, you need to anticipate and understand customer expectations. Be prepared to share costs openly and honestly; guarantee security of supply within a given contract; be proactive – challenge the way things are done and always be technically competent.

The old way of doing business involved a salesperson and a buyer head-on-head. Today, all that has changed. There is now a new way of doing business where a supplier team and a customer team work hand-in-hand, working with purchasing, marketing, development and technical departments.

Sell the team concept and it won't let you down. At the end of the day successful selling is based on a lot of things, not least of which is our own professionalism.

So the next time you visit a prospective customer make sure that professionalism shines through – be honest, open and if you don't know the answer, say so, but..... You know somebody who does!

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Single steps or GIANT LEAPS?

Contributing editor, **Jennifer Dochstader**, examines the role of RFID smart label technology in the marketplace today. This first article of a series, examines several key RFID initiatives that have been announced in 2003, and what impact these mandates might have on the mainstream label-converting universe

As a species, we tend to avoid change. Many over-degreed academics have written dissertations about how the human brain is hardwired to shy away from new ideas, concepts and technologies. We dismissively wave away that which we don't understand. Even industry 'experts' aren't necessarily immune to this reflex. In 1962, a European music recording company said of new rock group, 'We don't like their sound, and guitar music is on the way out.' In 1977, Ken Olson, founder and chairman of Digital Equipment Corporation discussed a new technological concept then on the horizon, 'There is no reason why anyone would want [that] in their home.' The recording studio was talking about the Beatles, while Ken Olson was referring to that king of short-lived fads – the personal computer.

Now that we've identified that even those who have access to the most advanced knowledge and pertinent data can make grossly inaccurate predictions, we can turn our attention to a nascent label-embedded technology that might strike a bit of fear in the heart of a label printer – Radio Frequency

Identification (RFID) and the smart label.

Most of us know by now that RFID technology enables an object to be identified by utilizing a radio frequency transmission. The technology itself has been around for decades – used in highway tollbooth, access control, animal tracking, anti-theft (think of those ubiquitous plastic tags affixed to clothing in department stores) and ticketing applications.

We have also read that a basic RFID system consists of three components: an antenna, a transceiver, and a transponder (the radio frequency tag itself) electronically programmed with unique information. The antenna sends out radio signals to activate the tag, reading (and sometimes writing) data to it.

A few years ago, the phrase 'smart label' worked its way into the label-printing masses, as manufacturers of RFID-related elements began publicizing their wares to the converting industry, while making some pretty big claims along the way. (A smart label is a label that contains the transponder component of the RFID equation – a thin, flexible device with a programmable microchip and an antenna.) Lately, and in



Close up of various security labeling

diametric opposition, we've heard everything from 'within two years smart labels will make barcodes obsolete!' to 'RFID won't impact mainstream label printers for decades'. But where is the technology today, and just how relevant are the RFID breakthroughs occurring presently in the marketplace to the average label printer?

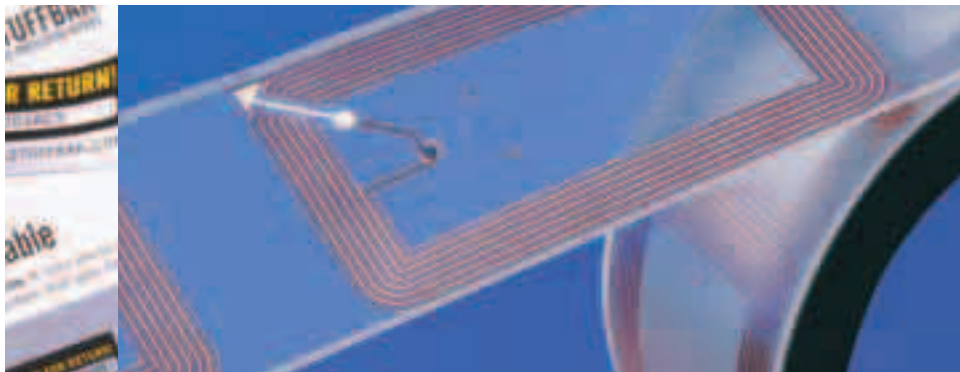
Wal-Mart and Gillette move forward with RFID

Over the course of the past six months, some very important RFID directives have been put forth that all label converters should certainly be paying attention to. By 2005, Wal-Mart Stores, Inc., will unveil an RFID-based tracking system working with many of their top 100 suppliers to integrate RFID technology into all pallets and cases of product supplied to the company.

Chip integration onto pallets and cases will enable Wal-Mart to track goods from distribution centers to retail outlets. CIO and senior vice president for the company, Linda Dillman, has been quoted as saying, 'We believe very strongly in the potential of this technology to do wonderful things for our customers and suppliers. At some point, [the technology] will be a requirement for doing business with Wal-Mart.'

Now comes the important question – will each pallet's transponder be applied via a smart label? That has yet to be decided according to Peter Gawley, vice president of Sales and Marketing for transponder manufacturer Rafsec. 'Our view has long been that end-users are going to begin by tagging assets, and pallets and crates are assets because they're sitting on someone's books. This is the fastest growing area today in RFID. Now, that doesn't automatically mean that all of the tagging will be done with smart labels. Testing has been undergone that involves placing a transponder into a plastic crate via an injection molder – the crate is molded with the transponder contained. For some of these applications the final carrier of the transponder hasn't been decided. However, once that asset has a tag in place, you can use that tag to write to it, to tell it what the contents of the pallet are. That starts to have some tangible value.'

Wal-Mart's RFID program will prove to be a significant impetus for any supplier of packaging to the company, in addition to a tremendous influence on retailer's supply chain strategies in the near future. Think of the supply chain building blocks for the distribution of goods utilized by global retailers. A pallet holds cases or crates, and the cases and crates hold the individual consumer products items that eventually make their way onto store shelves – bottles of shampoo, jars of pickles, packages of razors. As stated, testing is already underway for additionally integrating transponders onto the cases and crates, in addition to the pallets down below. If I'm Acme Food Co. and I pack 24 bottles of salad dressing into a case, I'm soon going to have to have a reader-writer that writes to the case's tag telling it that it's Acme's Oil and Vinegar Salad Splash Extraordinaire in that case, and then apply a serial number to it. I'm also going to have to integrate that information, and the ability to enter



Close up of Rafsec's transponder technology

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“One can pretty much assume that ‘item-tagging’ (integrating transponders onto a bottle of shampoo and a jar of pickles) is an imminent reality”

that information, into my software programs and material handling protocol.

Hence one can pretty much assume that ‘item-tagging’ (integrating transponders onto a bottle of shampoo and a jar of pickles) is an imminent reality. Smart pallets will arrive from a retailers DC (distribution center) to the retail outlet. Smart cases and/or crates will be unloaded from those pallets, and smart products will be placed onto smart shelves, ensuring a traceable visibility of products throughout the entire supply chain. However it appears that it has yet to be mandated whether the transponder’s carrying agent will be that lovely four-color process UV flexo-printed PS label donning the product, or, perhaps the transponder will be injection molded into the products cap, or into the product’s container itself.

According to Gawley, this decision will be made once the cost model results have been analyzed thoroughly from the various pilot sites presently testing labels, in addition to other transponder carrying agent methodologies. ‘We’re currently working primarily with the end-users,’ Gawley explains, ‘because these are the entities who are eventually going to have to put transponders onto every item they manufacture, and they will therefore be the ones who have to make the decision as to how to integrate an RFID transponder into their packages. The issue is that the technology selected will be the technology that is the cheapest to integrate, however, we strongly feel that it’s inevitable that a significant portion of the volume of transponders used will be delivered in the form of smart labels.’

Another significant occurrence this year in the world of RFID packaging is Gillette’s announcement confirming the purchase of 500 million RFID tags for the tracking and security of certain retail products. Have you tried buying a refill for the company’s Mach III razors lately? Chances are you’ll have to ask a sales clerk as they’re increasingly located behind the counter having recently been awarded the dubious distinction of being one of the most shoplifted products in the world.

Gillette’s RFID tag will be utilized at retail sites as an element in ‘smart shelf’ technology, enabling the tracking of the status of products sitting on retail shelves – alerting stores when stock becomes low, in addition to erratic stocking patterns that might indicate theft. Paul Fox, director of Global External Relations for Gillette, has been quoted as saying, ‘We want to test the real-world application of this technology within our own supply chain – from point of arrival through packaging, inventory and then leaving the building.’

As is the case with the Wal-Mart mandate, Gillette’s announcement will undoubtedly prove to be a critical juggernaut in the RFID history books. Stan Drobac, vice president of RFID Applications for Avery Dennison comments as follows. ‘This announcement reflects a real intent by Gillette to move the technology into its operations. The company chose to tell the world that they’re committed to this technology in order to try to help move the market forward by making an announcement about something that normally would stay quiet. Gillette is doing us all a favor by stating this intention.’

The impact on label converters

We’ve established that several industry giants have made a few key steps in favor of RFID – inevitably having a giant impact on every level of the packaging supply chain. In the near future however, it will be the pallets, followed by the cases and crates on those pallets, that will somehow be branded with RFID transponders. The next natural progressive step in the RFID hierarchy will be item-tagging, however this presents a whole new set of cost model hurdles, complex technology adoption curves, and code uniformity issues.

What does all this mean for the label converter, and just what sorts of applications are label converters doing with RFID today? The next article in this series will examine RFID’s present, and future, impact on the mainstream label-converting universe.

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Pinnacle Label is rolling out its laser sheet technology into Europe after establishing a branded business across North America.

Natalie Martin reports

'My dad always told me, "Son, you can do anything you want to do. Ninety five per cent of this world will not work hard enough to attain a goal. You don't have to be the smartest guy in the world but never be afraid of hard work – work 24/7."' Instilled with a 'can-do' spirit, Ches Cochran, now, president of Pinnacle Label, started out in the labeling industry in 1989 working for Avery Dennison VIP Buffalo, New York, as a territory representative based in Texas. Not knowing the first thing about labeling, his job was to sell computer labels. Cochran learnt fast.

Cochran states he was given a territory that he called 'nasty'. So the first thing he did was to take a road trip to visit the top 20 customers in 90 days. Very quickly, he realized that the brand meant nothing out there. He says, 'My first priority was to bring value back to the brand, so I worked with specific customers to sell them high quality, high cost data processing labels.' In a year he had tripled the size of his territory, and was eventually promoted to become national sales manager. He had found his niche.

In 1995, Cochran decided to buy a facility in Lackawanna, New York. He says, 'The labels industry is a maturing market – so the best way to capture market share is to find a niche and provide the most competitively priced and highest quality product.' Which is exactly what he's done. He advises, 'Focus all your efforts that will allow you to become market leader – think of process and systems. This strategy will yield a high level of service.' Since 1996 when Pinnacle Label began to produce commercially, it has more than doubled its sales with profit margins having increased overall by 10 per cent.

Pinnacle Label purchases rolls of face and liner stocks,

"Cochran identified a need to turn laser sheet material from a commodity into a stock/custom business"

silicone coats the liner stock and joins them together with adhesive to produce laser labels on four custom-built Didde presses. The company also specializes in warehouse distribution, and pick and ship applications requiring multiple forms.

These multiple forms are 'mission critical'. Many mail-houses and distribution centers with centralized IT departments need to run jobs on high speed laser printers that can handle orders of up to 50, 000 sheets per shift. High-speed printers on average can cope with running up to 135 sheets per minute.

Adhesive problems

Traditionally, printing at speed on laser printers tends to cause adhesive to squirt out from the edge of the sheet because of the intense heat (400 degrees) and pressure (40 pounds). Often, the adhesive migrates across the rollers causing them to jam up. 'When you have large volumes of pick and ship labels that you need to run to meet a specific time frame, usually during the night shifts – where you need to get those boxes to go out in the morning but you don't have the labels ready to ship out of the warehouse – you're in deep trouble,' states Cochran. James Iacono, an IPS senior account executive with Image Printing Solutions (IPS), one of the largest West Coast distributors for commercial print, forms and labels, says, 'The Pinnacle Label Form Combination Sheet provides my clients with clean throughput and flat stacking in some very challenging warehouse settings.'

One of his clients, IM Logistics, is headquartered in Southern California and claims to be the world's largest distributor of computer peripherals and consumer electronics. 'IM works at a pace where time is paramount. This sheet has been reliable, cost-effective and easy to handle. And in its own way, it has helped fuel IM's growth.'

That's why Cochran identified a need to turn laser sheet material from a commodity into a stock/custom



business. In doing so, Cochran developed a pattern print hot-melt adhesive, so that when the material is converted, the die-cut laser sheets are left with a clean edge around the sheet to prevent adhesion bleed when put through the printers. Pinnacle's separate liner division is proprietary.

Marketing savvy

From the outset, Cochran knew he had to build a stock brand. 'We do 100 per cent resell – no direct – so we had to create a brand to help our distributors leverage their way into long run customer accounts like KB Toys, Levis Strauss, Williams Sonoma and the like. We had to start off slowly teaching the customer base. We are the only independent label manufacturer from here and across the pond that focuses exclusively on this product line – with technology that allows us not to be a captive customer to Fasson or Raflatrac so we can custom configure cut sheet laser labels to run through

laser/inkjet printer.'

In fact Pinnacle Label claims it was the first to introduce universal face papers compatible for all markets and for any print system. Retail customers working in a business office environment could then use one product across any of their printers/copiers at competitive prices. 'Everyone needs something new to sell as a broker, so we give independent distributors a whole set of marketing tools,' says Cochran. 'We will quote, custom-make the sample label and run a test at the potential customer's plant at our cost,' confides Cochran. His technical team is present at the test run. A project can take anywhere from three to nine months to develop from the initial sales call, to producing a working document, test running, to completing the contract. Cochran feels that it's being able to validate what you say that's critical. 'We come in fully equipped – give the potential customer actual live product and we can present the 'package'. Once we get the contract we will have that

"We are the only independent label manufacturer from here and across the pond that focuses exclusively on this product line"



“The best way to capture market share is to find a niche and provide the most competitively priced and highest quality product”



business as long as the application lasts. It's beautiful – our product is qualified on the first call.’

Global ambition

Cochran wants to take this product Worldwide. He has since teamed up with Bill Podojil, managing director at Escribo Label, based in the Netherlands, as his first move into breaking other markets. ‘We both have mutual interests and skillsets. I told him about the success we were having in the States so we decided to form a partnership,’ says Cochran. Both collaborated to design a stock product using the same business model as the one in the US. From there Cochran and Podojil say they have selected the highest calibre manufacturers/distributors to cover specific regions and have also adapted the brand name to fit in with European values, ‘Adhesion free edges’, using exactly the same technology.

Product in Europe was delivered to the market on the 1st June 2003. Podojil from Escribo was able to secure an order for half a million dollars with NSD, a 75-year old company in Rotterdam. Within a year, Podojil and Cochran feel that growth will reach one million euros including both stock and custom products.

Digital

Right now Pinnacle Label is working on introducing new stocks to be run on digital printers including Xerox, HP Indigo and Heidelberg. Although Cochran says it's still in its infancy, he believes Pinnacle will become the standard for those equipment manufacturers. ‘Already end use customers have brought our product to their equipment manufacturers – so we’ve been recommended at the grass roots level, based purely on performance, says Cochran. ‘HP Indigo requires synthetic and polyester labels with ‘Clean Edge Technology’ and lay-flat capabilities. Going global with our product will allow us to embrace the latest technologies. Digital requires ‘pop’, we’re in the process of creating paper that will produce the brightest, whitest, smoothest sheet and will work across all print plus digital formats.’

Cochran feels he has successfully built a brand in a non-branded world – bringing new products to the market place. ‘Be aggressive in product development and this will help to increase your profit margins.’ He thinks that his biggest growth drivers will be in the development of new face papers and third generation adhesive/coating technology that he hopes will yield double-digit profit growth annually for the next five years.

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Turkish Delight

BOPP manufacturer Polinas is located in the middle of one of the fastest growing labels markets in the world, and has ambitious plans as a global supplier. **Andy Thomas** reports from Izmir, Turkey

Nestling in the mountains above Izmir in Turkey, Polinas started manufacturing BOPP film in 1985. In those days, Polinas found that being a Turkish company was a problem for some customers in the US and Western Europe, who had outdated ideas about the level of Turkish industrial development. So Polinas has had to prove the quality of its materials the hard way, culminating in the recent award of ISO9001 and the AIB Certificate of Conformity with Hygienic Conditions.

Polinas' location at the historical junction of Asia, Eastern Europe and the Middle East puts it in the middle of one of the fastest growing labels markets in the world. From this base Polinas has developed into a global player, with successful direct sales operations in the US and Australasia. Indeed, Polinas now claims to be the 5th biggest BOPP operation in the world, exporting to 46 countries.

L&L recently visited Polinas to see the start-up of the company's 7th BOPP line, engineered with the ability to produce BOPP down to 10 microns at 375 metres/minute. Applications are principally for overlaminating films for labels and flexible packaging, where 12 micron films are currently used. The first 10 micron films are now undergoing field trials at a key customer.

The development of a 10 micron film is particularly beneficial for bottlers, who can realize a 20 per cent increase in yield per roll. Polinas is committed to working with bottlers to ensure their applicator machinery can handle the new films, which have different stiffness characteristics. Converters will also have less downtime between rolls, providing their presses can handle the thinner films (web tension and temperature control are key elements).

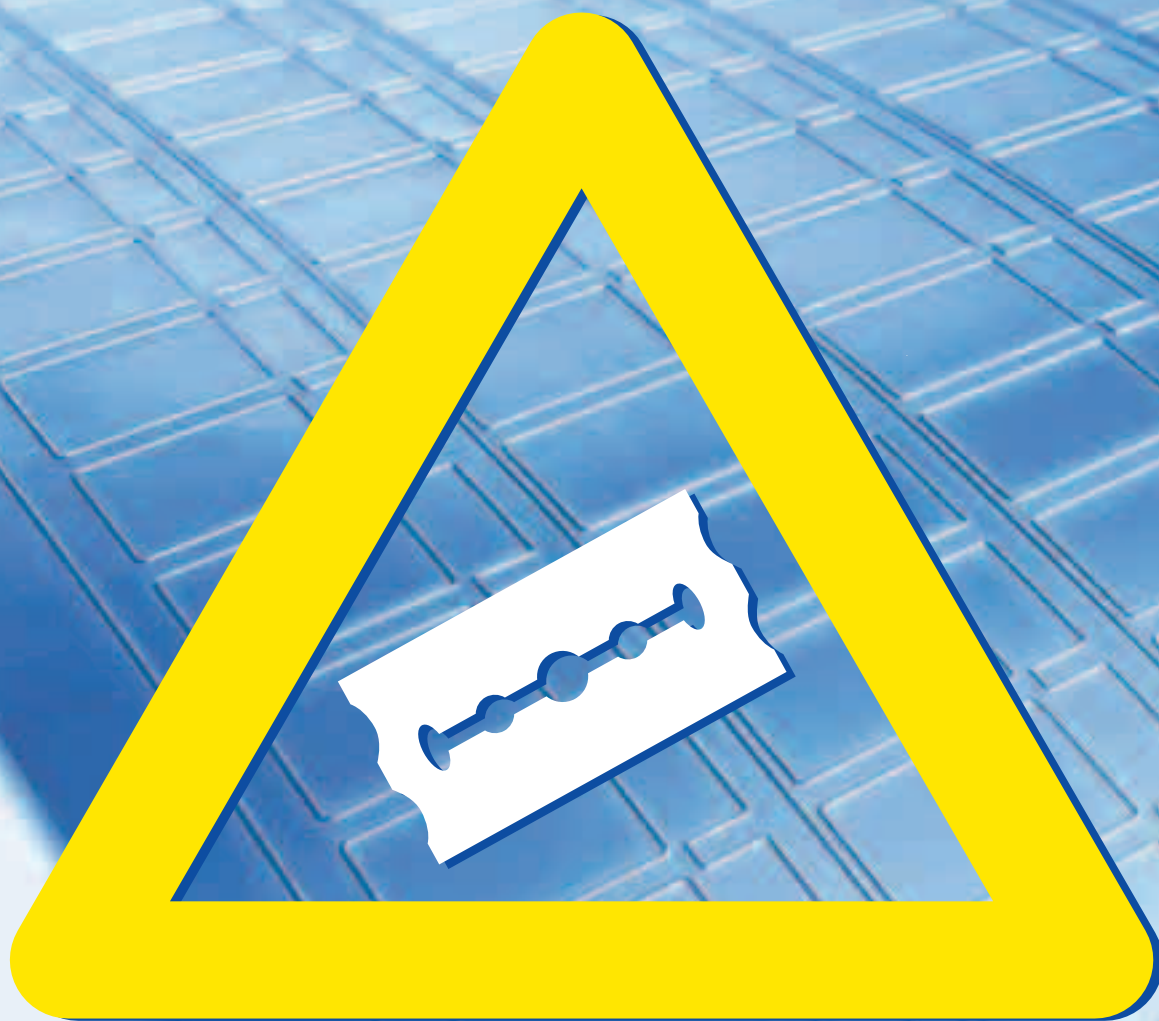
"The 8.2 metre wide line will also be used to produce a new range of IML films and to generate much needed new capacity for the exploding roll-fed bottle label sector"

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“Up to now a lack of capacity meant Polinas could not go after new labels markets as aggressively as it wanted to, particularly IML and roll fed bottle labels”

The 8.2 metre wide line, installed by Dornier, will also be used to produce a new range of IML films and to generate much needed new capacity for the exploding roll-fed bottle label sector. The line adds an additional 35,000 tonnes capacity, taking Polinas' annual BOPP production to 100,000 tonnes. It represents a total capital investment of around \$30M.

