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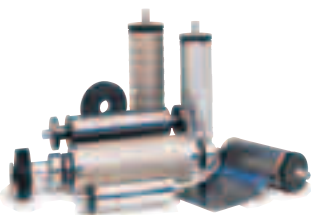
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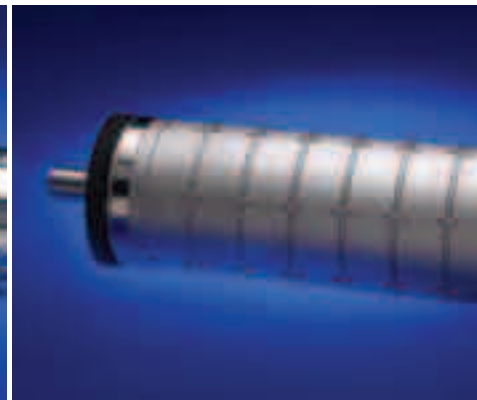
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Leader



Securing the brands of global apparel manufacturers is a focus of this issue of L&L. The problem is a huge one, and it's not just about identifying counterfeit goods. It's also about ensuring that apparel manufactured for one market does not end up illegally in another - the so-called Gray market. For our readers, the most exciting solution is for label converters to build security, product identification and track-trace elements into the label at the point of printing, using one of a wide range of technically ingenious 'smart' technologies now on the market. Indeed, in this L&L we report exclusively on a new taggant from Creo which is literally undetectable on a label substrate with even the most sophisticated forensic equipment.

Converters offering this kind of in-line solution can give global apparel manufacturers the ability to spot where counterfeiting and diversion is happening without the cost of item-level RFID tags.

However, there remain major barriers to the widespread adoption of these security and authentication technologies.

Firstly, the brands themselves. All too often there is no direct financial link between the brand protection division and the label buyer. The brand protection officer may recognize that by investing a small amount more at the label specification stage they can save vast amounts downstream in identifying counterfeit or diverted product. But the label buyer is out of this loop, and gets paid on his/her ability to drive down the cost of the label.

"Converters offering this kind of in-line solution can give global apparel manufacturers the ability to spot where counterfeiting and diversion is happening without the cost of item-level RFID tags"

Secondly, there are no universally recognized security standards which customs officers and other enforcement officials can refer to when assessing potentially counterfeit or diverted goods.

What we require is a database of recognized secure technologies which can be accessed by any customs officer with a wireless PDA. Setting up this database should be the joint responsibility of brand owners, enforcement authorities and security solution manufacturers. Then brand owners would have a real incentive to encourage their label buyers to invest in label printers offering secure solutions.

Andy Thomas

Group Managing Editor



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From press to dress

Protecting brand integrity, combating counterfeiters and supply chain management all come under the umbrella of tag and label converting for the apparel industry. How do converters keep up?

Katy Wight reports

Two 18 year-olds hit the headlines in Florida recently after hosting a 'purse party', where guests were invited to buy knock-off designer handbags at a fraction of their retail values. After selling some fake Louis Vuitton – to an undercover detective – the teens were arrested and charged with felonies for dealing in counterfeit merchandise.

Although selling faux purses is a crime, it resides at the lower end of the federal law enforcement food chain, particularly with the current focus on terrorism. But purse parties are merely the tip of the counterfeit-clothing iceberg.

The proliferation of fakes in the apparel segment is glaringly obvious. Whether you're on 5th Avenue in Manhattan or Khao

San Road in Bangkok, dodgy designer gear is easy to get your hands on – and the brand owners aren't happy about it.

Unlike other products, copyright protection is denied to fashion designs under the US Copyright Act. Trademarks are available to designs, but it's a fine line between an actual counterfeit and a creative interpretation. Levi Strauss & Co. is one of the world's leading branded apparel companies. It achieved net sales of almost \$4.1 billion in 2003, selling in more than 100 countries worldwide. Since their invention in 1873, Levi's jeans have become one of the most recognized brands in the apparel industry. But along with the kudos, come the copycats.

'Brand protection has been an issue for Levi Strauss & Co. for several years,' says Collette Bonner, a trademark manager at Levi Strauss UK Ltd. 'We take it very seriously and work with the authorities to control the illegal business of counterfeit, manufacturing, distribution and sale of Levi Strauss & Co products. These products are not made with the proprietor's knowledge or by an authorised dealer. Counterfeits are not of the same quality as the genuine item and never subject to the same rigorous quality control procedures and therefore cannot carry a genuine guarantee.'

Levi Strauss & Co is unwilling to disclose the extent to which counterfeiting affects them, but estimates assess the costs related to overall global branded product abuse at \$720 million each year. But the consequences don't stop there. On top of loss of brand revenue and profit, counterfeits flooding a market can erode brand value through association with inferior product and destabilization of the brand market share – or the entire market itself. The tag and label converter has an important role to play in brand defence.

'Security products built into tags or labels have a dual role to play – to authenticate genuine and identify counterfeit product, and to track genuine product,' adds Bonner. 'We must continue to fight illegal activity of counterfeiting and do our utmost to retain exclusivity and the heritage surrounding the Levi's Strauss & Co brand.'