Polinas sees labels as a key future market, 'a major focus of our group, with continued opportunities arising from the replacement of paper with film labels,' according to sales and marketing manager Ali Aksu.

The new BOPP line is the first part of an ambitious plan for Polinas. By the end of 2005 it is looking to install two completely new lines, one for bi-oriented (BOPET) Polyester (2004) and an eighth BOPP line (2005), making a total investment over the next 2-3 years of \$60M.

'This will make us into a full range packaging supplier of BOPP, PET, CPP and MOPP, coated and uncoated,' says Aksu. The site is certainly big enough to absorb this added capacity. It already includes substantial warehousing totalling some 3,500 tonnes, allowing Polinas to stockhold for its major customers.

Up to now a lack of capacity meant Polinas could not go after new labels markets as aggressively as it wanted to, particularly IML and roll fed bottle labels. 'These new investments will make us more competitive and more

global, which we have to be if we want to stand up,' says Ali Aksu. The US and Eastern Europe are seen as the key markets to attack.

An interesting recent development is the growing number of narrow/mid-web label converters who are buying Polinas' films, which is an indication of the growing demand for shorter runs of high quality film labels in a market still dominated by wide web CI and rotogravure presses.

End use markets

Key end use applications for Polinas' BOPP films include cut and stack, roll-fed wraparound, and pressure-sensitive face-stock in a range of finishes including pearlescent and metallised. A metallised PS face film is currently being trialled and was shown at Labelexpo.

Inmold label (IML) films are an increasingly important application, and Polinas has developed a new version of white pearlescent IML film which was also first seen at the Brussels show.

Polinas sees roll-fed bottle labels as a key future market. It has been active in this sector in the US since the early '90s and in Australia and New Zealand since the mid-'90s. These markets mainly used lamination, with single ply materials favored in Europe. 'This is one area where we need the new capacity the new BOPP line gives us,' notes Ali Aksu.

Metallised wraparound labels are another new product unveiled at Labelexpo, developed on Polinas' recently installed 2.4 metre wide metalliser.

Although not directly related to the labels industry, Polinas has invested a lot in its tear tape capacity, an exciting area of development which could be of interest to label converters looking to broaden their product offering into flexible packaging.

As well as developing new labels-related film, Polinas' well equipped R&D department is researching a line of 'smart' films, including an anti-fog film and an anti-bacterial film now out for trials.

This non-coated film has active ingredients which target harmful bacteria, prolonging shelf life of food products. Such a product could have applications as part of a 'smart' label placed inside a food package.

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The new coater will allow Polinas to increase penetration in thin laminating film, roll fed bottle labels and IML.



Platinum Silicones

Platinum-catalyzed silicone coatings offer good release performance properties. However, in the past, applying these coatings to polyester (PET) films required the use of more costly primed films or was problematic due to anchorage (silicone rub-off) or corona treatment issues.

A new series of platinum-catalyzed, thermally-cured silicone coatings has been commercialized that brings all of the positive attributes of platinum-catalyzed silicones to unprimed, plain polyester films. A proprietary additive in these coatings enables them to adhere to plain polyester without corona treatment. As a result, release liner users can now obtain liners with the dual benefits of platinum-catalyzed release coatings and readily available plain polyester films.

Polyester film performance

As a substrate for silicone-coated release liners, polyester film is more thermally stable than other types of film (e.g., polyethylene or polypropylene), enabling it to be processed at temperatures as high as 250°F (121°C). It is a smooth, hard film, which facilitates sharp die cuts. Film caliper can be precisely controlled, and polyester films are available in many degrees of clarity and thickness. (See Table 1).

Table 1. Performance Characteristics of Polyester Film

Characteristic:	Polyester Film
Thermal stability:	Processable at 250°F (121°C)
Caliper uniformity:	+/- 5% cross web
Smoothness:	< 10 Sheffield smoothness
Cleanliness:	Fiber-free
Strength:	Very high tensile strength for high-speed applications
Die cutting:	Provides a hard surface to cut against
Clarity:	< 1% to > 25% haze

Label manufacturers have seized upon these characteristics and developed laminates that meet many market

requirements. See-through or clear labels have been very successful, and transfer tapes, polyester liners for medical products and other products have caused the polyester liner market to grow at estimates of 10 per cent per year.

Coating system alternatives

A number of silicone coating systems are available to the polyester release liner manufacturer.

Solvent-diluted, tin-catalyzed silicone coatings offer easy-release on one-sided polyester film applications. However, easy release is the only performance option available since tight-release additives do not crosslink into the silicone coating matrix and therefore migrate, causing release performance to drift over time. Also, they cannot be coated onto opposite faces of the polyester film because they will block.

Silicone coatings that are cured by ultraviolet or electron beam radiation are also commercially available. Wide ranges in their release performance have been observed due to the concentration and functionality of the reactive groups of the polymers.

Platinum-catalyzed silicone coatings are thermally cured coatings that provide many desirable performance characteristics. Coatings can be formulated with easy, or premium, release. Substrates can be silicone coated on one or two sides without the coatings blocking. Additives can be incorporated that increase the force necessary to remove the adhesive from the liner. Additionally, release is smooth and consistent at multiple stripping speeds and uniform over time.

The challenges

Until now, blending the beneficial attributes of plain polyester film and platinum-catalyzed silicone coatings has not been a simple task.

The constituents making up a polyester film vary from supplier to supplier, and can inhibit the cure of a silicone coating or cause loss of anchorage between the silicone coating



Bob Van Oss, senior chemist at Loparex discusses the benefits of Platinum Silicones on plain PET films

and the film substrate.

One solution is for the release liner manufacturer to purchase a polyester film that has been coated with a silicone-adherable primer. This primer enables platinum-catalyzed release coatings to achieve full cure and anchorage to the polyester film. There are many drawbacks to this, however. Primed films can cost twice as much or more than unprimed polyester films. Additionally, the need to purchase a primed-grade film increases the number of substrates the liner manufacturer must inventory. And the number of grades of primed polyester film available is very limited.

Another solution is to prepare the film for silicone coating by corona treating it. Corona treatment oxidizes chemical groups on the surface of the polyester film. Corona treatment can be done in-line with silicone coating and accomplished through relatively inexpensive technology.

There are a number of drawbacks to corona treatment. First of all, treatment must be consistent, as excessive

“Platinum-catalyzed silicone coatings are thermally cured coatings that provide many desirable performance characteristics”

treatment can lead to cure inhibition. Additionally, poorly maintained corona treater rolls can cause voids in the treatment, which leads to coating rub-off. For two-sided release liners, treatment during the second coating pass can damage the silicone coating on the first side, resulting in elevated release in the damaged areas.

Several years ago, silicone suppliers recommended formulating platinum-catalyzed coatings for plain polyester film through the use of corona treatment, anchorage additive and high concentrations of crosslinker. The drawback to this formulation technique is that the high concentration of crosslinker increases release through a phenomenon known as acrylic lock-up.

Acrylic lock-up is the increase in release force when acrylic functional groups on an adhesive, bond to excess silicone hydride in the release coating in the presence of platinum catalyst.

A new solution

Table 2 compares the release performance of a new platinum-catalyzed silicone release coating designed specifically for use with plain polyester films (7300) with a traditional, high-crosslinker release coating formulation (X6POP).

The 7300 coating interacts very little with the adhesive and gains only 2 grams of release force, while the excess crosslinker in the X6POP interacts with the adhesive,

Table 2. Release Performance – New Formulation (7300) vs. High-Crosslinker Formulation (X6POP) – Acrylic Lock-Up¹

Formulation	Room Temperature	Heat Aged	Release Force Increase
7300	8 grams	10 grams	2 grams
X6POP	17 grams	38 grams	21 grams

¹Release is grams per inch for 1mil dry of Monsanto Gelva 1753 Adhesive. Release coatings 7300 and X6POP are platinum-catalyzed, easy-release coatings on plain polyester film

Key features

- A new series of platinum-catalyzed, thermally cured silicone coatings (7300 series) has been developed especially for use on plain polyester films
- Additionally, an elevated-release additive allows release levels to be modified from easy to tight, enabling differential release applications
- These coatings, which employ a proprietary additive to enhance anchorage, have been used successfully to coat plain, unprimed polyester film without the need for corona treatment or the addition of high levels of crosslinkers
- Acrylic lock-up problems are eliminated and release performance is enhanced

causing a 21-gram release force increase.

Table 3 compares the release performance of the new 7300 coating with that of a hexenyl release coating (7200). Platinum-catalyzed hexenyl silicone coatings were designed to provide premium release with low acrylic lock-up. As Table 3 shows, both the new coating and the hexenyl coating have a room temperature release of 8 grams and an almost identical 9- or 10-gram heat-aged release. These results illustrate the premium release of the new 7300 coating and its lack of acrylic interaction upon heat aging.

This performance is confirmed by a clear label manufacturer who reported, 'We applied an adhesive coating to a 7300 silicone-coated release liner and to another release liner made by a polyester manufacturer. The 7300-coated liner had an initial release of 8 grams and aged up to 9 grams after 10 days. The other liner had an initial release of 9 grams but aged up to 28 grams.'

To control release values, the 7300 coating can be formulated with an elevated-release additive. The effectiveness of this elevated-release polymer is shown in Table 4.

The tape release results in Table 4 demonstrate that release force is increased as the amount of elevated-release polymer is increased. The data also show that very tight release can be obtained at high concentrations of the elevated release polymer.

Easy-release silicone coatings and elevated-release silicone coatings can be applied to opposite faces of the polyester film to create differential release liners. One such liner is a 1.5-mil clear polyester film with 7300 silicone coating on one face and 7335 coating (7300 coating containing 35 per cent elevated-release additive) on the opposite face. The characteristics that make this liner successful for this transfer tape application are a wide differential as measured by two different tapes, and very good cure of the coatings.

The results in Table 5 demonstrate that there is a sizeable release difference between the two faces. This allows the transfer adhesive to remain with the 7335 tight side during unwinding, without sticking to the easy-release 7300 face. Also, the low 5.5 per cent extractables demonstrates full cure of the

Table 3. Release Performance – New Formulation (7300) vs. Hexenyl Formulation (7200) – Premium Release

Formulation Room	Temperature	Heat Aged
7300	8 grams	10 grams
7200	8 grams	9 grams

Table 4. Effect of Elevated-Release Additive on Release Performance

% Additive	Release Force Against Tape A ¹
0%	15 grams
30%	60 grams
50%	130 grams
70%	235 grams

¹Tape A is Kendall Curity 3142 tape stripped at 12 inch/minute

Table 5. Transfer Tape Application – Differential Release and Cure Performance

Tape	7300 Coating (0% Elevated-Release Additive)	7335 Coating (35% Elevated-Release Additive)
Tape A ¹	15 grams	80 grams
Tape B ²	35 grams	80 grams
Silicone Extractables	5.5%	5.5%

¹Tape A is Kendall Curity 3142 tape

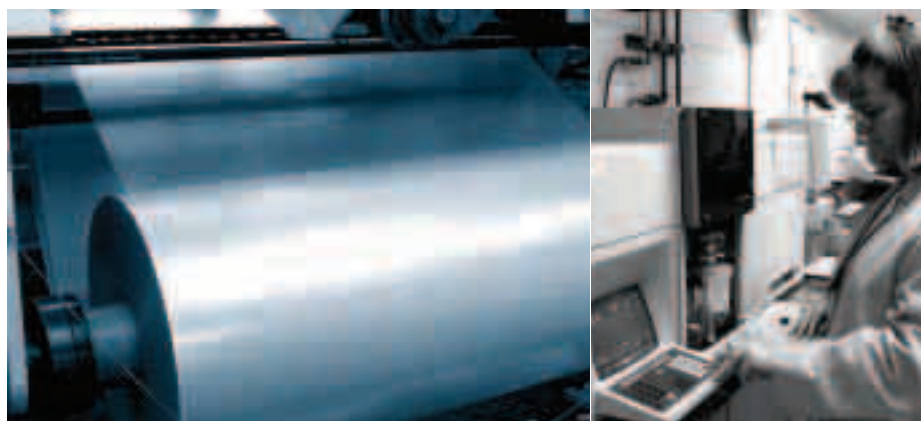
²Tape B is Tesa Tuck 4651 tape

silicone coatings.

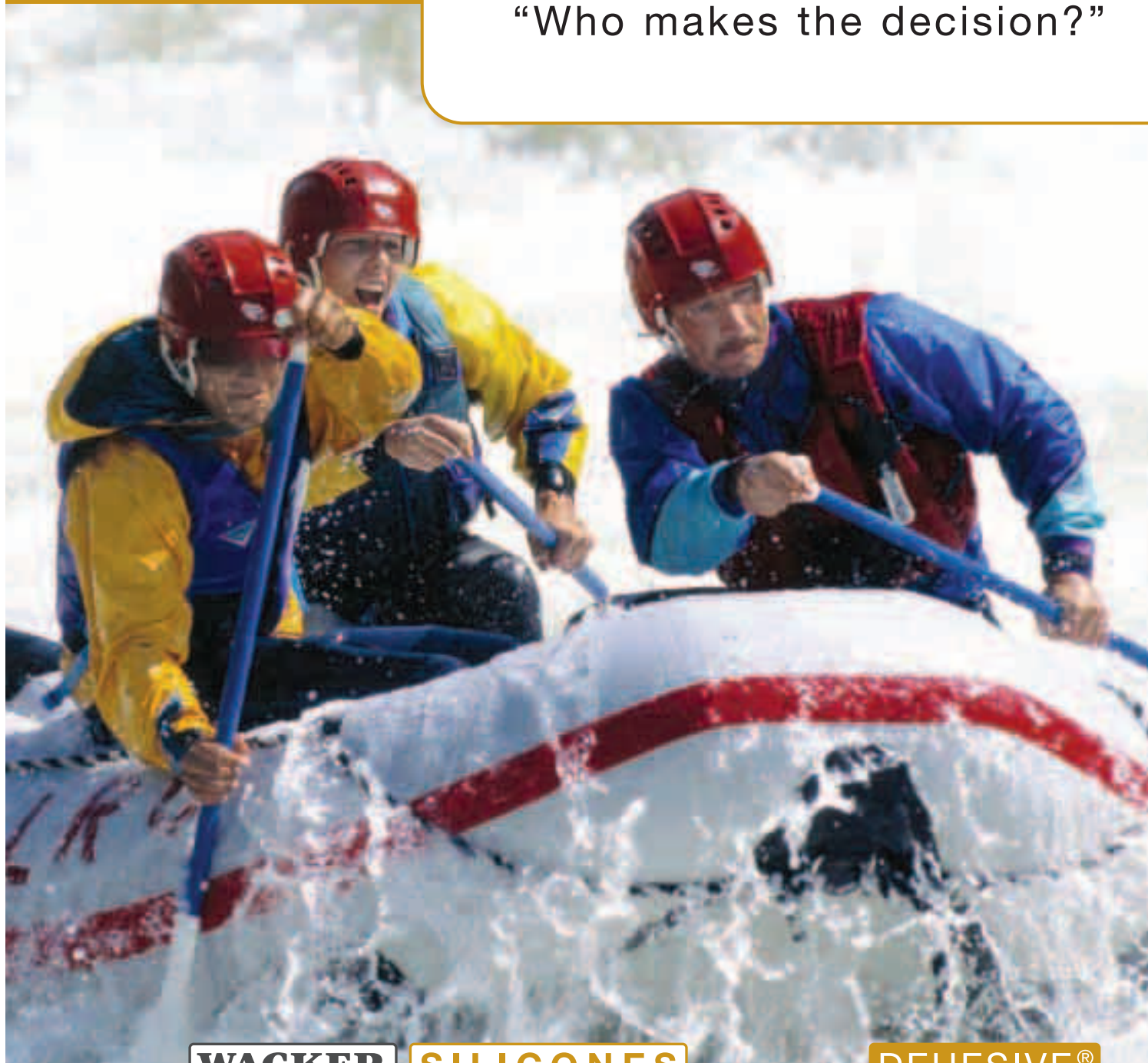
The coater used to coat these release liners is a high-speed piece of equipment that has been optimized to provide high-quality film to the market place. A gravure coating head provides uniform silicone coating weights. Web tension controls and drives have been updated to provide the best tension control for the web as it passes through each section of the coater. And considerable modification has been undertaken to ensure that the web is not scratched during the process of silicone coating or slitting of the liner.

With this new coating technology, it is now possible to create release liners and laminates that combine the release performance advantages of platinum-catalyzed silicone with the performance advantages of plain polyester films.

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Altrif Label embraces digital print

Digital printing is making slower progress in label converting than expected some years ago. Many label printers are still reluctant to invest in this technology. Quite an exception to this rule is Dutch label converter Altrif Label, which recently installed two HP Indigo ws4000 digital presses. **Durk Schilstra** reports on this dynamic label converter

Altrif Label is one of the biggest label converters in The Netherlands. 20 Years ago, in 1983, Free P. Doomen founded the company and started with three men and a 3-colour Iwasaki press. Since then, the family-owned company has been growing and growing and now employs 90 people. In 1988 Altrif Label moved to the industrial park of Roosendaal, a small industrial town near the Belgian border. There the company developed into the biggest letterpress label printer of the Benelux countries.

Ko-Pack showroom

The printing hall is a showroom of Ko-Pack rotary presses. Altrif Label has quite a number of 25 and 40 cm wide presses with 3 to 12 letterpress printing units, and Iwasaki semi-rotary presses. The standard width of 25 cm of most presses allows for an easy interchange of jobs when necessary. However, not all machines have the same configuration. Every press is provided with special features and together they give the company a wide choice and flexibility in label compositions.

Some presses are also equipped with screen printing units to create the special effect this printing technique offers for vivid colours, security features and braille. Other presses incorporate flexo varnishing units or hot foil units. Of course, all machines have die-cutting facilities. The Ko-pack machines are famous for their ability to combine several layers of

substrates and Altrif Label frequently uses this possibility to produce sandwich labels.

A specialty are the booklet labels in which the company is European market leader. Labels with booklets of up to 19 pages can be produced. Altrif Label also produces this type of label for many foreign label converters. For the further development of the booklet labels a close co-operation exists with a Japanese and an Australian label converter. Altrif Label also claims to be market leader in the manufacturing of scratch-off layers used for lottery tickets and security labels.

'Quality and service are our most important marketing tools', says CEO Free Doomen. 'Our customer is king and that is not a meaningless slogan. We go all the way in fulfilling his needs and wishes. In printing quality we do not make any concession. That's why we stick to letterpress as our main printing technique'.

Six years experience

Print quality was also an important reason for choosing the HP Indigo machines. 'We did look at inkjet printing, but at present the quality does not comply with our needs,' observes Technical Director Dion Goderie. 'Also the speed was a drawback. We wanted a digital printing technique that delivers a quality comparable to the letterpress quality of our Ko-Pack machines. Digital offset of HP Indigo seamlessly matches that



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(Top) Dion Goderie (left) with next to him standing Free Doomen watching the operation of the ws4000 shortly after installation

(Middle) The newly installed second ws4000 with in the forefront cartridges with Electro-Ink

(Bottom) The inline finishing equipment of the first HP Indigo ws4000

quality. The sharpness, details and colour strength are beyond question. So we are free to produce large runs of labels on the Ko-Pack and short runs on the HP Indigo presses for the same customer. He will not note any difference.'

Altrif Label has an experience of six years in digital printing. In 1997 the Nilpeter DL-3300 with Xeikon fc-printer was purchased. After a difficult start-up time the configuration has been operating very successfully. But now, the needs of the company have outgrown the capabilities of this digital solution. The speed of 15 m/min when printing full colour is one of the advantages of the new machines. The possibility to print up to 7 colours is another. The combination of the four standard colours with orange and purple allows for the printing of many spot colours. With the Indichrome ink mixing station other spot colours can be created as well.

In due time the first installed ws4000 was fully loaded with jobs. In general, runs of 10,000 up to 20,000 labels are produced in digital printing, but also test runs of 500 labels are produced. The growing diversification in labels, which leads to shorter runs, can now easily be met by digital printing. Moreover, the waste of expensive label stock is much less in digital printing than in conventional printing.

In a number of cases opaque white ink has been used to create a label with two different prints on either side, such as used for applications on transparent carriers for glass and PET bottles. For instance, first a full colour image is built up on the Photo Imaging Plate (PIP), then two layers of cover white and then the second image in one colour. The whole combination of ink layers is then transferred to the substrate; this is known as Indigo's one-shot technology.

Personalisation of labels and variable printing of codes and other information is the new service that Altrif Label offers its clients. The digital offset presses will also be used for proofing, now the second machine has been installed.

A wide variety of substrates can be printed. In fact, every substrate that accepts the primer needed for digital offset is printable. These label stocks include PP, PVC and paper. At present the label material with primer is purchased from

"The digital machines have been installed in a separate production hall. Altrif Label does not exclude in the near future a third and even a fourth machine"

suppliers, but Altrif Label expects to coat the label stock in their own plant in the future.

Finishing the digitally printed labels is done in-line, including coating/varnishing, foil stamping and die-cutting. The second ws4000 will be completed with a digital die-cutter from Nilpeter.

The digital machines have been installed in a separate production hall. There is room for more machines, and Altrif Label does not exclude that in the near future a third and even a fourth machine will be added. Free Doomen is very optimistic about the future of digital label printing and its new possibilities to comply with the changing needs of the market. Up till now around 2 million euro has been invested in the digital printing department.

Integration

A complete digital workflow in prepress is a must for digital printing. The company has also invested firmly in this part of the business. The company has a long tradition in full pre-press service, as all letterpress plates for the Ko-Pack machines are made in-house. At present Altrif Label is integrating its sales, planning and pre-press operations into one system and in one room. This allows for very short lines which minimise the possibility of miscommunications.

To complete the picture of this energetic company, it should also be mentioned that Altrif Label sells labelling systems, printers and foils. Service to the customer does not stop at delivering labels.



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Networking

This industry is built on networking. That's why **NELMA**, the North East Label Manufacturers Association, which was founded in 1996 by a group of progressive converters, continues to forge links with one another and vendors.

Natalie Martin reports

Back in 1996, Bob Biava of Driscoll label, Bob Mazzella of Labelmasters, David Fishbein of Trend Printing, Dave Cushman of Sachs industries, Ed Herder of Ramapo Graphics; the founding members of NELMA, decided to create an association for label manufacturers based in Northeastern United States.

Its mission was and still is to provide its membership with

educational, and networking forums designed to help improve their businesses. 'As manufacturers, we felt there was a need for owners and managers of 'like size companies' to be able to discuss openly the non-confidential aspects of business,' says current president of NELMA, Tom Spina of the Luminer Converting Group.

NELMA hosts dinner conferences at which guest speakers educate the attending members about their particular areas of specialty. Past speakers have dealt with sales force motivation and compensation, ISO 9002 certification, employment law, multicolor printing, prepress technologies, and many other relevant issues. Says Spina, 'Any time a new manufacturing technology is introduced, we try to get a presentation from that particular vendor to speak with our membership directly, with a follow on Q&A.' In addition, NELMA arranges field trip visits to key industry locations to give its members up-close and personal understanding of various elements of their businesses. Such visits have included hands-on tours of FLEXcon, DuPont Cyrel, and most recently Pitman Corp.

NELMA also hosts an annual EXPO at which industry insiders offer topical discussions. Selected leading industry vendors offer tabletop exhibits with an emphasis on one-on-one in-depth discussions so that members and vendors can better understand each others' needs and offerings.

Vendor relationships

NELMA believes building vendor relationships is beneficial to members so they can be made aware of all innovations and alternatives in the marketplace, and learn which vendors offer what. 'Relationships with vendors is a critical component to business success, so opportunities to bring vendors with something to offer, together with member companies who may be seeking solutions, are encouraged,' continues Spina. 'We also want to be sure that we do not become a vendor driven organization. We will probably offer limited vendor membership so as not to exceed the label manufacturer member numbers,' says Spina. 'Also, we will probably not allow vendors to sit on the board. A lot of these rules and regulations are being worked on now.'

Pitman Open House

Recently, NELMA teamed up with Pitman who played host to a 'Pre Press Open House' that took place on 29 July 2003 in New Jersey. NELMA converter members were divided into small groups and then guided around Pitman's facilities where DuPont, Artwork Systems and Agfa gave speaker presentations. DuPont talked about Croma Pro Imaging Proofing Solutions and Cyrel Plate Technology and converters said they learnt that proofing is becoming much more cost effective using the newest Ink Jet technologies which are color calibrated. Artwork Systems talked about its complete prepress workflow and the advantages of using its Nexus Prepress workflow versus the typical standard art programs available. Lastly, Agfa talked about Film Technologies and Point Light Systems discussing new screening technologies - a hybrid screen combining conventional screen with stochastic, soon to be introduced into the marketplace. This technology will allow for much cleaner highlight areas. Agfa also went over their various lines of film for different types of uses.

'The advantages to converters of attending vendor presentations is that it brings together multiple vendors under one roof at the same time, amply staffed for individualized attention, which can really only be accomplished with a certain critical mass of converters,' adds Spina.

As a vendor, Frances Cicogna, senior marketing manager, packaging segment from Agfa also felt that the open house was worthwhile. She says, 'The NELMA open house offered us an opportunity to participate in an informative discussion about the issues directly affecting the industry. This type of forum allows idea exchange and information flow amongst participants. The feedback that I received was that the members welcomed

educational sessions and the ability to share information with each other.

The Pitman Pre-Press Open House attracted around 20 converters, with a total of about 40 people. 'We have had a follow up board meeting since the Pitman seminar. All present seemed to think this was the way most future meetings should be held. They are very effective and cost efficient for both vendors and customers. I have spoken to the management at Pitman and they thought the seminar was excellent and offered it again next year. Pitman was able to see about 20 current or potential customers. We will still continue to have our smaller NELMA meetings to allow NELMA members to speak together without the presence of vendors but these vendor-supported seminars are the future for many NELMA meetings.


Current board:

Tom Spina president, Luminer Converting Group; Elisha Tropper, vice president, Prestige Label; Leslie Gurland, treasurer, Logotech; Bob Madaya, secretary; Bob Amarante, secretary.

For further information on future events, visit NELMA's website: www.NELMA.net or email Tom Spina on: tomspina@nelma.net

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Once you've found a winner, why change?

That could easily be the philosophy of any of the 50,000 customers that have relied on Weber Marking Systems to supply their labels and labeling systems in virtually all corners of the globe, says **Ed Boyle**

But in this case it's also the rationale of Brad Weber, president of the Arlington Heights, IL-based converter, for making Mark Andy, Inc., its sole supplier of new flexographic printing presses. Today, 70 of the 90 presses that the 71-year-old converter operates worldwide are Mark Andys, the first installation was a 6.5" three-color Model 810 press in 1975.

Says Weber, 'When I speak to other label converters, and they talk about using presses from a variety of different label press manufacturers in their plants, I honestly don't know why. We've grown up with Mark Andy and stayed with them, and that's given us a big advantage.'

Weber cites the benefits of working with a single press manufacturer as easily as he can list the locations of his company's 13 manufacturing locations in 10 countries around the world: the U.S., Canada, the U.K., Germany, Thailand, Denmark, Ireland, Turkey, Netherlands and France.

'For one, we don't have to inventory multiple parts,' explains

Weber. 'And our employees become experts – each one of them all over the world – on running and maintaining Mark Andy's. It's also a lot easier to train operators on one press type, so we consider ourselves lucky to have the consistency and continuity of one press manufacturer.'

In fact, Weber has only purchased one new press that wasn't a Mark Andy: a 10-color, 16" ProGlide press from Comco International, (now a Mark Andy subsidiary) that was installed in 2000. Quips Weber, 'Six months after we bought the Comco press, Mark Andy saw that and bought the company!' That Comco ProGlide press was installed at Tape & Label Engineering, Weber's St. Petersburg, FL, subsidiary, to print on unsupported film, an increasingly popular substrate for labels.

The 78,000-square-foot Tape & Label facility employs 92 people and converts prime labels for such high-volume markets as bottled water, health and beauty, and pharmaceuticals. At its Southern U.S. subsidiary, seven of the

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12 Mark Andy presses are 10-color.

One of that facility's latest innovations is a new series of resealable prime labels, called ReaseaLabels (trademark), that are designed to provide up to six times more printing space than a normal label. Converted on an eight-color, 10" Mark Andy 4150 press, this new construction provides ample room for printing product use information, ingredients, or mail-in offers, without sacrificing product identification.

Any portion of the label can be peeled back to reveal more product information underneath the label or on the back of its top layer. The top panel(s) can then be resealed for repeated use. Full color graphics can be printed on the front and base panels, plus text can be printed on the backside of the top panel.

Depending on the specific application, any portion of the label can be designed to be peelable and resealable. The construction is also suitable for both round and flat-sided containers. Resealable labels can be applied using standard automatic labeling equipment for pressure-sensitive labels, including all of Weber's label applicator systems.

Ironically, Weber initially purchased Tape & Label Engineering, which was already an experienced color process label converter when it was acquired 22 years ago, to help enhance the company's prime label capabilities at its Chicago-area plant. Ultimately, however, the St. Petersburg location has operated as an independent facility, with its own markets, product lines and customer base. For example, while Weber utilizes UV and UV flexo equipment at its main facility, the wholly owned subsidiary has rotary screen printing capabilities and can produce booklet labels like ReaseaLabels.

Weber began adding UV printing and drying capabilities on its Mark Andy presses some 10 years ago to improve the durability, light fastness and abrasion resistance required by diverse markets from bottled water to engine parts. The company also coats about one-third of its label stock on a 31" Kroenert coater/laminator with hot melt adhesive capabilities.

While Weber remains one of the largest prime label converters in the United States, 70 per cent of the labels the company produces at its 320,000-square-foot Arlington Heights headquarters use three colors or less, and a great many are blank. Most of those labels are thermal-transfer imprinted with variable information at the customer's site using printers produced by a variety of OEMs and sold and serviced by Weber.

The facility houses 28 Mark Andy presses, including Models 820, 2200, 4120, 4150 and 4200 printing two to nine colors and widths from 7 to 20". One of its 10" four-color Mark Andy 4120 presses incorporates an ion deposition unit to print variable information like barcodes and consecutive serial numbers in-line.

A worldwide presence

Another major reason that Weber has made Mark Andy its sole supplier of new presses is that the press manufacturer 'is truly worldwide source... providing service worldwide.'

When Weber had a minor start-up problem with a new press at its Bangkok, Thailand, plant, Mark Andy flew a technician from St. Louis, MO, to correct it in less than 48 hours. Notes Weber, 'I don't think any other press manufacturer could have pulled that off.'

While a mere handful of North American label converters serve customers beyond its borders, a majority of Weber's customers are outside the United States. And so are its facilities. Realizing that labels are fundamentally a 'local' commodity,

"When Weber had a minor start-up problem with a new press at its Bangkok, Thailand, plant, Mark Andy flew a technician from St. Louis, MO, to correct it in less than 48 hours."

Weber has purchased or built plants in growing market segments around the world, and employs over 900 people.

'In 1980, we formed a partnership with Bluhm Systeme, then our German distributor,' Weber recalls. 'Eckard Bluhm, the firm's managing director, introduced us to important international markets, and has helped us grow our business each and every year.'

According to Weber, that relationship has been the model Weber Marking Systems has followed in developing additional ventures throughout the world. 'The keys are our partners in those countries,' Weber points out. 'And we trust their instincts and advice on what each local market requires.'

One of its longest-running facilities, located in East Lothian, Scotland, recently celebrated its 30th Anniversary. Currently, that plant operates seven Mark Andy presses: three 3-color Model 820; a 6-color with UV varnish Model 2200 plus an 8-color unit; and 5-color and 8-color Model 4120.

Five years ago, a member of the British Royal Family, Princess Anne, took part in a gala 25th Anniversary celebration at the 30,000-square-foot Scotland facility, which employs more than 90 people from the small town. Notes Weber, 'When royalty shows up, it's very special. We were very honored.'

Many of the company's other international facilities began as distributorships for its thermal transfer and label application equipment and grew to become printing operations with a substantial customer base. For example, Weber sent members of its experienced production staff over to Bangkok to help a local distributor launch what has become Weber Thailand. 'We probably gave them a five-year head start over what they could



have accomplished on their own,' says Weber. That facility currently operates three 10" presses: a 10-color Mark Andy 4150 UV press, an eight-color Model 2200, and a three-color 830 press.

'That's just another reason why we're a very unique company compared to our peers,' he continues. 'There are estimated to be more than 2,000 label companies in the U.S., and 99.9 per cent of them don't have any sales or manufacturing over a border. We're in Europe, Asia, Turkey, and France. We're already overseas because of the equipment we manufacture, and the software we write and develop in the United States. So when we go somewhere to set up a label operation, we already have established relationships.'

'No job too small'

In spite of its tremendous growth and worldwide presence, Weber has maintained a true entrepreneurial spirit: No job is too large or too small, too simple or complex, notes Randy Stake, manager of Marketing Communications. 'Anything you can use a label for, we produce it, whether it's a down-and-dirty blank label or a beautiful point-of-sale, multi-color label. Foods, pharmaceuticals, secondary labels for use on cartons, all sorts of things.'

Simply by preprinting large runs of base labels with a company's generic information – i.e. shipping details, designs and logos – and then offering equipment from the likes of Zebra, Sato and Datamax that is designed to custom-print variable information on each label, Weber allows its customers to greatly reduce label inventory and maintain product integrity.

'That's really how the company was built,' explains Weber. 'If you manufacture 1,000 different products, and each one has a different part number and description, you used to have to go out and buy 1,000 different labels, and the label converters will charge you for the individual plates and graphics. You also have minimum order quantities, and then you have to store all those labels, which become obsolete if you change your product or it doesn't perform because it's been on the shelf a few years. This is a really simple solution to all those problems.'

In the process, Weber has become the largest re-seller to end-users of thermal transfer ribbons in the world, with annual sales of \$14 million – more than the label sales of most converters.

Weber also recently purchased Geset, a German manufacturer of specialty applicators, to further improve its internal product line, and has more than 60 full-time field service engineers to maintain its products around the globe.

'This is really the concept that we've sold throughout the world,' Weber says of his versatile labels. 'And that's one of the reasons we've been so successful. Plus, we're experts at everything. We've got the full breath of not only labels and labeling equipment, but we can produce everything from a hot-stamp with a hologram on it, to a scratch-off with an ink-jet printed number underneath it, to an award-winning 10-color process label.'

'We've got everything that you could imagine,' adds Randy Stake, 'so we can sell you what you need, rather than what we think you need. We can do it all.'

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Business **sense**

The arrows are pointing up for converters willing to embrace new technologies, adopt practical solutions and offer diverse and flexible services. Prestige Label feels it's experiencing the right growth, at the right pace and has the right accounts.

Natalie Martin reports

'Our business is weird,' says Elisha Tropper, president of Prestige Label. 'This business never works on the same level – either we're working under the gun or hitting a slump. It's never a constant.'

He feels that to gain new business growth, you have to start with the assumption that you can institute change in your organization. 'Changing services is not difficult, when compared to changing production capabilities. 'His company currently delivers advanced graphics management, thru a commitment to digital workflows integrating creative and management software, offers fulfilment services as well as customized distribution and logistics capabilities, all geared to reduce overall costs for the customer.

For example, Prestige recently had to design, print, pack and distribute between 100, 000 and 2, 000, 000 each of 285 different label SKUs, shipped in varying quantities to 85 locations across North America – and all to be delivered on the exact same day. He comments, 'It was time-consuming work, but easy coordination. Once you're set-up for this type of project, it's almost automatic.'

Tropper deliberately picked the industries he felt Prestige could serve well – its core being primary labels for food and beverage, personal and household products, as well as nutraceuticals and retail, promotional and component stickers.

To track customer inventories at both its plant and customer locations, Prestige compiles usage data and keeps up-to-date logs for each customer. For some customers, they will also send representatives into the field to conduct inventory stock checks and automatically replenish labels. 'We've set up a customer with over 1000 skus – with racks and racks of bins of labels. We will check the inventory on a regular schedule and replenish when needed,' says Tropper.

Customer representatives are also available at the plant to answer any technical queries on the spot. Tropper feels that customers appreciate it more when they can get thru to someone who understands the technical issues at the plant level, rather than going thru their sales representative who usually acts as the 'go-between'. This way, they get faster service.

Recently, Prestige Label traded in six old flexo presses towards two new Nilpeter Rotopress 3513 presses. The machines are 13.75" wide, 10-color, UV flexo with rotary screen, and inline hot and cold foil stamping. Tropper emphasizes that the two new ones now produce more labels than the previous six combined together, and this has helped the plant to both expand and add capacity. Over half of the jobs are four-color process so Prestige decided to invest in a Cyrel FAST unit. This has increased efficiencies, and boosted capacity by an estimated 750 production hours per year, with wastage dramatically reduced.

'Managing growth presents its own set of challenges,' explains Tropper. 'You have to schedule competing jobs responsibly. Don't give prospects special attention over existing accounts. You want customer loyalty,' says Tropper. 'Occasionally we need to bump a previously scheduled job to produce an urgent job. As a rule, we will call up the affected customer and ask permission before doing so. Our customers then see firsthand that we would jump through hoops for them when needed.'

He also says that Prestige ensures maximum efficiency by using multiple vendors, identifying their individual strengths and being open with them. 'We try to work beyond the sales person thru to the product manager or even the president. They understand your success is their success,' adds Tropper.

'It's all about micro/macro managing at the same time. You've got to find the right balance between investment/profit – it's a fine line. You either go up or down – you can't stand still. Isolate and crystallize your goals and synchronize your equipment and get the right people behind you. After all, you need to create the right chemistry. We try to remember the hardest customers to win are often your best, once you've won them over. Based on expansion plans already progressing, Tropper is confident that when they hit the year 2004, Prestige Label will have overall doubled its capacity in advanced printing and finishing, as well as in its staging areas for customized distribution services.

Labels in China

The labels business in China is still at a relatively early stage of development, so there are big opportunities for both label printers and suppliers. China specialist and L&L contributing editor **Brigitte Wolff** reports from Shanghai

Whether SARS is still a threat or we are facing the aftermath is irrelevant. Besides the respiratory mask manufacturers, one of the only winners to emerge from the crisis is the label industry. Why? Disinfectants and hand wash lotions which come in a labeled bottle have been booming since the outbreak.

Since monitoring of the packaging industry began in China – particularly labels – a growth of around 20 per cent per annum has been seen, while China's GDP growth was approximately eight per cent. That seems enormous. However, real figures are still small.

China: the world's powerhouse

Worldwide recession is forcing us to seek out the few remaining growth markets, and the pace of development in the country is astonishing.

However, it is usually forgotten that about 60 per cent of Asia's GDP relates to Japan. China is about 17 per cent, but growing fast. The legendary 1.3 billion population figure is misleading: only about 200-300 million Chinese citizens have a spending power comparable to Western nations. The average GDP per capita is still around 1,000 USD – even the 4,000 USD given for Shanghai is only one eighth compared to the 36,000 USD of the USA in 2002. Growth rates are high and therefore reports of sales records are many, but mostly coming from a very low level.

The top of the 'Chinese Iceberg' is certainly Shanghai. It's the real powerhouse of China. We can see a masterpiece of strategic development in urban planning, infrastructure, economy and industry. A lot of Fortune 500 companies have invested in the Shanghai area, some of them even setting up their Asian headquarters in the metropolis. On the other side of the coin, the infrastructure and activities of key industries in the rural regions away from the coastline are poor. This

requires massive logistical undertakings, especially for consumer goods companies and their suppliers.

Value added chain of labels

The participants in the Chinese label industry are predominantly domestic companies. In the last 10-20 years more and more international companies have entered the Chinese market, leading labels to new technical and quality dimensions.

Substrates

World market leader Avery Dennison came to China in the 1980s, starting with a production site in Kunshan, west of Shanghai City. Today, the company has 600 employees on the mainland and they have also set up a Self-Adhesive Conversion College in Kunshan.

Choosing to introduce emulsion coating technology initially proved right. Avery's now has around 25 per cent of market share for label substrates. In 2002, the Guangzhou factory started operation. Avery will soon be the only supplier manufacturing all three substrate technologies, including solvent and hotmelt coating technology, in China, reports

"In the last 10-20 years more and more international companies have entered the Chinese market, leading labels to new technical and quality dimensions"



“By 2002, the pressure sensitive sector was estimated to have a share of about 40 per cent of the entire label market, reaching almost 500 million square”

Avery's marketing director China David Xu. Substrates for new applications such as tyres and special conditions like freezing temperatures will then be available domestically.

The market is quite concentrated: the top six substrate manufacturers supply about 50 per cent of the domestic market. These are foreign invested companies such as Four Pillars of Taiwan, KK Gaoguan, Lintec and King Label, as well as Raflatac. The majority of the numerous local producers address the lower end of the market. The future will see further investment and for example, Lintec just invested in a 30 million plant for polyester film products in Suzhou, west of Shanghai City.

Printing equipment

In China there are about 80,000 printing enterprises. But only two per cent produce about the half of all print output. Of these companies, 20,000 print packaging.

The annual print volume per capita is around four Euro – not even one per cent of that in Japan (373 Euro). Other volumes are: USA 261 Euro, EU 230 Euro, world average 46 Euro. Again the annual growth rate in China is phenomenal – 14 per cent – while Japan's print output is shrinking and others' growth is stagnating.

According to a recent survey conducted by Heidelberg China, the Chinese package printing and particularly label printing, is growing even faster. The label printing sector is hard to extract exactly, because Chinese printers are less specialized. As Robin Goettle, marketing manager of Heidelberg China knows, they print all the orders coming in – today a brochure, tomorrow an advertising leaflet, the next day labels. Their best selling machine is a letterpress with universal utilisation possibilities.

The Chinese label market is dominated by letterpress technology and offset is also quite common. The more specialized the printer is in labels, the more he is involved in flexo printing, of which UV flexo is the most popular.

The narrow web press specialists are selling to China too: Gallus benefits from the excellent position of its partner Heidelberg, Nilpeter operates in China via its long established sales partner Votra/MAN Roland in Hong Kong and Mark Andy/Comco is represented by United Printing equipment, a Beijing based US-Sino venture.

The number of Western narrow web machines is estimated

to still be low, yet demand is reportedly increasing. Domestic competitors are Beiren and some smaller companies. However, none of them is specialized in narrow web only.

Label industry

The entire label market in China is still crystal ball gazing: the huge number of printing companies with their various product programmes are not mirrored in the official statistics.

From smaller surveys, we know that the majority of all decoration methods still use screen direct print. In total, labels constitute over one billion square meters, with the majority in wet glue.

PS labels

The printing of pressure sensitive labels began in China at the end of the 1970s following opening to the outside world. Equipment and technologies were first imported from Japan. With the constricted conditions at that time, the labels processed showed just simple words and graphics.

By 2002, the pressure sensitive sector was estimated to have a share of about 40 per cent of the entire label market, reaching almost 500 million square meters. The growth rate from 2001 to 2002 was 20 per cent. Experts forecast a minimum annual growth of 20 per cent for at least the next three years.