Understandably Levi's Strauss & Co are cagey about revealing the exact security solutions they use. Any security solution has a finite shelf life – usually less than 18 months – before the counterfeiters have cloned it themselves, no matter how technologically advanced, so they're not about to give them any hot tips. Solutions have to be watertight if companies such as Levi's Strauss & Co are to work successfully with customs and police for successful prosecutions.

Printer and security provider

So who do the brand owners turn to for these security solutions? Paxar Corporation is a \$675 million, NYSE-listed provider of innovative merchandising systems to retailers and apparel manufacturers. It is one of several converters that have specialized in the apparel industry – and they all have very similar characteristics. As apparel brands have become global, and manufacturing has shifted offshore, these companies have had to adapt and provide solutions from label concept and design to checkout capabilities, throughout the world. Paxar has manufacturing operations and presence in over 75 countries, which enables them to offer clients a competitive range of products on a global basis.

'Globalization has frustrated brand protection and made the job harder for many brands,' says Dean Garner, brand protection

Care labels - a technical guide

Garment care labels are an essential element in telling consumers how to maximize the life of the apparel they purchase. Care information is provided with a garment so that the consumer knows whether the garment should be machine washed or hand washed, bleached, tumble dried, ironed, professionally laundered or dry cleaned in order to keep it in good condition and prolong its life. Indeed, research studies have shown that more than 60 per cent of consumers indicate that care label information is important in their decision to purchase an item of clothing, with the majority checking the garment care label before purchasing the item of clothing.

Care labels, showing the required text and/or symbols, are required on most textile clothing, must be attached firmly to the garment, be easy to find and be readable throughout the life of the garment. In addition to providing information on safe cleaning, care labels must list any necessary warnings about the cleaning method, i.e. the label must say whether any step in the care process - bleaching, washing drying, ironing, or dry cleaning - could harm the garment, or any other items that may be cleaned with it.

Care label guidelines and symbols have been developed by GINETEX, the body that regulates the use of garment care symbols throughout Europe - and accepted by a majority of countries of the world as an international care labeling code - and by the Federal Trade Commission's Care Labeling Rule for apparel sold in Mexico, Canada and the United States. Although the FTC care symbol system is not identical, it is very similar and differs primarily in its comprehensiveness, as well as being a more user-friendly approach.

Symbols used in the GINETEX care labeling system (also subject to an international standard ISO 3758 'Textiles - care labeling code using symbols') - and protected by an international trademark - include:

- A washing symbol for home laundry usage (although the industrial launderer can use it as additional advice to supplement his own experience). The washing symbol may also include temperature information indicated by a number inside the symbol, a hand wash symbol, and a bar under the symbol to indicate a very mild or gentle wash cycle.
- A chlorine bleach symbol, with Cl inside if bleaching is allowed in a cold or dilute solution, or a cross if chlorine bleach is not permitted
- An ironing symbol, with 1, 2 or 3 dots placed within the symbol to indicate maximum temperatures in degrees Celsius for ironing textile articles.
- A dry-cleaning symbol (which is a little different to the American type) which incorporates the letters A, P or F to refer to the solvents that may be used by the dry cleaners. An underline indicates that a specific process should be used.
- A tumble drying symbol, completed with one or two dots for different temperature levels.

The appropriate GINETEX, ISO or FTC guidelines should be followed and understood when producing or using care labels.

*Source: Encyclopedia of Labels and Label Technology
by Mike Fairley*



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Puma has adopted the Secutag solution to fight piracy, see p18

manager EMEA, Paxar. 'They just don't have the resources in place to manage effectively. They've been encountering lots of problems protecting their assets and intellectual property, and basically risk losing their credibility and revenue. It can have a knock on effect and can sour supplier relations too. My responsibility is creating brand protection solutions for brands and retailers.'

Retailers and brands have a range of security options to consider for any apparel tag or label – security inks, UV threads, holograms, invisible codes, barcodes or even RFID – but, 'the biggest challenge is getting brands to admit they have a problem in the first place and then identifying the size of the problem,' says Garner.

'We can offer a whole range of security options, with the flexibility to intergrade almost any security technology, but it

"After counterfeiting, the new-age problem is the gray market – the movement of goods through unauthorized channels"

depends on the attitude of the brand. There is no pattern that determines which brands will adopt which solutions. You can't say that luxury goods will go for the most advanced and expensive solution, because it is actually very varied. There is no direct relationship and it is related to whether the brand recognizes that they have a problem and how far that they are prepared to go to address it. All of the brands have similar problems, but they all require different solutions.'

Counterfeit goods was the first issue addressed by the brand owners, but the new-age problem is the gray market – the movement of goods through unauthorized channels. These activities can be very organized and it can be very damaging for a brand if the market is flooded with unauthorized and/or fakes beyond its control. To counter diversion, brands require track and trace and authentication solutions. These can range from the low-cost coding, marking, numbering and barcodes (2D, linear, data matrix) – these can be covert or overt – right up to RFID.

'There has been increasing interest in RFID from our end users as the cost is coming down. We have been looking into applications that fit our customers' requirements and forming partnerships with hardware, logistics and software specialists to try and create an all-round solution,' he says.