Per capita consumption in China is almost 0.4 square meters, compared to 15-16 square meters in the United States. Taking only the 250 million East coast and Urban Chinese into account, this number is still only two square meters. Based on those 250 million consumers and assuming the pressure sensitive market grows constantly at 20 per cent over the next few years, China will reach a per capita consumption comparable to the West in 2013.

Around 50 per cent of the market is high quality labels comparable to Western standards and the remainder has two or less colours and simple patterns or just text. Ninety per cent accounts for paper and ten per cent for films, with the latter growing faster.

Applications in the top segment are dominated by household and beauty products, such as household cleaners, shampoo, body lotions. Second are pharmaceuticals, followed by variable information printing (VIP), such as thermal printing, and finally electronics. Other applications with smaller shares include batteries, food and beverages, toys and lubricants.



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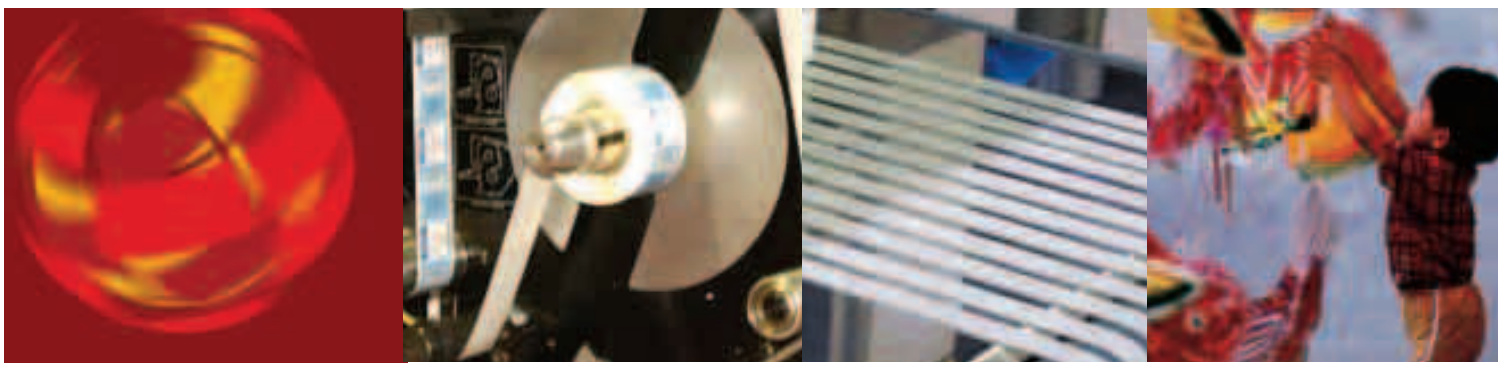
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International label specialists have invested in printing factories for labels only and focused on the top quality segments. Some of them followed their customers to the region as they were not able to find adequate quality at local suppliers.

Leading is Taiwan's ChengMay with around 10 per cent market share, appearing under the name ChengWay in Shanghai. Its sister-companies are HuaKuan at Kunshan and Zhenfeng in Shenzhen in the Southern province Guangdong,

CHENGWAY INSTALLS SECOND COMCO PROGLIDE

Leadng Chinese converter, ChengMay, has installed a second nine-colour 16" Comco ProGlide MSP flexo line at its ChengWay plant in Shanghai to improve the quality of its label production for the burgeoning Asian market. The two high specification Comco lines are the culmination of an eight-year investment programme designed to put ChengMay at the leading edge of quality label production in China.

The two Comco lines are similarly specified with Martin Automatic butt splicers, web cleaner, corona treater, nine UV/hot air flexo print stations, Stork rotary screen units, UV lamination, three position rotary die stations, video inspection, sheeting and Martin transfer rewinders. In addition, the first press is fitted with hot foil, flat bed die cutting, turner bars and delam/relam facility. The new lines complement existing Sanki rotary letterpress equipment, as well as a comprehensive pre-press facility and a variety of finishing plant.

Specialising in PS labels mainly for the consumer packaged goods market, (shampoo and detergents), and food, beverages and petro-chemical products such as motor oil, ChengMay is looking to expand from its own large domestic market in Greater China into export areas of the Asean countries, as well as North America, where the standard of work produced on Comco equipment is well proven and internationally accepted.

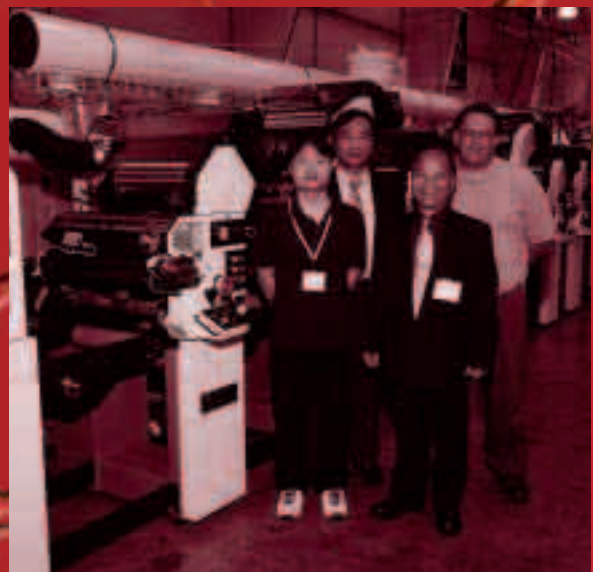
The parent company ChengMay Enterprise Co was founded in 1969 and is based in Taipei. Shanghai ChengWay was opened in 1996, and now has sister companies in Shenzhen and Kunshan. The Shanghai ChengWay production facility has now grown to almost 17,000ft of production capacity, and employs 190 with an annual turnover of US\$13m.

Commenting on the company's choice of Comco, Mr T C

Chou, General Manager of ChengWay, Shanghai said: "We spent a long time investigating flexo technology because we needed to be certain that its quality would match that of our letterpress machines. Comco was not the cheapest flexo option, but it does offer high-end combination facilities, and we believe it leads the field in label printing technology. With Asia making the switch to flexo, the two Comco ProGlide machines put us ahead of our competition."

Aware that the move to quality flexo requires more than just the right printing press, ChengMay spent 12 months preparing themselves in the areas of pre-press, plates, inks, substrates, and the myriad of ancillary technology needed to make the most of their investment with Comco. The result, they believe, will make them a world-class manufacturer, able to compete on quality, price and delivery. For example, it gives them the opportunity to print at more than twice the speed of their letterpress machines and can be used in unsupported film applications as well as prime and sophisticated labels. With fast make-ready and low waste levels, the Comco ProGlide is a highly productive line.

Concluding, Mr Chou commented: "Not only can we produce the right product at the right price, we can now offer our customers a diverse range of complex and sophisticated products that will enable them grow their businesses. Our vision is to respond quickly to trends in the market, and the Comco machines will allow us to do that."





“Experts estimate the number of PS label manufacturers to be between 5,000 and 6,000. Half of them may specialize in labels only”

next to Hong Kong. Both specialize in electronics and other non-food applications. ChengWay supplies brand companies such as Johnson and Henkel.

Other big investors are Komark of Malaysia and Winlabel of Hong Kong. Komark has three production facilities: in Guangzhou, Shanghai and Tianjin, covering the three major economic centres in China. Winlabel just added to its Guangdong factory with another one in Shanghai. Other newcomers are Super Enterprise from Malaysia and the German Steinbeis Group, which started a battery label printing facility in Hefei, Anhui in Central China.

Experts estimate the number of PS label manufacturers to be between 5,000 and 6,000. Half of them may specialize in labels only. The top three companies account for 30 per cent of the market. The majority of manufacturers are rather small companies.

Other label types

Sleeves are more and more popular today. Unilever uses them heavily for its shampoos, and recently, sophisticated drinks targeting younger consumers have used them to display their fun designs. Some dairies also use sleeves for milk and yoghurt drinks and Coca Cola recently introduced a new design using sleeves around its PET bottles.

In-mould labeling (IML) is still an advanced technology in China. Some companies are aware of the advantages of IML and exhibit great interest in the approach – mainly those whose products are in-mould labelled in other parts of the world. Initial investments and economies of scale are still missing, as the following examples show:

Case Study 1:

The leading Chinese manufacturer of hair care

products, SiBao from Wuhan in Hubei Province, planned a re-launch of its leading brand in 2000. Major requirements were upmarket appearance and anti-counterfeiting. They wanted to introduce an in-mould labelled bottle.

When they could not find what was required, SiBao decided to set up its own blow molding operation.

Not only finding a blow moulding machinery supplier capable of installing IML insertion equipment, but finding a supplier for in-mould labels in China also seemed impossible.

Once the decision was made to print their own in-mould labels, the search for a suitable substrate was another difficulty, even with the support of leading substrate manufacturers.

The final result is that SiBao not only produces in-mold labels in-house, but also the entire blow moulded IML bottle. Contrary to Western packaging strategies, SiBao has installed its own packaging manufacturing division. Keeping the know-how inside the company also guarantees that SiBao products are not that easy to copy.

Case Study 2:

Again concerning injection moulding applications, the Chinese ice cream market leader is Unilever Wall's brand, in a unique package. In a country where the cooling chain is still under construction and interruption of the cooling chain is rather likely, it was a courageous decision to start with the 'family pack' segment.

Their first product 'Viennetta' – in a carton box – was already a success. Then the second product 'Carte d'Or' – already a successful product in Europe – was launched. The packaging is an oval injection moulded container with a closure-lid. Both the lid and the container are in-mould-labelled.

Wall's found a local injection moulding company as well as a local in-mould label supplier, one of three in China reporting to produce IML. The product was a success in the Shanghai marketplace, even though the package still has room for improvement.

End users

Western brand companies have entered the Chinese market with internationally successful products in high quality packages. They have forced the whole supply chain to produce to another dimension of quality and performance. Multinationals either brought their packaging suppliers with them or taught domestic companies to raise their manufacturing standards. Chinese consumers were demanding more and more products with higher standards. This helped to push the overall level of domestic suppliers hugely. ►



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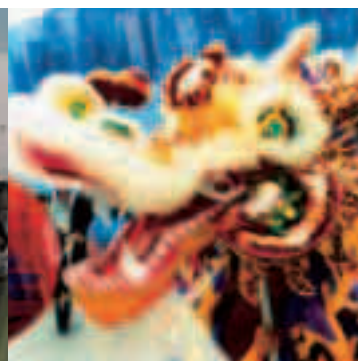
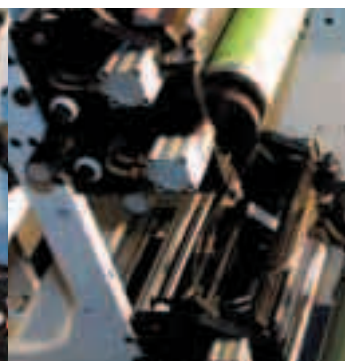


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Major International Label Users in China

Company	Location
Amway	Guangzhou: household products, personal care, cosmetics
Avon	Guangzhou: cosmetics
Beiersdorf	Trading Corp. in Shanghai
Colgate-Palmolive	2 x Guangzhou: day care, personal care (toothpaste), fabric care/ Sanxiao: oral care (toothbrush)
Gillette	Shanghai: razorblades
Henkel	Tianjin: detergents, personal care
Johnson&Johnson	Shanghai: detergents, personal care, shampoo; Medical: eye care etc.
Kao	Hangzhou: detergent, Shanghai: shampoo
L'Oreal	Suzhou: beauty care, cosmetics
P&G	Guangzhou: 3 plants: shampoo, personal care, toothpaste Beijing: detergents, Chengdu: detergents Tianjin: 2 plants: personal care, shampoo
SC Johnson	Shanghai: household products
Shiseido	Beijing and Shanghai: cosmetics
Unilever	HQ in Shanghai (skin personal care, wash), plant in Hefei: detergents, personal care, shampoo

Source: Abacus Corporation

Retail

Coming from the back end, it is obvious that the infrastructure of the retail chains is not as developed as in Europe or the USA. In Europe, the strong position of the leading retail companies represents a gigantic spending power: the top 10 European retail chains represent about 70-80 per cent of all retail sales.

The buyers are highly qualified and come along with specification lists which go right down to the packaging – for example they must be environmentally friendly or must be returnable without more handling (In Germany this led to the interesting development that one-way containers – bottles and beverage cans – almost disappeared). The retail giants command a specific power through their use of 'private labels', a concept that has not yet taken off in China.

Leading supermarket companies in China are: Hualian, Carrefour and Walmart. Convenience stores such as Lawson, 7- Eleven and numerous domestic chains have also mushroomed

in the last two years. These companies concentrate on fast-moving items, either brands or products, with an attractive appearance.

Outlook

Each industry in the value added chain for label production has a high market potential in China, particularly in the high quality sector. Marketing becomes more and more important as more suppliers want to gain the consumers' attention. With competition getting stronger, appearance and sophistication will become even more important. This will lead to Western driven qualities, products and finally investments.

Materials and machines available in China are not yet sufficient, and there is still room, not only for import, but also for investments in own production.

Labelexpo China 2003 will bring international equipment and machine suppliers to China – some of them for the first time – to meet the highly demanding local label printers.

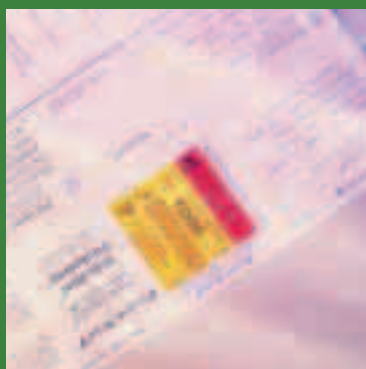
About the author

Brigitte Wolff runs the Abacus Corporation, an international management consulting firm based in Shanghai, whose mission is to help companies turn their Asian business vision into reality. The multicultural composition of its teams – Chinese project managers together with the European management in Shanghai – ensures that both the global perspective and local knowledge are integrated to create custom tailored, interdisciplinary, and holistic solutions for its clients. Abacus is a partner of The Tarsus Labels Group in China.

Labelexpo China 2003 update

The inaugural Labelexpo China and the associated conference, being held at the Intex Exhibition Centre in Shanghai on 9th-11th December this year, has generated much interest in the world of labels both within China and internationally.

Confirmed press manufacturers exhibiting include Gallus, Mark Andy, Nilpeter, Omet, AB Graphic Int, Douglas Hanson, HP Indigo, Labelmen, Lintec and Rotoflex – along with materials and technology suppliers including Ahlstrom, Akzo Nobel Inks, Alphasonics, Avery Dennison, Raflatat, YUPO, Stork, Surface Specialties (UCB), RK Print, Prochem, Zeller & Gmellin, JM Heaford, Open Data, Polyonics, Printex SRL, Rotometrics, UCB, Unilux, GEW and Vacmet Packaging. In addition, more than another 100 other suppliers have expressed a serious interest in the show.



Green Bay in Mexico

Natalie Martin recently interviewed Paul Hasemeyer, senior vice president of Green Bay Packaging Inc., Coated Products Operations to discuss its purchase of a majority interest in ESAMEX, a Mexico City plant. The new operating name is Green Bay Mexico

Green Bay Packaging Coated Products Operations has been doing business with ESAMEX since 1991 and has developed a very strong working and personal relationship with them. Green Bay Mexico will draw upon the well-established sales and distribution network of ESAMEX.

‘The potential and importance of the Latin American labels market compared to North America is that the rate of growth will continue to be good as more end user production is established in Mexico and Latin America,’ says Hasemeyer. ‘We feel there is a growing demand in Mexico for the quality and consistency of pressure sensitive materials produced by Green Bay Packaging.’ The company will draw upon the technical ability and financial resources of Green Bay Packaging Coated Products Operations. Combined, Green Bay Mexico will provide expanded product lines and inventory to service its customers needs with consistent quality.

Hasemeyer believes the acquisition will offer three key advantages for its customers. He says, ‘We will significantly upgrade the plant’s slitting capabilities, as well as increase the breadth of the product line, but as importantly, we will raise inventory levels to allow for just-in-time product delivery for the market.’

Green Bay Mexico will continue to offer all of ESAMEX’s previous broad line along with products from Green Bay Packaging’s domestic line, including standard white papers (gloss, semi-gloss, EDP and pharmaceutical), fluorescents, direct thermal, thermal transfer, laser, foils and holograms, and films.

‘We’re excited to be able to give our customers in Mexico a higher level of product, a greater level of support and a deeper array of options. The new acquisition brings an established alternative to a growing market, giving label converters a stronger source of supply than they’ve had in the past.’

Business practice:

He continues, ‘In terms of conducting business in Mexico, I don’t see any major obstacles going in as a Western company. Sometimes government controlled issues



Paul Hasemeyer
Senior vice president
Green Bay Packaging Inc.,
Coated Products Operations

move slower than what we are accustomed to. However, we look to our internal staff and that of Green Bay Mexico to better understand the customs and culture of doing business in Mexico.'

Mexico differs from North America in terms of technology because North America has had the advantage of time and resources in developing technology and has the lead in that regard. Says Hasemeyer, 'We will use our resources and ability to support Green Bay Mexico with enhanced technological development.'

'To market ourselves in Mexico we are combining Green Bay Packaging and Green Bay Mexico promotional resources to market Green Bay Mexico. We began with a celebration presentation to the label converting industry on August 21, 2003 in Mexico City.'

"The potential and importance of the Latin American labels market compared to North America is that the rate of growth will continue to be good as more end user production is established in Mexico and Latin America"

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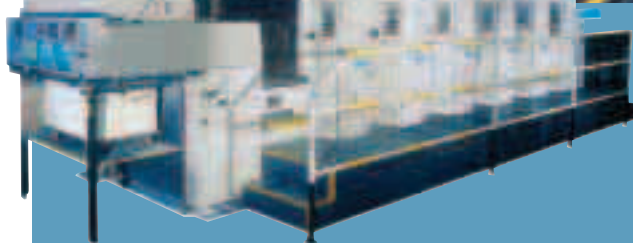
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Riding the wet glue curve

A willingness to undertake project management, value engineering, and taking costs out of the supply chain have enabled wet glue printer Buckleys in the UK to survive in a tough market. Now flexo or digital printing could be on the horizon, as [Andy Thomas](#) reports



Buckleys is currently based in a former mill building in Stockport, Manchester, which provides plenty of space for warehousing, print finishing and dispatch. This size of building gives advantages on printing large volumes and call off management coupled with the space to expand and install further machinery as the business grows

Printing wet glue labels is surely the most competitive sector of the labels industry, one plagued by overcapacity, cut-throat pricing and the spread of reverse auctions. To survive and prosper, printers must be able to offer end users unique propositions, and one company which is achieving just that is Buckleys.

Based in a spectacular converted mill building in Stockport, in the northwest of England, Buckleys has a history stretching back to 1881. Today two thirds of Buckley's output is punched and square cut wet glue labels, with the remaining one third promotional print and direct mail. A high value niche is labels for composite tubes.

Buckleys became an independent company in 1989, but 10 years later was in big trouble. It was rescued by John Bower, an entrepreneur and investment banker with a number of highly successful companies under his belt. Bower recognized that the company was severely under-invested, and initiated a \$2M investment programme across all areas of the business to drive increased turnover and profitability.

It took two years for the investment to have a significant impact, a 'tricky period' as Bower describes it. 'We were a company with a \$6M turnover, and in 2001 lost a major customer and two other big customers. But turnover rose through \$7M in 2002. It has now passed \$8M on the way to a target of \$10M. We are still a sleeping giant.'

As well as investment in technology – across pre-press, press and finishing – the new Board of Directors aimed to turn Buckleys into a company driven by quality control and service, concentrating on areas like Just-In-Time delivery and dedicating areas of the factory to storage for customer call-off.

A significant investment was the Radius Pecos Management Information System (MIS) which gave the new management team the ability to take snapshots of the company's performance and track progress.

The second key feature of Buckleys' recovery was an intense concentration on added value label production, as well as more efficient production of longer runs of 'standard' labels. Buckleys



runs three MAN Roland B1 size 700-series presses, one 4-colour and two 6-colour, with the most recent press specified with twin flexo coaters offering both aqueous coating and UV varnishing, which can be freely mixed and matched. The twin coaters can lay down a wide variety of finishes on various substrates including metallised papers and plastics in thicknesses up to 1mm.

A Gerber CAD/CAM system claimed the first to be used in the graphic arts market – the system was designed for fabric cutting – is used to cut relief blankets for the twin coating units on the Roland presses. The digital imposition data from the Artpro pre-press system, modified to allow for dispo, is used to generate the cutting forme in just a couple of minutes. 'This replaces the scalpel and ruler method traditionally used to create a cut-out blanket,' points out production director Steve Trotter.

There is a big push to achieve effects using in-line coating which previously were only obtainable with off-line or more expensive processes. 'For example, UV inks are higher quality, but more expensive. Our R&D is concentrating on developing conventional inks with IR emulsions which deliver the same brilliance as UV,' says Trotter.

Buckleys has also had 'fantastic success' with metallics printed in-line, according to Trotter. 'We can simulate bronzing effects while achieving more subtle effects than with blocking.' Buckleys has been working with a pigment maker on a new silver ink which is getting ever closer to the gloss levels of a metallic paper. Gold inks still present a problem – they are 'flat and pale' – and these are still blocked, 'but technology is now coming through to print golds which bridge the gap,' says Trotter.

Trotter also points out that Buckley's Artpro software allows the company to print in one pass what previously would have required multiple passes: 'Normally you would print a solid and heavy black and let it dry before running through again. Now our spreads and chokes are accurate enough for us to do it in one pass.'

Buckleys has also done a lot of work on tightly registered pearlescent varnishes to ensure there is no picking or striping of varnish. 'One of the big challenges is making black sit on

State of the market

The recovery of Buckleys' fortunes is a remarkable achievement given the tough conditions prevailing in the wet glue sector. 'Price is a very big issue we have to deal with, and is not made better by reverse auctions,' says John Bower. But overcapacity is the biggest problem faced by the wet glue industry: 'There are too many players in the wet glue market, and as soon as companies go out of business, they turn up again as 'Phoenix' companies, so capacity is not taken out of the market. Things are starting to change, however. End users are no longer putting up with it and are sticking with suppliers who can guarantee continuity.'

Buckleys is also having to cope with the centralisation of purchasing by end users, with one client recently moving its purchasing operations to Brussels. This is making the company focus more on the European market, which currently accounts for around 10 per cent of its labels-related business.

top of a pearlescent varnish,' says Steve Trotter. 'Trapping silver and black onto a pearlescent varnish to print in one pass is a real challenge.'

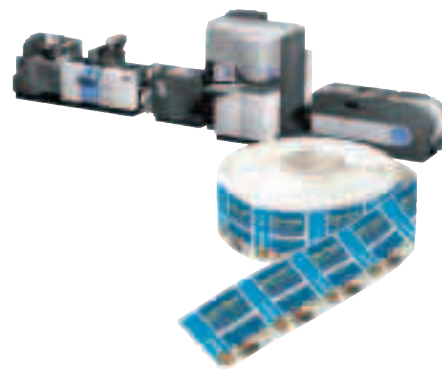
The Roland 700 press is specified to run at high speed with its in-line varnish units. Ink pumps are specified so the ducts do not have to be filled by hand, fed from 200 kilo drums and 1,000 kilo batches to ensure consistency through long runs. The press has a special optical sensor for printing clear plastics, and there are ionisation units throughout the press for anti-static control. These technologies ensure the press can print onto a range of substrates from label papers and films to metallised and linen embossed substrates up to lightweight boards.

Buckleys has heavily embraced the six-colour Hexachrome printing process, which allows ganging up of composite jobs and means special colours can often be dispensed with.



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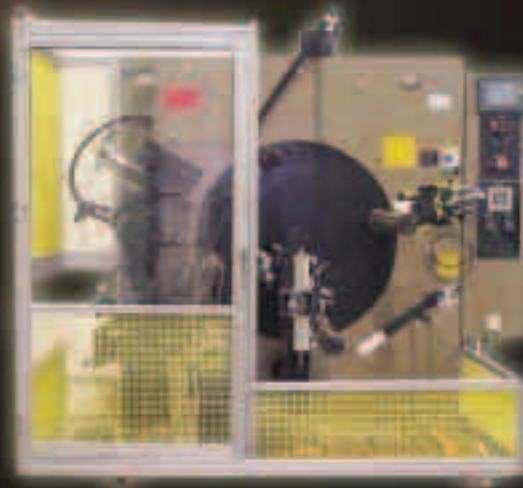
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As part of the 1999 investment programme, Buckleys installed Artpro software for power imposition and trapping, a Purup-Eskofot Magnum imagesetter and a CopyDot scanner. Additional investment to complete the updating of the pre-press department has seen the installation of a Purup Eskofot Violet Laser CTP system using photopolymer plates giving run lengths up to one million impressions and a new digital cromalin system.

Already most end users are happy with a digital proof delivered by digital cromalin or Epson inkjet, although wet proofing is still encouraged for high tech labels using special papers, varnishes etc, so they can be run right through the process to application.

Buckleys will action as much of the design work as required by its customers, but likes to get involved as early as possible in the design cycle to look for ways to maximise press efficiency. A consultancy service at the end user's plant forms part of this process: 'We'll look at RH levels at the end user's plant, the temperature and how labels will be stored, the glue that will be used and the varnishes best suited to the job. We might suggest a different glue to help the label apply. All our sales people have to be technically minded,' points out sales director Tony Stevens. Customers and suppliers are invited to 'Partnership in Excellence' meetings which look at areas like eliminating downtime and cutting time to market.

Flexo future?

Buckleys has a young management team – the directors have an average age of 44 – which is keenly aware that the wet glue market is under attack from alternative decorating technologies.

In response, Buckleys is trialling cut & stack plastics, although Tony Stevens concedes that reel-fed technologies now have the edge in this sector. 'In the soft drinks market wet glue is being overtaken by roll-fed film and pressure-sensitive labels.'

So the company is examining both digital and flexo technology. 'Digital is very interesting in the wines and spirits sector, and we're very open minded about setting up a flexo division. I could forsee a digital press and a flexo division at Buckleys,' says Tony Stevens. Stevens is particularly excited by the possibilities of in-line converting techniques such as embossing, which is currently outsourced.

The company formed part of the ELMA delegation which visited Labelexpo Europe to hold its annual conference and take a close look at rotary print and converting technologies.

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Working with Heinz

Despite John Bower's reservations about reverse auctions, one of Buckleys' biggest contracts arrived through a successful reverse auction bid. 'Although we do view them with scepticism, one of the advantages of the reverse auction process is that it allows new suppliers to bid for work,' says John Bower. The customer in question is global fmcg giant H.J.Heinz, which recently awarded Buckleys Grade A supplier status following an audit of its manufacturing and quality control systems, from receipt of raw materials through manufacturing to delivery. Grade A status means Buckleys consistently delivers to stringent specifications, enabling Heinz to use the materials without further inspection. Buckleys has supplied over 40 million wet glue labels per month for the Heinz Baked Beans brand since 2001, and Heinz recently extended this contract to include wet glue labels for the Heinz canned pasta and puddings ranges. This has increased the volume of labels supplied to H.J.Heinz to nearly 60 million a month. The Heinz relationship exemplifies the principles of strategic partnership which John Bower set out to implement back in 1999. Buckleys effectively project manages the supply of wet glue labels, co-ordinating production and loading schedules over three month periods. 'There's no speculative work, it's all contract work, although it does include a lot of short notice work,' says Bower. 'If we know where the peaks and troughs are coming, where the pressure points occur, we can plan for that and optimise our own production, finishing and storage. This is only possible once you have an understanding of everybody's situation.' Buckleys' suppliers are a key part of this chain. 'The audit process is a complete package, where our suppliers have to be as good as us,' comments sales director Tony Stevens. 'We have established strategic alliances with our suppliers, and this benefits everyone. Paper suppliers want to know that printers are not blaming a bad print job on the quality of the paper! So Buckleys deals directly with the mills and not merchants, and we also have strategic links with our ink suppliers.' Buckleys is now undergoing accreditation to the BRC / IOP Technical Standard and protocol for supplying food packaging materials for retailer branded products.

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TLMI Golf Day

The fourth annual TLMI Scholarship Golf Challenge, sponsored by Labels & Labeling, raised a whopping \$15,255

The total amount raised by the golf outings, which have been held over the last four years, has almost reached \$40,000. This money will go directly towards further education for students interested in pursuing a career in the tag and label industry. The annual golf tournament has become a major source of funding for the scholarship program.

Bud Gray, vice president-general manager, Cypress Multigraphics, Inc., said: 'The TLMI Scholarship Golf Outing has become an annual event for many of us in the converting sector. We are provided the opportunity to contribute to the TLMI Scholarship Fund through our golfing, while networking with industry professionals, and the total experience is invaluable.'



Team 1

Steve Krogulski - Labelexpo
Peter Lombardi - Rosemont Convention Bureau
Jim Freeman - Donald E Stephens
Joe Carlucci - Carlucci Restaurant



Team 3

Ronn Christensen - Black Diamond Marketing
Mike Derda - Paper, Film & Foil
Scott Kessler - Pillar Technologies
Scott Bieda - Paper, Film & Foil



Team 4

Larry Skaja - CTE
Tasha Janowski - Labelexpo
Joe Angers - Tarsus, Inc
Don Petkus - CTE



Team 5

Tom Cobery - Aladdin Label
Brad Weber - Weber Marking Systems
Dick Schwartz - Aladdin Label
Frank Sablone - TLMI



Team 6

John Alonso - AET Films
Terry Klimowicz - S.C. Johnson & Son
Chris wood - Dims! Organizing Print
John Hartman - Dims! Organizing Print



Team 11**Team 12****Team 13****Team 11**

Brad Kabb – Mack And Parker, inc.
Don Kossow – BDO Seidman, llp
Doug Emslie – Tarsus Group
Jim Romnek – Tarsus group

Team 13

Wayne Richter – Wallace Computer Services
Bob Turner – Wallace Computer Services
Paul Brauss – Mark Andy
Mike Keim – Wallace Computer Services

Team 18**Team 19****Team 20**

Michael Panko – Hyatt Regency
Peter Mulheran – SICPA
Roger Pellow – Tarsus Group
Ray Mackura – Avery Dennison

Team 22

Roger Wright – Nastar
Mark Diedrich – Ameriprint
Mike Evans – Acclaim Label
John Miller – Acclaim Label

Team 7

Rob Fulton – RES
Grant Bailey – Donald E Stephens
Andy Bigane – RES
Dave Houston – RES

Team 8

Rick Clark – Kocher + Beck
Brian Ludwick – Packageprinting
Kevin Gourlay – Rotoflex
Erich Midlik – Prime UV Systems

Team 9

Randy Buckley – Buckley Graphics Inc
Jim Buckley – Buckley Graphics Inc
Bruce Hill – Mactac
Barry Madel – Mactac

Team 12

Scott Fisher – WS Packaging
Denny McGee – Mark Andy
Chris Rocque – WS Packaging
Dan Ray – WS Packaging

Team 14

Chris Illman – Coakley Tech
Wayne Francis – Case New Holland
Joan Bridge – Coakley Tech
Michael Lenegar – Case New Holland

Team 15

Ted Alden – Alden & Ott Printing Inks
Scott Janis – CM Associates
Bud Gray – CM Associates
Chris Faust – Aquaflex

Team 16

Angelo Capozio – Alden & Ott
Lori Davis – Contract Converting
William Schnettler – Contract Converting

Team 18

Daniel Brindley – Tarsus Group
Pete Costanza – The Ink Well
John Gervans – The Ink Well

Team 21

Mike Fairley - Tarsus Group
Mike Sullivan – Keene Technology
David Taylor – Radius Solutions
Tom Harle – Radius Solutions

Team 14**Team 10**

Richard Black – Fuji
Dave Nieman – All Printing Resources
Rick Mix – FTA
Steve Liezert – All Printing Resources

Team 15**Team 16****Team 17****Team 17**

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Donald Hill – Doubletree Hotel
Mark Hartman – Doubletree Hotel
Paul Teachout – Aquaflex

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Some like it cold

Cold stamping is increasingly establishing itself as a possible alternative to the traditional surface decoration method of metallised hot stamping foils. In both Europe and the USA, use of the cold process has now reached significant levels. Leonhard Kurz GmbH & Co. KG, one of the leading manufacturers worldwide of hot stamping foils, is strongly involved in the cold stamping sector. The company reports a high level of industry interest in the cold stamping process and a continuous growth in demand.

Stamping on label printing machines

Cold stamping is a process in which metallised stamping foils are transferred to a substrate by means of a UV curable adhesive. First, the UV adhesive is applied to the substrate by means of either offset or flexographic printing. Then the cold stamping foil, which is structurally similar to hot stamping foils, comprising a carrier foil and stamping layer, is fully laminated onto the substrate. Next, the adhesive is cured through the carrier foil by means of a UV lamp. In the final step, the carrier foil is stripped from the substrate. The process does not require a hot stamping station. Stamping is carried out on conventional label printing machines. Most label printing machines that have a laminating station integrated into them, or that have been retrofitted with a cold stamping unit, are suitable for this process. The retrofit unit includes stamping foil wind-off and take-up facilities and a press roll. The silicone rubber coated press roll (Shore hardness 85 – 90) brings the foil into contact with the preprinted adhesive. Machine manufacturers have already developed and brought to market transfer stations that have been specially adapted for the cold stamping process.

Process advantages

The cold stamping process does not require any stamping tools; but instead uses only printing plates. These are not only much cheaper but also much faster to produce, which increases the flexibility of the printer. While the delivery time

Label finishing using the cold stamping process is gaining importance. **Leonhard Kurz** is in a good position to comment, producing both hot and cold foil systems, and here

Wolfgang Burkard, director of product management for the Graphics Industry, makes an assessment

for an engraved or etched stamping tool can be up to two weeks, a printing job using cold stamping can be carried out at very short notice. In principle, the labels can be printed in a single day and shipped on the following day. The stamping speed of 60 to 120 m/min achieved using the cold process is also particularly high and only attained in exceptional cases in the hot stamping process. Furthermore, no specialist stamping know-how is required. In short: anyone who can print can also cold stamp. A further simplification compared to hot stamping worth mentioning is that the cold stamping adhesive is printed in register with the inks and therefore register problems between preprinting and cold stamping seldom arise.

Finally, cold stamping opens up new design possibilities because gradients and half-tone images are not a problem to produce.

New prospects for the industry

Cold stamping applications are currently restricted mainly to self-adhesive labels and tube laminates. This application is however also equally suitable for folding boxes and flexible

“The appearance of cold stamping is increasingly approaching the look achieved by hot stamping and offers a particularly economical alternative for producing decorated packaging of striking impact”

packaging materials. In theory, most types of smooth paper and plastic packaging that are processed from roll to roll can also be cold stamped. The appearance of cold stamping is increasingly approaching the look achieved by hot stamping and, in the above-mentioned applications, offers a particularly economical alternative for producing decorated packaging of striking impact.

Cold stamping is however also especially interesting for labels that have up to now not been finely finished or for short runs. When, for example, a large number of varieties of a particular packaging is required, as with soup sachets or spray paint cans, it is too expensive to hot stamp the variable elements because a large number of stamping tools are required.

Decoration by means of the cold stamping process, however, may be performed economically since it only requires that the printing plates be exchanged. A further advantage is in the finishing of temperature sensitive materials, for example in-mold labels or shrink labels, because cold stamping requires no heating, which could otherwise adversely affect the labels.

Prerequisites for good stamping results

■ Materials and equipment

The cold stamping process is suitable for use on smooth, non-

absorbent materials. If porous, absorbent materials do need to be decorated. A primer, lacquer or a suitable ink will need to be preprinted on the material to cover the paper or cardboard fibers – at least in those areas where stamping is to occur. Of course, the stamping foil itself plays an essential role in the stamping result. To ensure full transfer, cold stamping foils need to release easily – even at high stamping speeds. At the same time, the foil must also stamp cleanly despite



these easy release characteristics.

To be able to provide reliable advice on the suitability of a particular adhesive for cold stamping, various UV adhesives have been intensively tested in the Kurz development laboratory.

Several free radical curing adhesives delivered very good results both for flexographic and offset printing. The Kurz laboratory is continuously testing new adhesive systems to ensure that an up-to-date recommendation list is available to customers at all times.

In theory, virtually all smooth, non-absorbent surfaces can be decorated using the cold stamping process; this includes not only plastics-based self-adhesive label materials but also cast-coated paper or printed cardboard. Depending on the substrate, the coating weight of the adhesive should be in the range of approx. 3 to 7 g/m². When used on rough, untreated paper or cardboard surfaces, Kurz recommends preliminary trials involving preprinting the substrate with a primer in order to seal the fiber structures.

Normal high-pressure mercury lamps can be used to cure the adhesive. The lamp wattage should be regulated according to the speed of the machine. The higher the speed of the machine, the higher the required lamp wattage. Typical values are in the range of 120 to 200 Watt/cm.

■ Processing

Besides the materials used, various settings and factors during the coating process also play a role in the stamping result. This includes the separation distances between the printing unit, application roller, UV lamp, and foil release. To avoid wrinkle formation, Kurz recommends that distances be kept as short as possible.

In an ideal machine arrangement, the total distance between the printing unit and foil release would be no more than 1m. According to Kurz technicians, machine speeds can lie between 45 and 120m/min. Furthermore, based on their experience, a flat release angle for the carrier foil leads to a better stamping result.

In conclusion it should be said that the stamping result can only ever be as good as the application of the adhesive by means of offset or flexographic printing. It is therefore essential to achieve an optimum printing quality for the adhesive.





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One-stop shop in Portugal

Portuguese converter Olegario Fernandes has set itself up as a one-stop packaging shop, converting a wide range of materials from pressure sensitive and filmic labels to cartons on its ProGlide MSP press

With run lengths reducing and margins shrinking, printers everywhere are looking for something that will give them an edge in the market and set them apart from their competitors. In most cases, this involves investing in new technology, but the question is, which way to go – down the established route that carries lower risks, or into new areas where there is a higher tariff of risk and reward.

One company that has taken the second path is Olegario Fernandes Artes Graficas SA, based in Cacem, near Lisbon. Founded in 1922 as a commercial jobbing print supplier, the company grew under the prudent stewardship of Mr Fernandes until 1968, when, with the move from letterpress to offset looming, he sold his interests to the present owner, Joao Baeta.

With offset technology came new presses, initially Nebiolo and then Heidelberg, as the company sought to expand its markets into wet glue labels and cartons, particularly for the pharmaceutical market in Portugal. Today, the company's plant list includes single, two, and four-colour Speedmasters, with a Bobst and other converting handled offline.

A factory relocation in 1993 from the centre of Lisbon to Cacem, some 20km away, gave the company an opportunity to investigate the type of new technology that would increase its productivity and profitability. By now, existing customers were looking for a 'one-stop' supply of different types of package printing, and with the move from wet glue to self-adhesive labels growing, Olegario Fernandes began to look in earnest at what narrow web machinery had to offer.

The initial investment was a Gallus R200B letterpress machine. But with the rapid advances being made in flexo quality, it was not long before a Comco Cadet was installed as a pre-cursor of what became a major tranche of investment in 2002, with the acquisition of a Comco ProGlide MSP line.

According to production manager, Duarte Sousa: 'We used and still use the Cadet as a training ground for our staff, for whom the new concept of printing flexo reel to reel came a culture shock to offset hands steeped in sheet-fed production. Although the learning curve was quite long, we never doubted that flexo was the right way to go, especially with the support we received from Comco and its local agent Santimel.'

On three occasions Sousa and his project team visited Comco's production and demonstration facilities in Milford, Ohio, to test run jobs and ensure that the company's technicians had a secure grasp of the technology and what it could offer. Visits were also arranged to existing Comco users in the USA, to witness how the flexibility of the ProGlide made significant changes in the way work could be scheduled.

By the autumn of 2001, Sousa was convinced, and placed an order for a 13 inch (330mm) Comco ProGlide MSP (Multi Substrate Press) specifically to produce folding cartons. The machine was installed in June 2002, with the first commercial job being produced by the operators while still undergoing training from Comco's personnel. The press went straight into production, and twelve months on, is working triple shifts, six days per week.

Sousa outlined his rationale: 'We chose Comco because they

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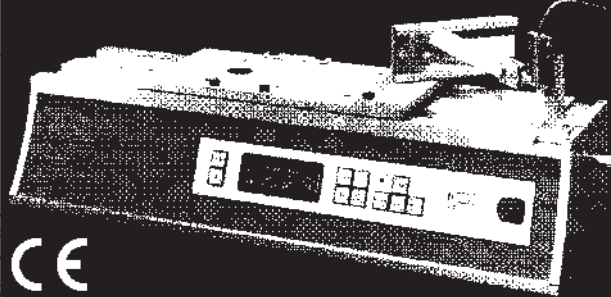
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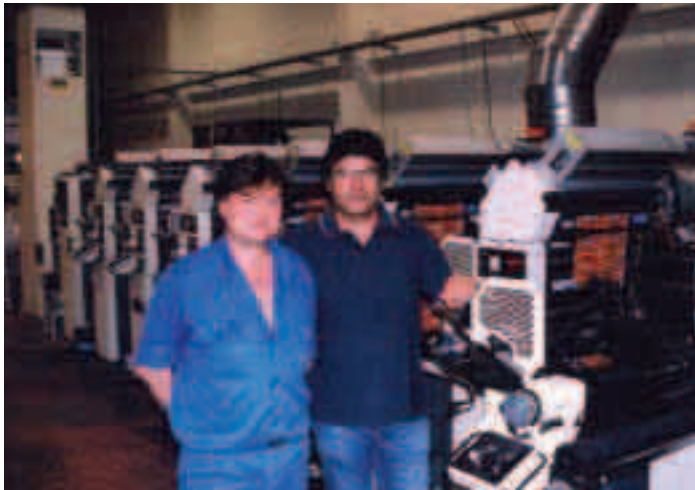
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Print manager Antonio Nunes and production manager Duarte Sousa chose the Comco for its flexibility and the significant changes that could be made to the way work is scheduled

had the experience to help us break the stereotypical European thinking on carton production. We could not see how investing in traditional sheet fed presses with offline converting would differentiate us from our competitors, and we wanted to gain an advantage.'

The press, which was installed in a new 1400m² factory extension, has a Martin Automatic 516 Butt Splicer, which allows the handling of 50 inch rolls. It is fitted with chill drums on each of the seven shuttle-deck Comco flexo print units to improve substrate stability, moveable turner bars, a Mark series high-velocity hot air dryer to allow for blister pack production, and GEW Nuva 2000 UV lamps on each unit. In addition, there is a hot foil unit, two die stations allowing four positions, with three slide-in cassettes, and a shingling conveyor with counter/jogger.