'The costs associated with RFID are not just about the price per tag. For the end user, it's also about investing in the whole infrastructure to be able to utilize those tags. You cannot make a direct comparison between the cost of a conventional tag and an RFID tag – you need to look at the benefit that that RFID tag can make to your logistics and inventory controls – that's where the tag/cost ratio becomes commercially viable.'

The label-less look

EAS tags, graphic tags, sizer strips, woven labels, printed fabric labels, encrypted image labels, hang tags, pocket flashers, joker tickets – there's a lot of label possibilities in the apparel segment, but the hottest ticket is the 'label-less' look. All of the brands are jumping on the bandwagon to get rid of scratchy, irritating size, care and fabric content labels from intimate-wear. Paxar promotes its Soft.mark soft labels and ShoreTo Shore has its Ever-Brand range.

'Hanes in the US did a huge marketing campaign and enlisted the help of Michael Jordan and Jackie Chan,' says

David Slauter from Shore To Shore, 'and then Fruit of the Loom and Jockey started cashing in. We are going to be producing Ever-brand labels for Hanes and Tommy Hilfiger.' But is this just a fad or a sustainable labeling solution?

'That's an interesting question,' adds Slauter. 'Via a heat transfer you can list the same information without having to sew anything on and it's not going to be immediately chopped off by the wearer, so I don't think that we are going to see it going away. Production of these for us has mainly been in the US, but we are working on deploying in the rest of the world.'

The Prada Project

RFID holds significant advantages for logistics, supply management and brand protection, but apparel manufacturers are beginning to see other benefits in harnessing the technology. The Prada project involved the implementation of RFID with the aim of augmenting the Prada sales experience.

In December 2001, Prada opened its 'epicenter' store in NYC. All merchandise has its own RFID tag, which when scanned and detected, provides immediate access to a database where there is content for every garment, shoe, and bag. This is in the form of sketches, catwalk video clips, and color swatches.

There is also up-to-date information on every item, such as what sizes or colors are currently available. This enables the sales associate to spend more time attending personally to a customer, and less time chasing to the stock room to check for available items.

An RFID tag is also part of a PRADA customer card. Customer preferences are stored on the database, and only the customer card provides access. This information is used to customize the sales experience and further enhance the service provided to the card-holding customer.

The wireless staff device provides information to the sales associate. It is used to scan merchandise for inventory information, and when used in conjunction with a ubiquitous display it functions as a remote control, allowing the sales associate to highlight sketches and catwalk video clips directly in front of the customer. Staff devices are distributed around the store. A sales associate picks up a device when needed and logs on to the database by scanning their own small personal RF clip. Seven special dressing rooms were installed so that once inside the dressing room the customer can directly access information that relates to their garment. As garments are hung in the closet their tags are automatically scanned and detected via RF antennae embedded in the closet. Once registered, the information is automatically displayed on an interactive touch screen, enabling the customer to select alternative sizes, colors, fabrics, and styles, or see the garment worn on the PRADA catwalk as slow-motion video clips.

Wal-Mart is one of the companies leading the way for RFID in the apparel sector and their initial deadlines require pallet-level tagging. It's when the tagging goes to the individual item level marking that the tags become expensive, but as mass-production increases, the price will come down. At the moment RFID tags can easily be justified on luxury items – \$0.25 is a small percentage of a \$250 jacket – but can it be justified for a \$7 shirt?

'We are moving towards RFID, but it is probably five to ten years before we start producing the tags for the mass market,' adds Garner. 'I think that barcodes and RFID will be working in tandem for quite a long time. At the moment we can offer solutions where the two are linked and there are situations where this will always be cost-effective.'

One of the biggest issues for brands is gaining support from

"What is the point in sinking money into a solution if you are getting no support from the authorities when you get to a prosecution stage?"

governments, customs and other import/export authorities. The counterfeiting, piracy and diversion of soft goods such as apparel are seen as a soft crime, but issues of authentication are crucial when you are tracing life-critical products such as pharmaceuticals.

'We need legislation for help and support,' says Garner. 'What is the point in sinking money in to a solution if you are getting no support from the authorities when you get to a prosecution stage?'

Track and trace

'In the race for brands to maximize sales, they have and can lose control of their supply chain,' says Garner. 'There is a degree of trust involved in this kind of global operation because your manufacturing can be occurring at a distance, without you policing it.'

'We have the data mechanisms to support control of the supply chain and implementing RFID would have added benefits for a brand – it is intelligent and has a longer lifecycle. These devices can help the brand focus their energy on track and trace and then they can be used to support the enforcement agencies.'

Up until the point where the labels are handed over to the client, the tags are the responsibility of the printer. The converter needs to have a carefully controlled audit trail and distribution chain, particularly if it has to coordinate multiple locations throughout the world.

Focus Label Machinery, Nottingham has tracked the migration of apparel production via sales of its range of Letterflex textile presses and converters. The narrow web presses print on a range of fabrics – cottons, satins, polyesters, twill, GroGrain and polysatins – in up to six different colors (models L1-6), plus two-color reverse print in a single pass.

'Ten years ago we were predominantly selling presses for apparel tag and label printers in the US and Hong Kong,' says Anthony Cotton, technical sales manager at Focus. Subsequently sales then shifted into Sri Lanka. More recently, sales have naturally moved out of the US now to South East Asia and Turkey. We are



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Garment labels

Labels are an essential element of every garment, providing both legally required care instructions and content information. For most garments they also provide the primary method of brand identification. Garment labels may be woven or printed, or a combination of the two processes and, for many applications, can all be used for the same purposes. However, there are important differences: printed labels are less expensive and faster to produce than woven labels, while woven labels are more durable so as to survive commercial or home washing.

For the more highly priced fashion sector, woven labels are the main standard, offering a luxurious and sophisticated appearance – although good quality printed labels are becoming more common. Printed labels will be more legible than woven labels where there is lot of text or very small text, such as with care labels.

Printed labels are most frequently made on rotary letterpress or screen presses, or thermal transfer (with suitable durable ink ribbons). Flexographic presses are also used, especially for self-adhesive removable garment labels. There is also some use of offset on coated fabrics, as well as ink jet printing. Depending on the printing equipment and process used so printing may be carried out on one or both sides of a wide range of different materials, from satin, acetate, polyester, nylon and cotton twill, in a continuous format.

The labels are printed with brand, care, bar code or other information from a roll as required and, after printing, folded to end fold (the left and right edges of the label are folded), center or loop folded (folded in the middle), miter fold or single cut to size (using a cold or hot knife), die cut to shape or left in a continuous tape format. The most common material used is satin-coated acetate.

Woven garment labels are manufactured on industry-standard weaving equipment in a wide variety of weaving styles – single shuttle, double shuttle, needle loom, damask weave and twill weave – and in a range of patterns, usually using polyester, taffeta, damask or satin materials. Damask weave labels have the best life and can reproduce smaller type sizes, although not to the same clarity as printed labels. The majority of woven labels carry a brand name.

Garment label materials are selected according to the garment type and performance, from strong, durable materials for jeans to ultrasoft woven edge satin fabric for lingerie. They may have a slit edge, woven edge (generally used for any garment which has direct skin contact) or be specially treated, i.e. fire retardant or self extinguish nylon, stone wash nylon to withstand chemical and stonewashing of workwear.

Woven labels and most printed labels are sewn in place on the garment with a sewing machine. Printed labels can be applied flat to a garment using iron-on, heat-activated or self-adhesive backings.

Source: Encyclopedia of Labels and Label Technology

“In 2005, all countries participating in the WTO are going to drop their quotas and this will cause a huge shift in sourcing”

gaining more and more customers in countries like Thailand, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Korea, Taiwan and Japan. Other emerging areas are Eastern Europe and North Africa – countries such as Morocco, Tunisia and Israel – and South America is also quite buoyant.’

Low labor cost is the obvious major pulling factor for brands in moving their production offshore. The cost of employing a labor force in the US to China, for example, just doesn’t compare, and textiles/sewing only requires a low-skilled labor force.

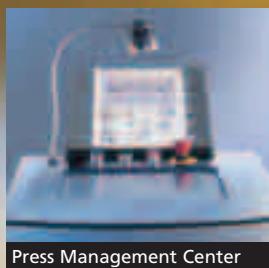
‘At present about 70 per cent of our revenue comes out of the Asian region,’ says David Slauter, vice president global sales and marketing, of converter Shore To Shore. Shore To Shore has 13 manufacturing facilities in the world’s largest garment producing centers and sales support and customer service in 24 locations worldwide. He believes that the apparel industry can expect more shifts in the future.

‘In 2005, all countries participating in the WTO are going to drop their quotas and this will cause a huge shift in sourcing,’ he explains. ‘We are all waiting to see what is going to happen regarding changes in sourcing patterns. We are expecting China to explode. We already have three offices in China and we are expecting to set up additional stations, as we are seeing shifts of sourcing into this region. It may just accelerate the exodus of textile factories out of other garment sourcing regions.’

He adds: ‘We are seeing some growth in Central and Latin America, which comes off the back of its proximity to the US. They are in a good position to provide for the products that need replenishing on the shelf quickly. US companies have the peace of mind knowing they are working with someone in the same hemisphere,’ he says. ‘The same thing is happening in Europe, with garment factories popping up in countries like Morocco in North Africa and Romania and Poland in Eastern Europe – again it is about their ability for rapid replenishment.’

Shore To Shore produced 2.6 billion tags and labels in 2003 for brands such as Gap, Donna Karan, Liz Claiborne, the Arcadia Group, Mango and Tesco. But their expertise doesn’t stop with the tags. With a turnover of about \$12 million, in monetary terms they are one of the smaller companies in the apparel industry, but Slauter thinks that it is making its way into the top three (behind Avery Dennison and Paxar).

‘Why are people choosing us?’ echoes Slauter. ‘Well it’s the old mantra – we are offering solutions on a global scale. We have been listening to where people are sourcing garments and then growing our business in that region accordingly. There is lots of information available to us about trade and the financial situation in these areas. We study all of that data and



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Puma fights back

German sportswear giant Puma has been using 'Secutag', a novel security system that uses layers of tiny color-particles, to fight piracy and counterfeiting.