Within a month of installation, Olegario Fernandes began to switch carton production away from its sheet fed capacity to the new Comco. According to Sousa: 'We could match offset print quality with UV flexo on the Comco and offer our customers more attractive prices and faster delivery at the same time as improving our own margins. It was a 'win-win' situation, and has driven us to go triple shift on the Comco. We now produce 50 per cent of our total carton output on the Comco, and the figure is growing all the time. We see it as the only way forward.'

Within months of its installation, the versatility of the Comco's multi substrate capability became evident. Under pressure from existing customers, Olegario Fernandes began to run filmic materials on the ProGlide, particularly polypropylene for shrink sleeves and wraps. One customer, Unilever, has recently embarked on a development project

"Under pressure from existing customers, Olegario Fernandes began to run filmic materials on the ProGlide, particularly polypropylene for shrink sleeves and wraps"

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with the company to explore opportunities with different substrates and new product fields. To date, in-mould labels for vegetable oil containers has been one successful project, but Sousa claims to be working closely on several others that will throw traditional methods of package print production wide open.

He explained: 'We have the capability on the Comco to handle substrates from 25-micron unsupported film to 600-micron board with the minimum of adjustment, which gives us an enormous advantage over our competitors in terms of cost and speed of delivery, and that is crucial. More efficient use of labor within the factory is a key element in this. The Comco reduces manning levels by around 60 per cent compared with traditional methods, which allows us to re-deploy staff to other more productive duties. It brings a whole new way of working.'

The cartons being produced by Olegario Fernandes on its 13" Comco are limited to a 315mm width, which means one-across production. According to Sousa, this is a perfect fit for the type of work in which his company is engaged, bearing in mind the population of Portugal is only 12 million people. 'It's a linear calculation,' he said, 'there is little point in over specifying your machine for a market that is intrinsically small. We typically run the Comco at 120m/min, which produces an average of 50,000 cartons/hour. One recent job saw 1 million cartons come off the Comco in 48 hours. I'm not sure we need more capacity than that right now.'

With job changes being accomplished in anything from 20 minutes to two hours, depending on format, Sousa is keen to reduce expensive downtime still further. 'I'm developing a concept that will work like a Formula one racing pit-stop team. It precisely defines each person's job, and sets target times for accomplishing each task. In today's price conscious market, where decimal point differences in price can win or lose a job, we need to be the best,' he said.

Today, Olegario Fernandes' modern and immaculate 7,000m² production facility employs 92 staff and generates an annual turnover of Euro 7.5m on products ranging from self adhesive and wet glue labels to filmic products including wraps and shrink sleeves, folding cartons and blister packs, and medical leaflets.

With the globalisation of package printing, and all that it implies in terms of consistent quality, Olegario Fernandes is working ever more closely with its customers to develop new techniques and a wider range of products. Key to their joint success is the development of a long term working partnership with the chosen equipment supplier. As Sousa concluded: 'Our research convinced us that Comco leads the field in narrow web flexo technology for package printing, and we intend to grow our business into new and more profitable markets with their cooperation.'

 **No.355**

"In today's price conscious market, where decimal point differences in price can win or lose a job, we need to be the best"

New products

Tharo Systems

Tharo PA1000tZ Printer/Applicator

An accessory for the Zebra Z4M thermal/thermal transfer barcode label printer. The compact PA1000tZ Printer/Applicator can apply up to 58 labels per minute, depending on label size and height of product. The PLC interface provides maximum flexibility by allowing control of the system to be accomplished by almost any device, from a simple micro switch or optical sensor to a sophisticated intelligent controller (PLC). LEDs provide visual operating status and error conditions. The Tharo PA1000tZ can accommodate labels from 2 x 1 inch to 4.5 x 8 inch.

 **No.431**

Peripheral Advanced Design (PAD)

MixSpec III

PAD has introduced the MixSpec III, a mixing device that features an air-powered agitator that promises more consistent and better quality ink. The wet components are manufactured from stainless steel to prevent corrosion and it has built-in flow control to allow speed adjustment of air to the motor. The impeller is manufactured using conductive plastic to prevent static build-up, which is useful in solvent-based environments.

 **No.432**

Labelmate

TWIN-CAT-2 dual spindle label rewinder

Labelmate has unveiled a new desktop label rewinder with two powered spindles. The dual spindles can handle multiple rewind cores for slitting, or they can rewind finished label and waste matrix rolls for die-cut label matrix stripping operations. 'Normally in desktop slitting applications you must place the individual rewind cores on to a single shaft and worry about placing separator plates in between each one to keep the labels from overlapping,' says President Terry Zimmerman. 'With the TWIN-CAT-2, you can just place each successive core on the opposite spindle, which not only saves time, but is also much easier.'

 **No.433**

HarperScientific.com

The Green Machine hand proofing system

HarperScientific.com, the Engineered Technologies and Supplies Division of Harper Corporation of America, has released a new version of its Echocel Junior Flexographic hand proofing system, called The Green Machine. It incorporates a simple design, making the proofer easier to use and maintain. The Green Machine combines independent, linear loading of anilox to rubber roll impression, sealed steel bearings for both anilox and rubber rolls, and does not require any tools for maintenance.

 **No.434**

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- ◆ 1993 Focus F430 - 4 Colour Flexo
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Security labelling

Brand owners are becoming increasingly aware of protecting their products, **Edwin Shufflebotham** discusses how the need for brand protection will impact label converters

With counterfeit goods and brand piracy estimated to be responsible for as much as 5-7 per cent of world trade (some \$300 billion per annum), brand owners are becoming increasingly aware of the need to protect their products. It is not only the damage to their sales (and of course their profits!), but also to their reputation that is making them act. There is the real, and growing, risk of public harm through the activities of criminal gangs manufacturing bogus product, for example, in the pharmaceuticals industry, in replica packaging and "passing off" as the genuine article.

In some cases the effects of counterfeit products reaching the market can be fatal. In 1996, 30 children in Haiti died after taking a fake drug found later to be laced with diethylene glycol. Similarly, in 1994, the CIB (Counterfeit Intelligence Bureau) reported the discovery of an illegal pharmaceuticals factory in China, with 1,000 boxes of medicine ready for distribution. The product and boxes were all labelled with replica labels from legitimate brands.

In response to these attacks, genuine manufacturers are now directing their efforts at authenticating their packaging, including labelling, by the inclusion of easily seen (overt) and hidden (covert) security features.

Of course, it is not just brand owners that have problems with counterfeiting. Banknotes, ID documents and other financial instruments are under continual threat from forgers and counterfeiters. This was brought to the attention of many cinema-goers recently as cheque counterfeiting is featured in the film "Catch Me If You Can" (featuring Leonardo Di Caprio). Happily, the security of bank documents has increased

significantly since the period in which this film was set!

However, the main potential for the future use of security labelling seems set to be driven by brand owners increasingly concerned by the loss of sales and damage to their intellectual property. Drinks and tobacco companies, for example, have increasingly used overt and covert security features within a label, as they have been forced by governments to include security tax seals on their products for customs inspection.

They have looked to build in similar security labelling designs to protect their core asset, the brand itself. They must, of course, be careful in this process insofar as the design of a label intended to protect the brand with security features does not detract from the image of the brand.

Selection criteria

It is important before prescribing any solution to analyse what the particular problems are in order to ascertain the correct security protection "system" required. For example, is product authentication and tracking (through the supply chain) required?

Where are the problems?

An analysis should be undertaken to understand the benefits likely from implementing any particular solution. Balancing the financial cost of the solution with the estimated scale of the problem should enable a justification for expenditure, although intangible elements such as safety implications or brand value can make this difficult. Subsequent analysis should focus also on the implications for existing security procedures and current supply routes. There should also be a controlled pilot



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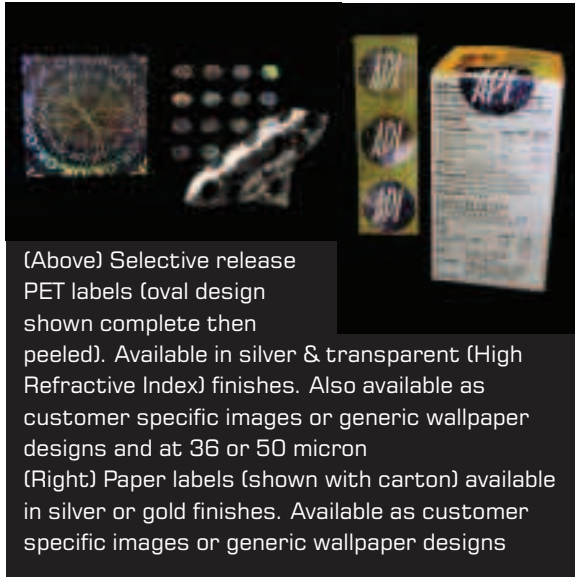


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(Above) Selective release PET labels (oval design shown complete then peeled). Available in silver & transparent (High Refractive Index) finishes. Also available as customer specific images or generic wallpaper designs and at 36 or 50 micron
(Right) Paper labels (shown with carton) available in silver or gold finishes. Available as customer specific images or generic wallpaper designs

trial for any new security solution before full implementation.

Although forensic analysis of the actual product assists in the identification of counterfeits and any subsequent prosecutions, it is not suitable for the quick identification of counterfeit or diverted product by customs officials or inspectors. Security features incorporated into outer packaging provide a quicker, more efficient way of identifying possible counterfeit activity.

What are the options?

There is a wide range of different options for protecting products and many technology providers are coming forward with advanced solutions. Broadly speaking, the anti-counterfeit measures included on outer packaging can be divided by reference to overt or covert solutions, and these can be further sub-divided into increasing levels of security complexity, dependent on the need.

When referring to overt protection, security holograms incorporated into self-adhesive labels or applied directly through foil blocking, provide the easiest naked-eye check for authenticity. However, criminal activity has reached the stage where the security label itself is being imitated, so in these cases high level holographic security foil devices from the banknote foil technology sector, incorporating additional covert authentication features, provide the highest level of package protection. Such features may include:

- fine demetallisation of the holographic image in specific areas
- encrypted security print where a message is only visible with the use of a specialised viewing filter
- microtext or nanotext – embedded microscopic text only visible to the inspector.

In addition, UV or IR inks and OVI's (optically variable inks) can be incorporated into the label or pack for increased security. Recent covert technology developments have included the use of security microscopic taggants; chemical or DNA based marking; digital "watermarking"; numbering-based

“There should also be a controlled pilot trial for any new security solution before full implementation”

systems and magnetic coding.

In this category of covert authentication and "track and trace" technologies can also be included the recent developments in RFID (radio frequency identification). This technology has the potential to be a powerful weapon in the fight against counterfeiting in both authentication and tracking functions, but the RFID solution is considered by many to be still too expensive for mass take-up by brand owners. Additionally, the global standards relating to radio frequency use – the RF tag is "read" and/or "written" by a reader at a certain radio frequency - are still fragmented.

Sliding scale

It is useful to think of the security features that can be incorporated into security labels and other devices in a sliding scale of complexity – and therefore cost.

The barcoding of products and their use in labels has been a successful way of identifying and tracking products for a number of years. These are governed by a number of agreed standards allowing use across many manufacturing and retail industries. They are still in widespread use but have several limitations. One important limitation is that they are usually comprised of black ink structures and can be either reproduced by counterfeiters or removed by diverters. Alone, they fail when viewed from a security perspective.

At a relatively unsophisticated level, but highly effective in many cases, a label may have the function of preventing tampering or pilfering from the branded product. In these cases the label may be constructed from a frangible material that disintegrates when tampered with, or there may be a visible message (eg "void") that is "printed" into the adhesive which is left behind when the label is forcibly removed.

At the other end of the scale, labels may include some form of taggant. This can vary from a few molecules of a marker chemical to the inclusion of a metallised substrate with specific electronic properties.

The taggant is covert and not detectable without the use of additional equipment or some form of reader. The reader could be quite simple, such as a UV lamp or a hand-held microscope, but it may also need to be quite complex depending on the level of forensic analysis required.

Forensic level tags are usually only included on a "need to know" basis, so as not to interfere with the production or processing of the product. Usually, tags are included as part of an overt security solutions package that can be also verified as genuine by the public.

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The forensic level tag feature is of most use also when the need arises to produce unequivocal proof that the product is not genuine, for example in prosecution cases.

Covert solutions

Labels may include taggants that have a specific physical attribute within their structure. These "microscopic" taggants are made up of different coloured layers and each layer represents a different specific number. Usually they can be

Electronic protection

Electronic protection systems have been used in labels for some time, but the potential is there for major growth due to their ability to operate by remote sensing and not by "line of sight" like so many systems. The attraction is that the product can be verified or tracked without opening the product or damaging the packaging. There are a large number of relatively low cost electronic tags under development that do not contain microprocessor technology. Many include magnetic materials as threads, films or laminates. Cheaper, so-called "passive" tags are encodable systems without a power source. Information is recorded on these tags when activated by an external electromagnetic impulse. "Active" or "Chip" tags

"Security labelling will be driven by brand owners, concerned by the loss of sales and damage to intellectual property"

identified with a hand held microscope and the particles checked for authenticity. Biological or chemical markers may be added to labels (for example as part of the varnishing printing process). These employ biological systems in the detection mechanism. One company has produced a system whereby antibodies of specific tagging chemicals are applied. These operate on a kind of "lock and key" principle whereby the taggant is uniquely recognised. The analysis of these systems is usually sold as part of an overall brand-protection solution service.

A frequently used covert feature, relatively easily employed by label converters and printers, is the inclusion on the label of a colourless product to the ink which when irradiated by light of a particular wavelength, cause the feature to emit in the visible spectrum. These spectroscopic systems include emitters that react under UV radiation and IR radiation, although the latter are used more infrequently. Spectroscopy is often combined with conventional print coding systems to prevent the actions of counterfeiters and diverters who can be made aware that the bar code is also used to verify the authenticity of the product using a machine readable tag. Alternatively, the covert ink may be used to print an invisible bar code only visible under light of a specific wavelength.

One company has developed a tag that uses specialist magnetic materials. A thread comprising a thin coating of metals can be demetallised in selective areas to provide a specific signal when remotely interrogated by a reader. The tag is very small and can be embedded directly into the pack or label. It is therefore quite possible to verify the product as genuine without damaging the pack.

include a microprocessor and a power source. These can be programmed to transmit data continuously or at selected intervals. However, it is still generally considered that active tags are too expensive for all but the highest value branded items, although many companies are working to reduce production and resale costs.

Future developments

It is likely that brand owners will increasingly use a combination of both overt and covert security features to offer good all-round protection to their brands. Whilst many of these features can be directly embedded into the packaging (and sometimes the product), the self adhesive label offers an excellent variable substrate mechanism for efficient delivery of these features. From the highly overt holographic and tamper-evident labels to the more covert chemical marking, digital encryption and label with RFID tag attached, there is an increasingly wide choice of technologies which can be applied to or incorporated in the label.

Key factors in the adoption of these technologies will be the success of the sales programmes that offer a solutions-driven approach, the will of the brand owners to combat the problem, and large scale production in certain technologies (eg RFID) that currently inhibit their use.

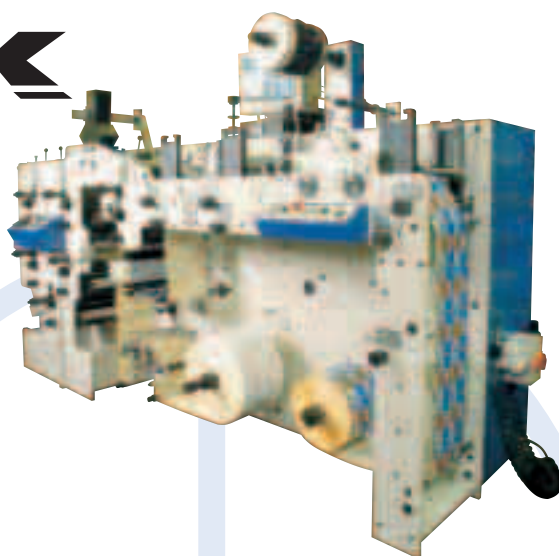
Edwin Shufflebotham, formerly of Applied Optical Technologies plc, is a freelance contributor to Labels and Labeling. He has experience of managing and implementing brand protection programmes into several major companies.

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Out of Africa

Gill Loubser, reviews the South Africa's narrow-web self-adhesive labelling industry

There's been a lot of talk recently about an African Renaissance – a phrase coined by South Africa's president, Thabo Mbeki. But how can this concept fit into the narrow-web label printing industry?

There's hardly an industry worldwide that isn't experiencing fast-paced change; and global competition is increasingly intensive. The international labelling sector is no exception, and, since South Africa's remarkable transition to democracy nine years ago, the country has taken its place within the global village.

As numerous articles in Packaging Review magazine attest, South Africa has seen huge investments in modern label printing equipment over the last decade, and a corresponding upsurge in competitive activity among narrow-web label printers. Five years ago, this influx of high-tech equipment coincided with slackening demand and heightened levels of label imports, which led to a severe over-capacity situation and debilitating price-cutting activities. The upshot was an industry shake-out that saw a number of company closures, followed by mergers and various realignments. Happily, today, the industry is generally viewed as being more viable, with many label printers having established themselves in particular niche markets.

So perhaps it could be said that South Africa's narrow-web industry has undergone its own renaissance. It now focuses on supplying world-class quality labels, both for home consumption and for the export market (the latter being helped in no small measure by the weakness of the South African rand against the dollar, euro and pound sterling).

Increasingly,

South African converters are supplying labels into the African market, both north and south of the Sahara, competing with those countries' traditional suppliers from their colonial days – for instance, France, Portugal and the UK.

These exports have helped to alleviate any residual over-capacity; and particularly important in this context is the burgeoning export market for wine, with foreign buyers expecting (if not demanding) self-adhesive labels on wine imported from South Africa. The labels keep their good looks for longer on the shelf, tend to travel well, and withstand immersion in ice buckets.

A beacon on the African continent

To put the South African self-adhesive roll-label industry into perspective in a global market that uses some 10 billion square metres of pressure-sensitive material annually, the market for labelling material throughout Africa is in the region of 260 million square metres, and is growing at around 3% per annum.

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“South Africa undoubtedly can boast the latest high-tech printing and converting equipment. Two names predominate – Mark Andy and Nilpeter”

somewhere between 95 and 105 million square metres. If this figure sounds imprecise, it's because a major feature of the South African packaging industry is its secretiveness! However, considering that South Africa accounts for just 4% of Africa's total land mass and only 5% of its total population, a 35 or 40% share of the entire African continent's self-adhesive labelling usage is impressive, and confirms South Africa's standing as a beacon of modern technology on the African continent.

The industry is served by two major international suppliers of pressure-sensitive label stock – Avery Dennison (with about 70% share of the South African market) and Raflatac. Both have local manufacturing facilities.

Label converters in South Africa cover the entire gamut of size and capability (self-adhesive, wet glue, shrink sleeves, in-mould labelling, etc), and, following world trends, self-adhesive labels are the fastest growing sector (particularly synthetic materials). The number of roll label printers is approximately 140, with largest proportion located in the greater Johannesburg area (Gauteng Province); the next largest number in the greater Cape Town area (Western Cape Province); and the third largest contingent in the great Durban area (KwaZulu-Natal Province). It's generally accepted that the 'big five' names are Ferroprint (Durban), Flexoprint (Durban), Rotolabel (Cape Town), Paul Frey & Sons (Cape Town) and New Era Labels (Johannesburg).

South Africa undoubtedly can boast the latest high-tech printing and converting equipment. Two names predominate – Mark Andy and Nilpeter. In fact, of about 500 narrow-web label presses operating in South Africa, no fewer than 125 are Mark Andys, and about 50 are Nilpeters. However, it should be noted that this count of Nilpeter presses includes letterpress, flexo, offset, silkscreen and gravure technologies, used to produce a range of products from self-adhesive labels, to unsupported film, to folding cartons. Aside from multiple installations of Mark Andy and Nilpeter presses, Aquaflex is another fairly common press among

label printers; and the last year has seen the installation of at least one new Gallus EM 280 press and one new Codimag Viva 340 waterless offset press.

Typical label printers

To provide readers with an insight into typical label printing operations in South Africa, here are brief vignettes of just three of the larger label printers.

Paul Frey & Son in Cape Town is entering a new era, with the imminent commissioning of a state-of-the-art Mark Andy LP 3250 eight-colour UV flexo press. This high-speed label printing press is the first of its kind to be installed in South Africa – indeed on the African continent. With 12 Mark Andy flexo presses in various configurations already operating at this plant, the choice of another Mark Andy wasn't unexpected; and the new LP 3250 will further increase production capacity. The fact that this press is one of only five delivered outside the US speaks volumes for the sophistication of the narrow-web self-adhesive label market in South Africa.

Another Cape Town company, Rotolabel, is a strictly Nilpeter plant with a strong niche in the wine and spirits label market, but with a wide customer base right across the food and FMCG sectors. Here no fewer than seven Nilpeters are installed, all rotary letterpress, with additional facilities such as in-line hot or cold foil stamping and embossing, rotary silk screening, and off-line hot foil stamping and embossing. This company, like most of the major players, boasts in-house repro facilities and computerised ink-matching systems.

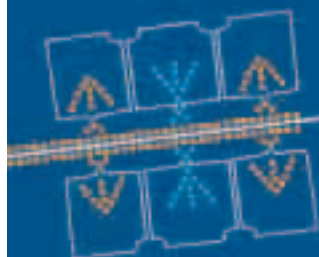
Moving to KwaZulu-Natal, another top printer is Ferroprint – a company that claims a 65-70% share of the pharmaceutical self-adhesive label market. Much of this company's growth is export-related with multinational drug companies using South Africa as a base for expansion into the rest of Africa. Ferroprint has many customers in neighbouring African countries – eg Zambia, Malawi,



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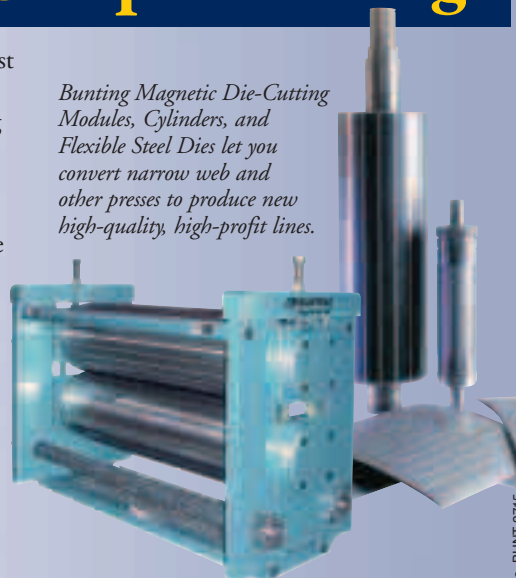


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e No.150



Clear self-adhesive labels from Johannesburg-based Rebsons complement this stunning beehive-shaped PET water bottle



Brand differentiation on Lever Pond's Lux and Dove ranges is enhanced by clear self-adhesive labels from Flexoprint that allow the translucent colours of the colour-pigmented packs to shine through



Printed on white polypropylene from Avery Dennison, using a Nilpeter UV flexo press, Durban-based Ferroprint prints the labels for the Take 5 range of fruit juices

Mozambique and Botswana. Typical of South Africa's world-class label printing industry, Ferroprint has installed the latest digital prepress technology. The company is particularly strong on the flexo front, and has bought no fewer than four Nilpeter UV flexo machines during past year alone, bringing the line-up of Nilpeters to nine. There are also six Pacom flexo presses.

Award-winning labels

Last year, Raflatac launched its Premier Wine Label Awards. The purpose of the awards is to highlight the advantages of self-adhesive labels, to demonstrate the capabilities of local label printers, and to promote self-adhesive labelling techniques for the benefit of South Africa's label printers, as well as the wine and spirits industry.

Labels printed on any labelstock or substrate (not necessarily one of Raflatac's products) were eligible to enter.

Rotolabel did exceptionally well in this pilot event, winning the best design award (as well as second, third and fourth places in that category) for Villiera Inspiration, Mont Destin, Kanu and Sandown Bay labels respectively. In the best print category, Paarl Labels (situated in Paarl, Western Cape Province) took first prize for the Du Toitskloof label, with Rotolabel in second position. In the best label category, Rotolabel again took top honours for the Cordoba label, as well as second place for the Thelema label.

Although this was a small beginning, Raflatac intends the programme to become an annual event and is also encouraging winners to enter the Institute of Packaging (SA)'s Gold Pack Awards programme, within which Raflatac sponsors the trophy for 'Self-Adhesive Labelling Excellence'.

At the last Gold Pack Awards this trophy went to Flexoprint for Timotei shampoo bottle labels, a pack that also went on to receive a coveted citation in the World Packaging Organisation's WorldStar programme, again proving South Africa's world-class status in the label printing field.

About the author

Gill Loubser, editorial director of National Publishing and editor-in-chief of Packaging Review, which acts as the official mouthpiece of the Institute of Packaging (SA), the Packaging Council of South Africa, and the Flexographic Technical Association of South Africa.



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Henry Chen, Export Manager at Labelmen, said the Labelexpo show had been particularly successful for the company, including orders for new presses.

At Labelexpo Labelmen was also promoting its agreement with Avery Dennison to install two presses at Avery Dennison's Converting College in Shanghai.

These presses are now being used to train label printers not only from China, but throughout the Asia-Pacific region.

Because so many Chinese converters still print letterpress, the Converting College decided to install a Labelmen PW 260 R6C 6-color UV rotary letterpress with UV flexo varnishing station and two unwind units.

The press is also specified to convert In-mold label and special shampoo labels. Labelmen has also supplied a PWS-310 roll-to-roll 1-color silk screen printing machine with re-winder, sheeter and laminating





module. The unit features both UV and infra-red drying capacity.

Dieu Dai Huynh, group technical director for Aver Dennison Materials Asia-Pacific and college master, said: 'Our students will be very pleased to have access to state-of-the-art UV letterpress print technology. Asia-Pacific region label printers recognise the importance of adapting to the latest printing technologies to compete in a global marketplace and grow their business. The addition of this equipment means we can now provide our customers with practical training on UV letterpress

and silk-screen printing technologies.'

Labelmen's successful Brussels Labelexpo came at the same time as the opening of a new 9,000 sq ft production factory in Taiwan. Representing an investment of \$15M US, the new factory will allow Labelmen to step up its production programme.

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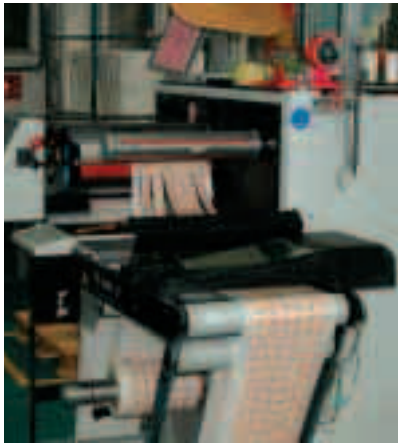
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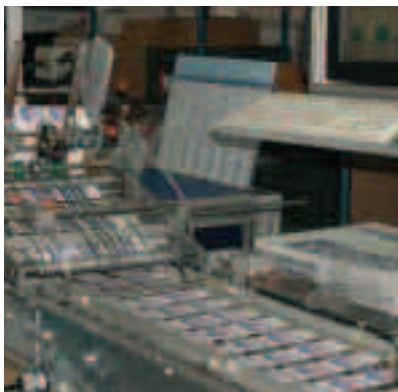
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(above/below) Promotional labels being processed on the Prati Jupiter TC400 slitter rewinder



(above/below) After being offset printed, booklet labels have a pressure-sensitive backing liner applied by the Flytec system



With the growing acceptance in France of booklet labels as promotional devices, CCL Industries' Paris operation has commissioned a new line which solves the problems presented at the slitting, inspecting and rewinding station. **Andy Thomas** reports from the former Avery Dennison plant in Chilly Mazarin

Booklet label line for CCL

CCL Industries' pressure sensitive label printing operation in Chilly-Mazarin, France, has set up a dedicated promotional booklet label production line utilising a Flytec laminator/die cutter and a Prati slitter/inspection rewinder.

'In France, the booklet label is now starting to make a breakthrough, and in the future the need to put multiple-languages on one label will drive the market faster,' says Daniel Coupé, production manager. 'However, the market for promotional labels is becoming very important - games, scratch-offs and other promotional devices.'

CCL Industries' Paris business – recently acquired from Avery Dennison – splits 50/50 between industrial and pharmaceutical, and there are promotional labelling opportunities in both sectors.

The Prati slitter/inspection rewinder was recommended by Daniel Coupé's colleagues at Iwako in Denmark, who had successfully used the system to produce booklet labels (the company is a licensee of Fix-a-Form). 'We performed trials in Italy. This is the best machine in the market for these applications,' says Daniel Coupé.

The promotional booklet labels are pre-printed offset by an outside supplier, then put onto the Flytec machine which applies a pressure sensitive backing liner and die cuts. The labels are then placed onto the Prati Jupiter TC400 for finishing.

'The Prati Jupiter TC 400 machine is the only one we found using a rotary slitter instead of fixed knives,' says Daniel Coupé. 'It is capable of a precise cut with very good quality. It also has a missing label detector and is capable of delivering small rolls. The paper is thick, so a good cut is essential. It is too easy to open the labels with the knives.'

The Jupiter range, available in 280 mm and 400 mm web widths, can work and inspect a wide range of materials including thick paper, booklet, thin cartonboard, paper and films. The new PLC vision system allows an increase in machine working speed from 250 metres/min to 315 metres/min. There is a self-diagnostic display which suggests solutions to possible problems.

the market for promotional labels is becoming very important - games, scratch-offs and other promotional devices



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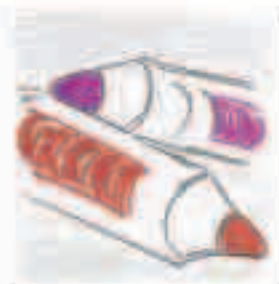
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Daniel Coupé
production manager at CCL
Chilly Mazarin

Step length measuring adjustment includes a self-learning function for error inspection and automatic positioning. Label length is saved in steps of mm.10. When an error is detected it is stored, and the machine immediately slows down. The display shows the number and the type of the error and each one is positioned on the inspection table for inspection.

The unwinding and rewinding tensions are completely independent: the machine is able to rewind reels with soft tension at the same time as dealing with strong unwinding tensions.

Difficult materials such as transverse perforated can be worked at maximum machine speed.

Waste extraction is automatic: a

special system allows the operator to extract waste material without losing tension and web alignment, reducing manual intervention. Waste material can be eliminated or rewound on the waste rewinder shaft, useful for final job control.

Counts can be made in labels or centimetres, with automatic slow down as the roll ends for maximum precision of counting. The machine is also equipped with a count inspector, which checks correct correspondence between counting photocell impulse and label length. If a difference is detected, a message is displayed and, if requested, the machine can stop.

The counter can be programmed to count labels or metres.

Any material can be slit with the same blade. The knife shaft is removable, reducing makeready and reducing the risk of accidents.

The material is rewound on interchangeable pneumatic shafts with brushless motors. The expander lips are manufactured with a special plastic with a very high friction coefficient. This avoids conic distortion and assures the same friction on each core.

CCL Industries Chilly-Mazarin prints with five Gallus R160B letterpress machines and three Arsoma flexo presses – two 8-unit 410s and one 7-unit 260 – all UV equipped, as well as four Webtrons.

Rotoflex and Partoria slitter rewinders finish the line. The Prati and Flytec machines are kept in a separate air-conditioned room and form a dedicated operation.

e No.345

New owner

CCL Industries Inc., the label and packaging solutions company based in Toronto, Ontario, acquired the Chilly-Mazarin operation as part of its purchase of Avery Dennison's package label converting business in Europe. The deal included a long-term, global supply agreement for Avery Dennison to provide pressure-sensitive base materials to CCL Industries.

The transaction involved the sale of two Avery Dennison facilities in Denmark, located in the cities of Brøndby and Randers, as well as the Chilly-Mazarin operation. The joint business, with some 325 employees, serves European customers in the pharmaceutical, health and beauty aids, food and industrial markets. At the same time, CCL Industries announced the completion of a 51 per cent controlled European joint venture deal with Pachem AG, a leading, privately held provider of pressure sensitive, shrink sleeve and in-mold labels. CCL Label will contribute its Avelin, France facility to that joint venture.

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Labelexpo announces industry awards

The organisers of Labelexpo announced the launch of the prestigious new 'Labelexpo Industry Awards' at Labelexpo Europe 2003 in Brussels.

The inaugural Labelexpo Industry Awards Ceremony and Gala Dinner will take place on Monday 13 September 2004, at the Donald E. Stephens Convention Centre in Rosemont, Illinois, on the first night of Labelexpo Americas 2004. In 2005 the Awards Ceremony will take place at Labelexpo Europe.

Planned to take place annually, there will be three major awards, with a leading labels industry player sponsoring each one. The awards will consist of:

- R Stanton Avery Award for Lifetime

Achievement, sponsored by Avery Dennison

- An award recognising a long established pioneering company in the labeling industry sponsored by *Labels and Labeling*; *Label and Narrow Web*; and *NarrowWebTech*

- An award recognising recently established companies which have made a major contribution to the industry.

Roger Pellow, md, Tarsus Labels Group, says: 'We are delighted to launch the Labelexpo Industry Awards and are grateful to our sponsors for their support.'

'The labels business is one of the few truly global industries and these awards will reflect that fact.'

No. 400

Opportunities for label industry in wider EU

With record visitor attendance and interest from Eastern European converters at Labelexpo Europe, a major two-day keynote event is being launched for 2004. The Labelexpo European Label Summit will assess label opportunities in the enlarged European Union and will take place in Düsseldorf on 2-3 November 2004.

A database drawn from the 2,500 Eastern European printers and converters attending the show – all hungry for information on the latest label industry trends, materials, technology and end user requirements – will offer a major opportunity for both suppliers and converters from existing and emerging markets to meet, discuss, and grow the industry for the future.

The conference will review the impact of the proposed entry of 10 new countries (predominately from Central and Eastern Europe) into the EU in 2004. Label industry leaders will come together to assess growth potential, opportunities and challenges that the label industry will face in the significantly expanded European trading community in the coming years.

Speakers will include representatives from the European Commission, some of the new EU entrant countries, brand owners and major retail groups already trading in Eastern Europe, label industry trade associations and also the key labelstock, label machinery, pre-press and ancillary equipment suppliers to the industry. The programme will also include speakers from lead label converters. Separate session streams and breakout workshops for suppliers, converters and label users will be built into the programme.

With current self-adhesive label industry growth already in excess of 20 per cent per annum in countries such as Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic – and annual growth of all label technologies in the region at around eight per cent – the expanded European Union is expected to bring a period of sustained growth to the European label market. This two-day conference, which takes place in Düsseldorf in November 2004, aims to help the label industry to successfully develop its long-term profitability.

No. 401

Raflatac announces start of construction for Eastern European terminal

Raflatac is starting construction of a new terminal and sales office in Tatabánya, Hungary. The new terminal is scheduled to begin operation during the first quarter of 2004.

The Tatabánya terminal will improve Raflatac's standard service offerings to customers in Central and Eastern Europe. Raflatac's current sales office in Budapest, Hungary, will be moved to the new site, along with Raflatac's terminal operations in Austria.

'In the future, the Tatabánya terminal

will be the heart of our operations in the region,' says Pauli Annala, Raflatac's area sales director, Eastern Europe.

'The city has been very active in the project and in the development of the industrial area, providing us with a team that has the ability to build this terminal for our purposes. In return we are creating jobs for the area,' says Reijo Reinval, Raflatac logistics director and Raflatac contact for the city, architect and contractor of the project.

 No. 402

Arpeco back in business at Labelexpo

Arpeco Engineering is back in business following an investment by a group of private investors.

The company entered into voluntary receivership in mid-June – largely due to very heavy engineering research and development activities on new Trackers, Impressionist label presses and on its new Cartonmaster folding carton machines. The strengthening Dollar and SARS outbreak were also factors.

'Arpeco has now emerged stronger, financially stable and with all its

previous technologies,' says the company in a statement. President Alan Prittie says he intends to direct the company, 'along a new road into the future – one that will provide sharp focus to the design and manufacture of application specific options/modules for its already established products.'

At Labelexpo, Arpeco Engineering featured the latest version of its Tracker Premier Slitter Inspection Rewinder on the Imer stand. Imer is Arpeco's Spanish agent.

 No. 403

DiMS! organizing print and Creo join forces to promote industry integration

DiMS! organizing print, a leading supplier of Management Information Solutions for the printing and packaging industry, has joined the Networked Graphic Production partnership. As an NGP Partner, DiMS! will work with leading industry vendors to build solutions using JDF and other open file standards to deliver fully integrated 'cross-vendor' solutions that help printers cut costs, increase revenues, decrease cycle times, and reach more customers.

'From the beginning, we have recognized the need for open standards to enable workflow efficiencies. In addition to having a 100 per cent Web-enabled system with an Oracle database at the back end, strong XML-based integration tools have existed within DiMS! for many years – enabling full system integration and interfacing capabilities with third

party suppliers,' said Gerard Marneth, CEO, DiMS! organizing print.

'By joining the NGP program, we openly welcome the opportunity to collaborate with other NGP Partners, such as Creo, and essentially we see it as a formalized extension of the JDF functionality that is already an integral part of our system,' Marneth added.

By using JDF and other open standards, the NGP partners aim to deliver seamlessly integrated solutions that help printers cut costs, increase revenues, decrease cycle times, reach more customers, and realize a more efficient business from idea to delivery. More than 15 Networked Graphic Production Partners are committed to this initiative. For a complete list of partners, visit www.ngppartners.org

 No. 404

Cold Foil Alliance signed and sealed

Amagic Holographics has formed the Cold Foil Alliance, a partnership of industry suppliers who are dedicated to providing solutions for the cold foil printing process.

The suppliers cover all aspects of the printing industry that directly affect the quality of cold foil printing such as inks, substrates, plates, presses and coatings. Alliance-approved suppliers will be given a special quality mark.

Other members include: Telstar; Raflatac; Prime UV; Akzo Nobel Inks; the Flexographic Trade School; Trinity Graphic and the Harper Corporation.

 No. 405

Collaboration for direct laser ablation

ZED Instruments (UK), Fulflex Flexographic Systems (USA) and Lignum spol. s.r.o (Czech Republic) have signed a three-way collaborative agreement for the development of direct digital laser ablation for flexo.

The collaboration has the aim of jointly promoting the laser ablation of seamless, in-the-round elastomeric sleeves for flexo printing. ZED Instruments and Lignum already have a number of mutual customers in Europe.

Director Jim Heller of The Moore Company, which owns ZED Instruments and Fulflex, commented: 'Both companies are extremely pleased to be working with Lignum.'

'We believe that the collaboration will have considerable benefits for our mutual customers, current and future, and in our efforts to promote direct laser ablation as a mainstream method for the production of high quality in-the-round flexo printing.'

 No. 406

CCL completes European acquisition

Avery Dennison Corporation has announced that it has completed the sale of its package label converting business in Europe, as previously announced on 22 July 2003, to CCL Industries Inc.

 No. 407

Labeling news

Management buyout at Harlands Labels

Harlands Labels has announced its management buyout from holding company Grenadier. This development for the label printer based in Hull, UK, is the culmination of many months preparation and is aimed at giving the business the freedom to develop more rapidly as an independent company within the labels sector.

In a statement, the new management team said: 'The past three years have

seen the restructure of the business into a well equipped specialist within the sector. Harlands has been very selective in the structure of its financing to guarantee that the business has a stable platform with the flexibility to invest and develop in accordance with its overall business plan.'

The MBO was backed by Yorkshire Fund Managers Limited (YFM) and Bridges Community Ventures. YFM is a venture capital company that invests, as a minority shareholder, in owner-managed businesses that have significant growth potential. Bridges Community Ventures was founded by Ronald Cohen, 3i and Tom Singh and backed by a number of bluechip institutions.

Ian Wright, managing director at Harlands, commenting on the management buyout said: 'Our team will remain the same, as will our goals

and objectives, and we will continue to be driven by our customers' need for new and improved products with continued investment in this area. We are all very excited about the new structure and look forward to moving into this new era together.' **No.407**

Multi-Plastics expands operations in Canada

Multi-Plastics Canada Co. has announced the construction of a new production facility in Whitby, Ontario. The 33,000 square feet facility will be operational in August 2004. The new facility is a \$2.7 million investment and represents Multi-Plastics' commitment to its customers throughout Canada.

Multi-Plastics, with its headquarters in Ohio, is a leader in the slitting and converting of thin gauge plastic film in roll or sheet to the envelope, carton, label and printing industries. It has eight strategic locations in the US, Canada and the UK. **No.408**

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TrenStar invests in RFID and asset track systems

TrenStar, Inc. has raised \$34 million to invest in radio frequency identification (RFID) and container tracking technology. The aim is to provide better visibility and control of a company's mobile assets as they carry goods and materials through the supply chain. TrenStar will devote portions of the funding to growth initiatives including further IT development and additional asset purchases from qualified companies seeking an outsourced solution for the management of their mobile assets.

Key target sectors include the brewing, food and beverage, synthetic rubber, automotive and air cargo business

segments, in which TrenStar has already established important positions.

TrenStar President and CEO Greg Cronin commented, 'TrenStar's solution for the automotive, brewing and food industries in particular is strengthened by the supply chain services heritage of the founding companies including Trecor. We can now more aggressively develop our solutions and services and expand into new markets.'

With this funding the largest shareholders of TrenStar are Trecor Limited, The Carlyle Group and the Leede Companies.

No.409

Valéron Strength Films selects new South American distributor

Valéron Strength Films has teamed with Perez Trading Company to distribute the Valéron and V-Max printing films to customers in South and Central America.

Perez Trading Company is a diversified domestic and international

sales corporation serving the graphic arts industries in the US, Mexico, Central and South America, and the Caribbean Islands.

'In order to effectively serve the Central and South American regions,

Valéron needed a distributor partner who truly understands the business practices and specific needs of end-users in these areas,' said Ed Williamson, product sales manager for Valéron Strength Films.