The color-particles are microscopically small, consist of four to ten variably colored layers, and are made of very resistible melamine-alkyd-polymeric material. They are sized between 0,005 and 0,045 millimeters (5-45 μm). The size of the particles can be chosen in accordance to its prospective purpose.

It claims to offer an endless spectrum of possible fields of application. Secutag is chemical resistant and thermal resistant up to 200°C which is an important feature especially for industrial use. Solids, pastes, powders and fluids can all be safeguarded and some other applications involve the tracing of contaminated waste, authenticating the source of weapons and explosives, tracking animals and plants and within the police. Secutag claims to have won several important product liability actions through its ability to authenticate.

The Puma brand used Secutag to trace unapproved overproduction, copies and gray market activity.

look for trends.'

Shore to Shore markets itself as a one-stop-shop for brand packaging sourcing. From the label-concept stage to distribution, logistics and then the final checkout, the company maintains the same quality control system worldwide. The brand owner from Gap can then sit at his desk in San Francisco and be assured that his manufacturing facilities in Indonesia, Hong Kong, China and Poland will receive like tags and labels, locally sourced with consistent quality. This global logistics network reduces the huge costs associated with shipping, duties and other expenses.

'The visibility is exactly the same for me,' adds Slauter. 'From my desk in the USA I can see all of the orders and shipments that are being made in the company all over the world. We have also brought this visibility to our customers with our online supply chain management system – W.O.R.L.D (worldwide order routing logistics and distribution). They can track their tags and labels and make any enquiries that they want.

'We are at the end of the food chain and we don't want any delayed shipments of clothes to be blamed on the fact that their Shore To Shore tags didn't turn up on time,' he says. Shore To Shore has built joint venture partnerships with local print or weaving suppliers. The suppliers need the backing of a company like Shore To Shore behind them to secure the business of the big foreign brands, and Shore To Shore benefits from local management and

expertise on local laws, customs and ways of conducting business.

Trans-global operations can throw up other challenges. The company goes to great lengths to ensure the same standard throughout. For example, all of the production art files are sent digitally so that it just needs to be opened and sent to press, and no one can interfere with it. Samples from production are sent to the customer periodically or sometimes they will come out to visit the production site.

'Our presses are all different, but we know the requirements of each one and the company has invested in all of the calibration technology to ensure color consistency – we use CIELAB readings and densitometers for example – and it is all predictable. Consistent paper and substrates presents more of a challenge. If an exact match isn't locally available we usually go for the closest match, but some of our customers are willing to have the paper they want shipped.

'Another problem that we face is because lots of our customers don't have a sole label supplier. We have to work together with other label suppliers to try and produce exactly the same result, because in the end that is what we are all being measured on.' ■





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Reacting to the retail industry

Located in the hills above Los Angeles, Avery Dennison's Retail Information Services business sits at the center of a global business which follows the manufacturers of apparel as they move into new locations around the world. **Andy Thomas** reports

From its network of operations in more than 30 countries, product ID provider Avery Dennison Retail Information Services (RIS) is in proximity to nearly every apparel manufacturing facility on the planet. That's good news for retailers and garment makers who source globally, especially those facing tough product ID challenges like color consistency, product availability and speed to market.

Indeed, with ticketing plants, service bureaus and resident consultants in regions that span from Turkey, Bangladesh and Egypt to Europe, the Americas, China and beyond, addressing and resolving product ID issues associated with global sourcing is a principal Avery Dennison specialty. So too is the specific task of tagging apparel. The company's roots in apparel ID date back nearly a century, so there's little in the way of surprise when company specialists examine a new application. If a new challenge arises, the RIS team can call on the resources of Avery Dennison's R&D center in Pasadena.

There is, in fact, little that the company can't do in the way of product ID. The organization's competencies include the manufacture and supply of completely printed tags and labels; high-speed printers that mark blank or partially pre-printed labels on site; a line of woven labels, plus printed labels and high quality graphics tags that convey brand identity; price tags, patches, shipping labels, safe fastening devices and supply chain solutions.

For example, the organization works with customers in creating brand identities and developing packaging design solutions. At customer-company Wal-Mart, Avery Dennison RIS maintains a local office specifically to assist the retailing giant with packaging design projects and execution.

The company offers other vital services that support package design activities, as well. As part of an alliance with Sprockhövel, Germany-based Rinke Etiketten, a producer of

quality woven and printed labels, Avery Dennison RIS presents brand marketers with a generic-based labels collection based on seasonal colors and matching substrates.

Plus, Avery Dennison RIS' creative director conducts research worldwide to spot package design trends that might prove useful in new product developments. The company keeps a library of packaging solutions developed in part by examining product brand launches, and asking, 'How could we have done it better?'

Supporting a global printing and ticketing management system for apparel makers and retailers requires competence across a wide range of disciplines. Consider, for example, the tricky business of managing color consistency. Printing processes on apparel labels can include a mixture of flexographic, offset and rotary letterpress, embossing and screen printing. These might have to color match with rotogravure or wide-web CI printed polybags, and with offset printed cartons and woven labels.