No.410

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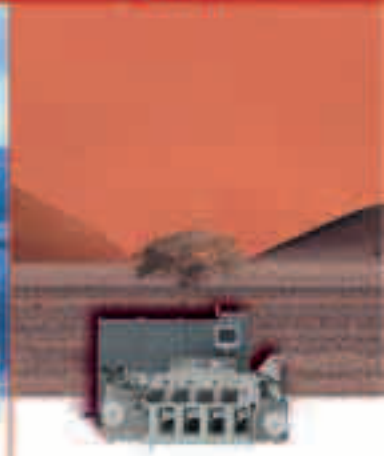
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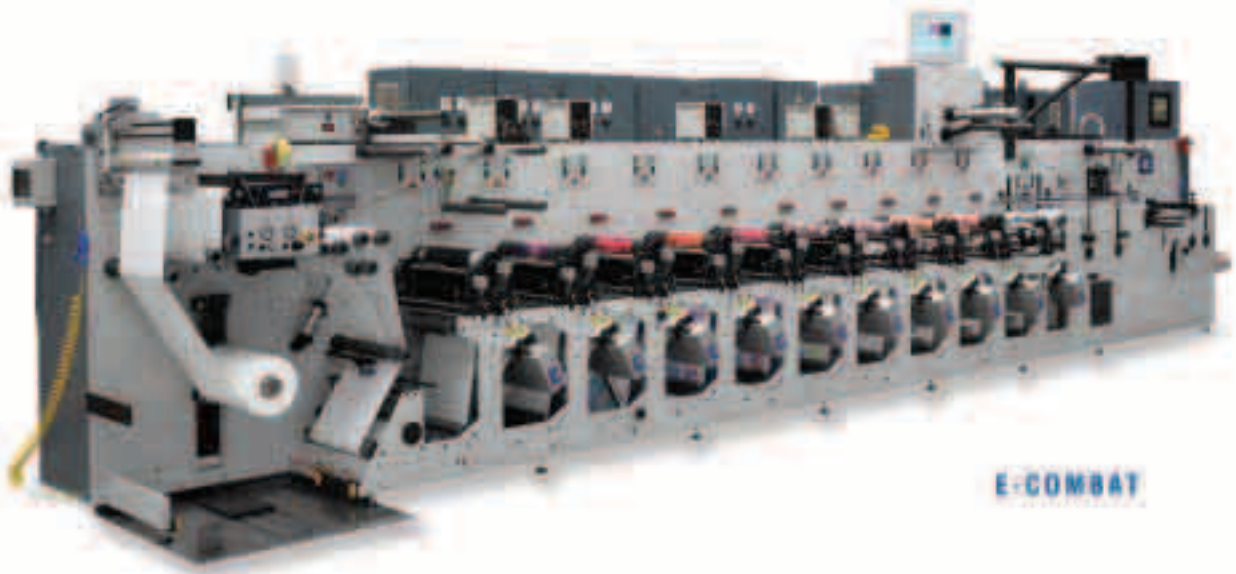
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New products

Tidland Corporation **Shaftless chucks**

These new three and four inch torque chucks are ideal for continuous-duty shaftless applications in corrugating, sheeting, paper finishing or laminating output. The torque output is over 500lbs-ft per chuck. Routine maintenance and core size changes can be made without removing the entire chuck from the machine, reducing downtime and the risk of injury due to heavy lifting. The toolless adapter allows users to switch from three to six inch cores in two steps, taking less than five seconds overall.

 No.360

3M **UV screen printable adhesive**

SP7514 screen printable adhesive eliminates the need to die-cut sheets of laminating adhesive material. It provides a balance of peel and sheer strength, making it a general purpose adhesive. It will not clog your screens like water-based versions, and clean-up is the same as for UV inks. You get high-speed printing and curing with a broad curing window, no shrinkage after curing and no process additives.

Peripheral Advanced Design (PAD) Inc. **MixSpec III**

PAD has introduced the MixSpec III, a mixing device that features an air-powered agitator that promises more consistent and better quality ink. The wet components are manufactured from stainless steel to prevent corrosion and it has built-in flow control to allow speed adjustment of air to the motor. The impeller is manufactured using conductive plastic to prevent static build-up, which is useful in solvent-based environments.

 No.361

Aellora Digital **BrightWhite UV-curable jetting ink**

BrightWhite UV-curable jetting ink is highly pigmented with specially processed titanium dioxide for strong whiteness, consistent jettability and print coverage. Although it is suitable for a wide range of plastics, fabrics and painted and coated substrates, BrightWhite does not need any special surface treatments or separate UV pinning stations.

 No.362

Sun Chemical **Spectrum and Fidelity inks**

Sun Chemical has developed two new lines of ink for shrink sleeve packaging. Spectrum gravure ink and Fidelity flexo ink are both solvent-based and designed for high performance on a variety of films.

Produced and marketed by the North American division of Sun Chemical Ink (GPI) and Coates USA, they give intense and glossy colors, while providing good adherence. Both types resist cracking during the application of heat and subsequent shrinking.

The inks have been designed to prevent bottle blocking, where reverse-printed ink sticks to the container, and they have low GCs to prevent taste and odour contamination to beverages and food.

 No.363

Avery Dennison **Fasson Direct-Therm 200GP labelstock**

Avery Dennison, US, has expanded its pressure-sensitive product range with the introduction of Fasson Direct-Therm 200GP.

A general-purpose direct thermal labelstock, Fasson Direct-Therm 200GP has been specifically designed to resist a variety of contaminants from

Continued on page 52



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 No.182

New products

the grocery and industrial labeling markets. It is a smooth, bright white paper with a medium-sensitivity thermal coating, designed to deliver durability and excellent checkout scan rates in both dry and wet conditions. Its unique thermal chemistry produces barcodes at fast print speeds and reduces printhead wear. It's available with a choice of two adhesives, one of which is suited to cold, damp environments. **No.369**

Fasson LaserCopy Jet 300 labelstock

This labelstock has been specifically designed for use in laser printers where edge trim and matrix removal are not possible. An uncoated facestock, it assures excellent toner anchorage, inkjet print quality and layflat for seamless operation during variable imaging, says the manufacturer.

It has been engineered for applications where adhesive build-up could be a concern. It is available with an emulsion acrylic adhesive which has been designed to minimize adhesive contamination of laser printers, making it a natural choice for office applications. **No.370**

Rad-Cure Corporation

Rad-Kote KX6003B

This UV-curable laminating adhesive is designed to bond PE film to corrugated boxes. It cures rapidly under UV light and may also be EB cured. The adhesive has excellent bond strength, does not produce an odor and has very low shrinkage. It also guarantees not to foam under a high shear rate. **No.371**

Spinnaker Coating

PrimeScan pressure sensitive film

PrimeScan is a white, matte top-coated, polyethylene film designed for use in both prime and variable markets. It can be embossed, perforated, folded without scoring and hole punched with rounded corners. It also conforms well to irregularly shaped surfaces and tight diameter applications.

Resistant to water, grease, smudging, tearing, and a variety of chemicals, PrimeScan is also UV resistant up to 18 months. Biaxial orientation means dimensional stability and no grain direction gives versatility in label orientation and die layout.

Compared to coated papers of a similar thickness, PrimeScan offers greater opacity, achieving cleaner graphics and easier readability.

The film achieves its opacity primarily from cavitation, not fillers, resulting in extended die life. The matte clay top coating offers faster dry time for increased press speed and ink versatility.

PrimeScan is printable under all conventional methods and also prints well with variable methods. It offers excellent print contrast, consistent colors, fine tones, and uniform ink hold out – providing a dependable contrast for barcode scanning, says Spinnaker. The film is available trimless with four different acrylic adhesives from Spinnaker's Ohio facility. **No.372**

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New products

Water Ink Technologies Supreme White UV ink

Supreme White UV opaque white ink is designed to have good flow characteristics and opacity and will adhere to a wide variety of film substrates. It can also be overprinted and trapped with water-based and UV inks for additional graphics.

 No.373

Contract Converting Tundra HD

Tundra HD is a high-density polyethylene film with a good roll profile and higher MD tensile strength. It has superior machine direction tensile strengths, which results in significant improvements in holding registration.

It is stocked in both 7.5mil and 10mil thickness, but is available in virtually any caliper you want from 2mil to 12mil in white or natural color.

It comes standard with corona treatment to a minimum dyne level of 42 on both sides and can handle temperatures down to -70°F without becoming brittle. It's also UV stabilized for improved weather resistance and performs well in harsh environments.

 No.374

Trilogy

Trilogy is a heavyweight double blade coated material that offers thermal printing on the face with a third coating on the backside. This creates a sheet that is flexo and offset printable

on both sides, with the added benefit of having good lay flat qualities. 'This unassuming sheet really makes inks jump out of a printed piece and the thermal transfer results beat the true thermal transfer stocks,' states Brian Verkuilen, product manager. Trilogy has thermal transfer ribbon receptivity with all ribbon types; wax, wax/resin and straight resin. Contract Converting will stock 8PT and 10PT through their Roll Express program. Suggested uses for Trilogy include thermal transfer tags, clothing/garment tags and barcode tags.

 No.375

Confectionary films

'Adding confectionary films will make it easier for our customers to get into the candy, ice cream and nutraceutical markets,' said Brian Verkuilen, Contract Converting's product manager. 'Flexible packaging is continually growing and we're seeing a substantial move away from paper and paperboard packaging to OPP films. This fits perfectly into our strategy of aggressive growth in plastics-based consumer packaging.'

 No.376

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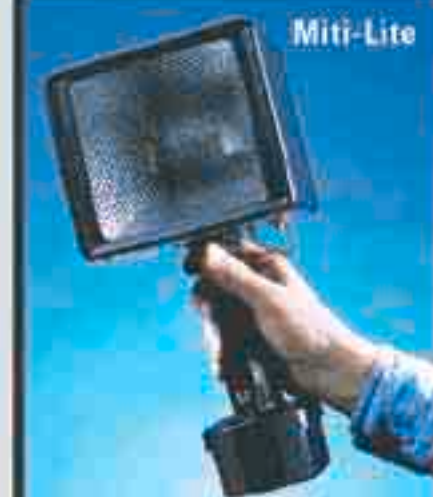
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 No.167

News in brief

Cortron expand eXact distribution

Anderson and Vreeland, Inc. has been appointed distributor of Cortron eXact flexo exposure systems. The eXact exposure system features automated operation and tuned reflector technology, providing angular control of illumination for high-definition flexo plate quality. The UV plasma source is digitally integrated and provides consistent exposure.

e No.350

New auction site live

Quality Discount Press Parts and Equipment, Inc. and Quality Discount Equipment, LLC. have launched a new interactive auction feature and chat forum to their website – www.qualitydiscount.com. The expanded site allows the printing industry to list their unwanted, used printing equipment for free and also to purchase used equipment.

e No.351

Brick-sized trash

Precision AirConvey has produced a waste and scrap solution that converts trim, loose scrap and other flexible plastic waste into valuable bricks suitable for reprocessing or easy disposal. The new briquetting system compresses film, foil, poly-coated paper and other clean or dirty materials into rigid bricks. The system may be adjusted to produce bricks from eight to 30 inches for easy handling and stacking without requiring a baler. It can operate in-line in extrusion and converting lines or with a remote receiving system for trailer-based and other operations.

e No.352

Prairie State Group claims success with Evolution

Paper Converting Machine Company (PCMC) has announced the successful start-up of the new Evolution In-line Converting System at Prairie State Group in Franklin Park, Illinois.

'Prairie State Group has been very successful in the narrow web printing markets,' explained Graham Redding, executive vice-president, Prairie State Group. 'We wanted to expand our flexible packaging division and we knew that PCMC was a leader in C.I. flexo printing. What sold us was their Engineering Department. They knew what they were doing when it came to flexible packaging printing.'

'We have had a great start-up with the machine,' continues Redding. 'We're getting great printing off of this press. It's fast and does a great job printing the high barrier films.'

'The eXtreme drying system and variable repeat gearless deck design allows us to go after the gravure market as well. We believe that this press will help us continue our growth in being a full service flexible packaging printer.'

The Evolution also has the ability to print cold seal films for the candy and nutritional bar market. 'We know that we can be competitive in the candy and nutritional bar markets,' Redding says. 'The Evolution is versatile, changes over quickly, has a tremendous drying system, and runs at the line speeds we need.'

e No.353



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Labelexpo announces industry awards

The organisers of Labelexpo announced the launch of the prestigious new 'Labelexpo Industry Awards' at Labelexpo Europe 2003 in Brussels.

The inaugural Labelexpo Industry Awards Ceremony and Gala Dinner will take place on Monday 13 September 2004, at the Donald E. Stephens Convention Centre in Rosemont, Illinois, on the first night of Labelexpo Americas 2004. In 2005 the Awards Ceremony will take place at Labelexpo Europe.

Planned to take place annually, there will be three major awards, with a leading labels industry player sponsoring each one. The awards will consist of:

- R Stanton Avery Award for Lifetime

Achievement, sponsored by Avery Dennison

- An award recognising a long established pioneering company in the labeling industry sponsored by *Labels and Labeling*; *Label and Narrow Web*; and *NarrowWebTech*

- An award recognising recently established companies which have made a major contribution to the industry.

Roger Pellow, md, Tarsus Labels Group, says: 'We are delighted to launch the Labelexpo Industry Awards and are grateful to our sponsors for their support.'

'The labels business is one of the few truly global industries and these awards will reflect that fact.'

No. 400

Opportunities for label industry in wider EU

With record visitor attendance and interest from Eastern European converters at Labelexpo Europe, a major two-day keynote event is being launched for 2004. The Labelexpo European Label Summit will assess label opportunities in the enlarged European Union and will take place in Düsseldorf on 2-3 November 2004.

A database drawn from the 2,500 Eastern European printers and converters attending the show – all hungry for information on the latest label industry trends, materials, technology and end user requirements – will offer a major opportunity for both suppliers and converters from existing and emerging markets to meet, discuss, and grow the industry for the future.

The conference will review the impact of the proposed entry of 10 new countries (predominately from Central and Eastern Europe) into the EU in 2004. Label industry leaders will come together to assess growth potential, opportunities and challenges that the label industry will face in the significantly expanded European trading community in the coming years.

Speakers will include representatives from the European Commission, some of the new EU entrant countries, brand owners and major retail groups already trading in Eastern Europe, label industry trade associations and also the key labelstock, label machinery, pre-press and ancillary equipment suppliers to the industry. The programme will also include speakers from lead label converters. Separate session streams and breakout workshops for suppliers, converters and label users will be built into the programme.

With current self-adhesive label industry growth already in excess of 20 per cent per annum in countries such as Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic – and annual growth of all label technologies in the region at around eight per cent – the expanded European Union is expected to bring a period of sustained growth to the European label market. This two-day conference, which takes place in Düsseldorf in November 2004, aims to help the label industry to successfully develop its long-term profitability.

No. 401



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Designer labels



Fruity fold-out labels

Label and packaging company Leading Edge, Kent, UK, has helped Sainsbury's relaunch their exotic fruit by designing and producing a range of new premium booklet labels.

Leading Edge produced a range of labels to work across pre-packed and individual fruits, along with the production of printed film for pouch packs. Each label contains origin information, recipes and serving suggestions, along with important storage and preparation instructions.

A spokesperson for the supermarket says: 'Following extensive customer

research we have found that the main barrier to purchase is that people simply do not know or understand what certain fruits should be used for.

'These educational booklet recipes designed and produced by Leading Edge are an effective way, not only to educate, but also to inspire our customers without adding cost.'

In addition to the design, artwork, repro and print, Leading Edge also created product illustrations and commissioned and managed the photography – providing the total production solution for the major multiple.

No.386

Revamped herbal haircare

Harlands have produced new-look labels for the Te Tao haircare brand as part of a restyle. The range promotes Chinese herbal medicine and is sold by Network Health and Beauty to leading high street retailers across the UK.

First launched in 1997, Network Health and Beauty wanted a fresh looking design that had a high impact, whilst maintaining the brand identity. Design work on the new labels began early last year and was followed by extensive testing on the label material to ensure high clarity and a clean overall appearance.

'We needed a label that was distinctive and reflected the quality of the actual product range,' comments Libby Walter, marketing manager at Network Health and Beauty. Managing director Ian Wright adds: 'Customer satisfaction features high on our agenda, which is why we spend a lot of time throughout the development stages making sure we get everything right and meet the requirements of the customer.'

No.387



Beach drink for borders

Decorative Sleeves has devised a new line of snowboarding-themed shrink sleeves for Malibu.

The bottles, produced by Rexam Glass, are available in Alpine ski resorts for the duration of the 2003 ski season and support Malibu's winter tour of bars and discos in leading resorts.

The three 70cl bottles each depict a different snowboarding maneuver and also feature tips on how snowboarders can enjoy Malibu après-ski.

Decorative Sleeves grouped all three sleeve designs on a single set of cylinders to maximize production efficiency. The nine-color gravure reelform shrink sleeves were fitted to the bottles using innovative steam shrinking technology.

'The new bottles are a fun way to connect our consumers' passion for snowboarding with their seriously easy going attitude off the slopes,' says Christophe Prat, senior brand manager, Malibu, France.

No.388

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Label life

Appointments

Jon Fennel
Radius Solutions
Vice president of operations

Radius is a global software company focusing on the printing and packaging industry. Fennel has more than 12 years of experience in software and implementation services and his expertise lies in ERP software solutions for the manufacturing industry.

Nick Morris
ZED Instruments
Sales manager

Morris has over 10 years' experience of worldwide capital equipment sales and has been brought in by ZED Instruments to strengthen its flexo sales in North America.

John Depuy
Fulflex
Director, sales and marketing

Depuy will manage the sales process for Fulflex's flexographic systems' laser-engraveable plates and sleeves. He will also be working with Fulflex's associate company, ZED Instruments, to oversee sales for flexo applications in North America.

George Herrick
RDP Marathon
North east region sales manager

Herrick joins RDP with over 20 years of experience in the printing industry. Based in Connecticut, he will be responsible for promoting fixed and variable size perfecting and non-perfecting web presses to printers based in the north east.

Dr Krzysztof Przasnek
Nilpeter Poland
Director for Nilpeter, Poland

From 1991, Dr Przasnek was director for Jackstädt Poland. He left the company in March 2003 following its acquisition by Avery Dennison.

Dr Przasnek is extremely optimistic about his appointment with Nilpeter Poland as in recent years the market for self-adhesive labels in Poland has shown annual growth rates of between 15 and 17 per cent. Nilpeter already has a strong position in Poland with a claimed market share of approximately 60 per cent.

NorthStar Print Group

The NorthStar Print Group has been awarded one of Miller Brewing Company's Partners in Excellence awards. It's the sixth consecutive year that NorthStar have scooped the award.

The awards recognize suppliers whose quality, innovation, service and cost excels. NorthStar prints all of Miller's labels and was one of only

39 winners from a field of more than 8,500 suppliers.

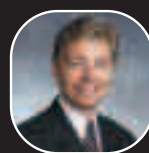
'We are proud of our long-standing relationship with Miller Brewing and are dedicated to providing them with the highest quality labels and service in the industry,' said Richard Gasper, NorthStar president and CEO.

No.390



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turned into customers.”

John Parsons
VP-General Manager/Flexo Division
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Packaging and Label Gravure Association

The Packaging and Label Gravure Association is on the lookout for entrants in the 2003 Technical Achievement Awards for Suppliers to the Gravure Industry for Packaging and Labels.

Introduced in 2002, the awards recognize and promote new or significantly improved products that will enhance the industry's position in three areas – pre-press, pressroom and support systems.

All entries must be commercially viable in 2003 and entry forms must be submitted by 31 December. Winners will be announced at the PLGA 2004 annual conference in Florida. For more information contact Bill Klein at bklein@bright.net

 **No.391**

Cortron New platemaking equipment

Cortron has announced the introduction of a new flexo plate washout system, a drying system and two all-in-one systems.

The eXact 2632P, eXact 3648P and eXact 5280P represent three popular sizes of inline processors. Inline processing provides much better washout than the older rotary processors and the heater and chiller feature keeps the solvent at precisely the correct temperature, says Cortron.

In addition to the washout equipment, the new dryer and light finisher – the 5280DLF – combines plate drying and post exposure to

DIARY DATES

RadTech Europe 2003 conference and exhibition

From 3-5 November 2003, the RadTech Europe conference and exhibition for the radiation curing industry, will be held at the Estrel Convention Centre in Berlin.

RadTech is a forum for the industry to learn about new developments and

meet experts, suppliers and end-users. The programme includes over 120 presentations and posters, where international experts will demonstrate the economic and technical merits of recent research and development, new fields of application, new processes, equipment and products.

 **No.392**

Mozzarella means money

Flexographic companies in Charlotte, NC, have been polishing off pizza to help raise money for the Phoenix Challenge competition fund. They were encouraged to buy pizza from a Pizza Hut restaurant throughout 'Pizza Week' and 20 per cent of all proceeds were donated to the event, which will be held in March 2004.

The Phoenix Challenge forges

sponsorship relationships with flexo companies to support skill competitions and school programs nationwide.

'The involvement of our sponsors and volunteers means that each student has an extraordinary experience at the competition,' says Phoenix Challenge chairman Bettylyn Krafft, 'and hopefully that will encourage them to strive for higher education'.

 **No.393**

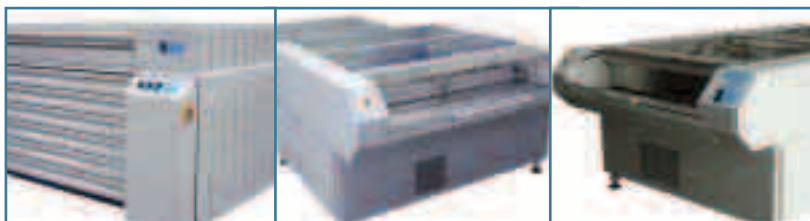
Radius Solutions

ERP software company Radius Solutions has become a Networked Graphic Production (NGP) partner. NGP is an industry-wide affiliation of printing and graphic arts equipment and software providers. The initiative aims to streamline and automate every step in the print production process and create a collaborative environment for printers, converters, print buyers and creative professionals.

The partnership will enable Chicago-based Radius Solutions to deliver a wider range of JDF-based integrated solutions to customers around the world. President David Taylor says: 'Forming partnerships with companies such as NGP is critical to the success of the development of new technologies.'

'Radius views the partnership with NGP as a practical step on the road to delivery of inter-operable print applications.'

 **No.395**





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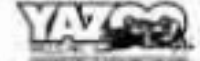


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