And that's just the beginning. As Avery Dennison RIS vice president of marketing Robert Loop notes, 'There are also

"The type of question that might arise: if we print in Pakistan, how will the paper stock, ink formulations and humidity affect the quality of the print?"



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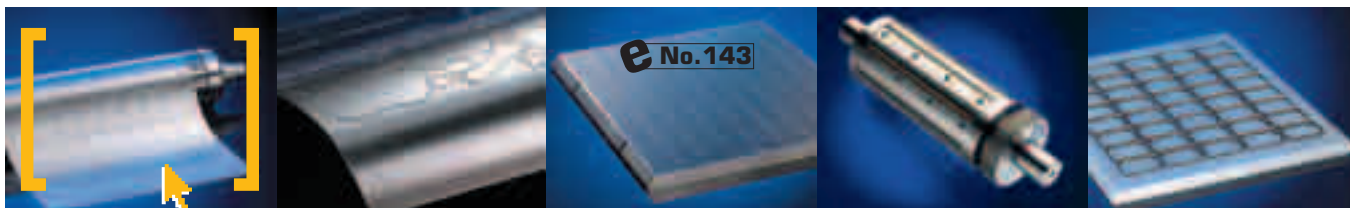
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[Amazing Power]



(Above left) Robert Loop, vice president of marketing at Avery Dennison Retail Information Services, (Above right) ADRIS can call on the services of a dedicated design group, here pictured with their inspirational 'library' of pack and label designs from around the world

“Uncertainty makes logistics management critical and mandates a very close working relationship with the customer at every point along the supply chain”

technical unknowns such as printing stock variation and different wash processes for interior labels that need to be considered. You need particular expertise to guard against potential color disparities. The type of question that might arise: “If we print in Pakistan, how will the paper stock, ink formulations and humidity affect the quality of the print?”

Beyond that, servicing global customers may involve supplementing Avery Dennison RIS' own in-house converting capabilities through outsourcing, a business activity that can make the color consistency equation even more complex. “We control where products are manufactured and printed locally depending on how we work with each individual client,” Loop says. “We might have to source numerous different paper stocks globally for the same label program, which means that we have to manage the process to ensure that our own facilities and partner printers are achieving the same results.”

Loop says that feedback from Avery Dennison RIS customers on color consistency is positive. “Brand owners and retailers recognize that this is a challenge,” he says, “and they are generally quick to acknowledge that the quality control processes we are developing are working well.”

The seasonal and unpredictable nature of the apparel

business has tended to slow the development of client-side interactive IT systems. “It is often difficult for our customers to forecast their labeling needs,” Loop says, “so we work in anticipation, without getting firm orders. This uncertainty makes logistics management critical and mandates a very close working relationship with the customer at every point along the supply chain. Our InfoChain Express supply chain solution is really gaining momentum with several major retailers and helping to bridge this gap.”

Brand Security

Maintaining brand security in global supply chains is a priority concern to apparel marketers. To assist them, Avery Dennison RIS builds in anti-counterfeit, anti-diversion and anti-theft technologies using an assortment of solutions. Products range from security threads, digital watermarking and serialized holograms to DNA taggants. “Radio frequency and acousto-magnetic are the primary anti-theft technologies that we employ today,” Loop notes.

Loop adds that managing a brand's master files can simplify tracking and tracing item labels. “With some clients, we identify our barcodes by printing our unique identifying codes,” he says. “This allows us to tell very quickly if we've printed something, and we can then track it back to its source.”

Loop is keeping a close eye on the potential for item-level RFID (radio frequency identification). “We are being asked to make labels and tags smart for in-store and supply chain functionality,” he says, “and to do this at the point of production. Avery Dennison Corporation has a very active RFID program, and the RIS Division is developing printers and software solutions to enable this technology. Now that Target has matched Wal-Mart's RFID commitment for carton and pallet RFID labels, and organizations like Marks & Spencer are doing their own testing, we expect it to develop quickly. Ultimately, RFID empowers.”

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e No.180

DuPont announces plans for flexo expansion

DuPont's pre-Drupa press briefing confirmed its commitment to the flexo based label and packaging industry. **Barry Hunt** reports

Promoting flexographic growth in the labels, packaging and converting sectors is seen by DuPont Imaging Technologies as central to its business. In fact during the next five years it plans to double the existing \$500 million turnover from sales of Cyrel flexo plates, platemakers, Cromalin proofing systems and associated hardware.

Europe accounts for around \$200 million of sales and future growth will include a large element of computer-to-plate technology, web-enabled remote proofing and other aspects of digital prepress technology. 'Packaging buyers' expectations are high and trade shops and printers must be able to produce consistent, high-quality plates and print. At the same time, we are conscious that current plate making systems need to become more environmentally friendly', said Barry Granger, vice president and general manager at the Wilmington headquarters in Delaware. At the briefing, held near Frankfurt, he singled out Cyrel FAST and Cyrel Round. Apparently they not only reduced plate production time and effort, but also reduced waste and emissions.

Nevertheless, DuPont remains committed to its analogue plate markets. Dr Mathias Henzel, marketing director at the division's European headquarters in Neu-Isenberg, said they currently account for 70 per cent of total plate revenues. A reorganized range to tidy up choice and stockholding includes three new products. With its medium durometer, NWS is designated as the 'universal' DuPont flexo plate. It is especially recommended for printing packaging films. HIQS is a premium hard plate for fine-dot halftones printed on smooth paper and film stocks. The softer NEOS is a regular quality plate intended for less demanding work, such as one or two-colour labels and envelopes. The new plates replace PLS, PLSi, HOF and POF,

Round and FAST

Henzel said there were some 650 flexo computer-to-flexo-plate installations around the world, of which 130 were installed in



For the first time, DuPont includes an onboard GretagMacbeth spectrophotometer. It is standard on the Cromalin b3 and optional on the existing b2

2003 alone. DuPont's Cyrel Digital Imager accounts for some 400 of them. Approximately 60 per cent of installed CDIs are ready to handle Cyrel Round. Made from a polymer compound and mask, this lightweight digitally imaged sleeve is seen as a possible gravure-to-flexo facilitator in key packaging markets. It was introduced over a year ago and currently has four European users and four American users.

Stephan Riechert, product manager, expanded on the advantages that Cyrel Round offers printers. 'They eliminate mounting, provide precision gauges without breaks, perfect registration, excellent ink transfer and are compatible with all conventional inks and solvents.' Cyrel Round sleeves are available in two versions: Classic, for use directly on a Stork sized printing cylinder or sleeve, and Thin, used in combination with a compressible bridge adapter sleeve.

After over two years, Cyrel FAST is now firmly established



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“Used within digital workflows, FAST could allow flexo printers to compete more effectively with gravure and offset for many applications, including those dependent upon satellite operations with remote platemaking”



DuPont's new two-page format Cromalin b3 digital proofer with ink jet printheads will be shown at Drupa

with 250 user sites worldwide, 50 of which are in Europe; most are trade shops. As the world's first dry thermal flexo plate, it eliminates conventional solvents, chemicals, liquids and aqueous washout solutions. Used within digital workflows, it could allow flexo printers to compete more effectively with gravure and offset for many applications, including those dependent upon satellite operations with remote platemaking.

A new product for Drupa is TD 4260, a large-format plate in a size of 106cm x 152cm. It is aimed at trade shops for maximizing ganged-up platemaking procedures. DuPont will also discuss progress for the next Cyrel FAST project: thermally-imaged Cyrel Round sleeve plates.

Cromalin digital proofing

Recognizing that 'contract proof' has become a generic term, DuPont now uses the term 'professional proof' in an attempt to establish a better understanding of a proof's technical qualities (There are over 2,000 Digital Cromalin proofing systems worldwide).

Early in 2003 DuPont Colour Proofing launched the b2 proofer, the first of a new generation of Digital Cromalin proofing systems using the latest drop-on-demand ink jet printhead technology. Its widespread acceptance as a professional-level proofing machine has led to the b3, a two-page version for smaller businesses, agencies and remote client sites.

Automatic calibration from printed test charts is a new innovation which is standard on the b3 and optional on the b2. A GretagMacbeth spectrophotometer sits in a flexible mount on

a carriage that moves across the width of the head to scan the proof in a series of stripes.

DuPont claims this method ensures outstanding colour consistency within a proof, from proof to proof and is site independent without operator assistance. This applies not just for process colour applications, but also for labels and packaging where numerous Pantone and complimentary colours are involved.

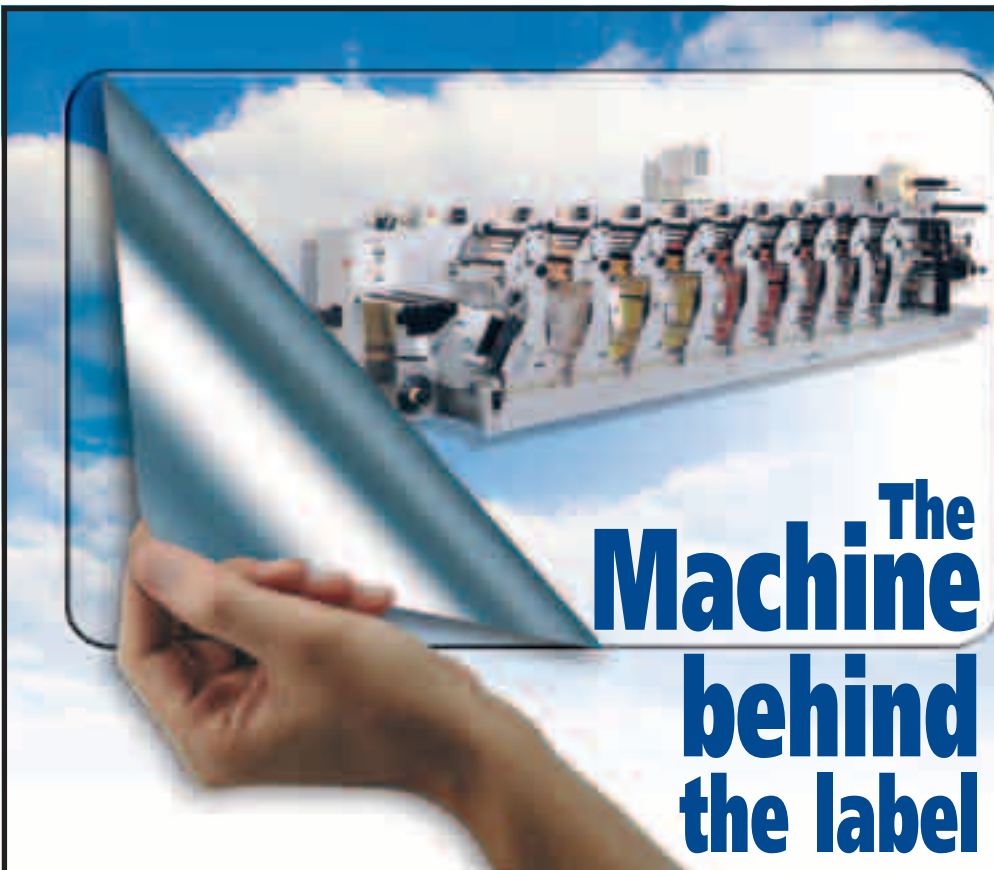
Both the b2 and b3 ink jet proofers will augment the existing Cromalin AQ2 and AQ4 models. They have a large installed base and are expected to remain key components in DuPont's proofing programme. This also includes iCertification, introduced two years ago as an internet-enabled remote proofing system for companies who need to guarantee accurate colour across sites, regions or sometimes globally. It can help standardize the process from design to print, using the actual substrates used for the job. This combination is said to provide a proof package with a common standard, allowing users to communicate not only data, but also colours with their relevant measurements and objective job reports.

Eastern promise

In a corporate sense, DuPont Imaging Technology plans to develop its eastern European business. It sees the region as being ripe for social and economic progress, with a potential that makes it among the world's most promising investment targets. It is currently sponsoring a project within the European Union and involving several 'Accession Countries'. The project aims to build a pan-European infrastructure of packaging printers, converters and trade shops, with business links among themselves and companies in other parts of the world.

The initiative began with the first Flexo & Packaging conference 'West Meets East', held in Moscow in October 2003. It was attended by some 300 representatives of the packaging industry, from both eastern and western countries.

'The principal goal of this ambitious project is to increase foreign direct investment in Eastern Europe, promote trade and strengthen cross border co-operation. Increasing cross-border communication and investment can dramatically stimulate the growth of this region. I believe that to be a critical component for any success strategy in Eastern Europe', said Dr Paolo A Barbieri, business director of DuPont Imaging Technologies. 'As shown by experience, capital, a transfer of technology and know-how, all encourage industrial restructuring and social change, while promoting integration into the global economy.' ■



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Drupa 2004 preview

Although Drupa is not a dedicated narrow web show, there is much of interest to label converters – particularly those looking to move into in-line packaging. **Andy Thomas** and **Katy Wight** preview the show

Press manufacturers

GIDUE

GIDUE will be launching its UNIPRO at drupa. First seen – though not printing – at Labelexpo Europe, the Unipro is a 730mm wide, in-line, mid-web packaging press which uses print cylinder sleeve technology. The UNIPRO prints and converts virtually any kind of substrate from PE BOPP, PET to paper, aluminum and laminates, and up to 450gsm carton board. The printing head is an enhanced version of the GIDUE Flower flexo head, with two new added design concepts: the UNI-Lock for non-reversible printing; and the Spider wash cycle for full automatic print unit wash up. The integrated Spider cycle reduces press down time with wash-up performed off-line.

 **No.300**

Edale

Edale will be demonstrating its servo-driven Sigma. The Sigma 510 will be running a UV flexo shrink sleeve application. The machine will also be equipped with a sophisticated water-cooled UV drying system supplied by IST. It's available for webs of 330-620mm and with a wide range of options including high powered air dryers in addition to hot/cold foiling, each machine is built to a customer's requirements and can be combined with rotary screen, gravure and digital printing.

 **No.301**

Ko-Pack International

Ko-Pack International will be showing the Euroflex 250 Artificial Casing Press. This 12-color flexo press has been designed for non-stop printing of polyamide food casing at speeds of up to 150m/min.

Configured for UV curing, the Euroflex uses specially formulated FDA-approved cationic inks. A 12-color 650 Film Press will also be shown. Using hot air drying and water based



GiDue Unipro flexible packaging press

inks, the press is configured for high speed (300m/minute) non-stop printing of food packaging films.

 **No.302**

Drent Goebel

Drent Goebel intends to pay particular attention to the packaging market and security printing at Drupa. The VSOP press will be on display, running both reel-to-reel and reel-to-sheet on different substrates alternately (see L&L issue 6 2003 for more information).

 **No.303**

Omet

Omet will be showcasing Varyflex at Drupa, a modular packaging press with the possibility of using different interchangeable printing methods (flexographic, silk-screen, rotogravure, hot foil, cold foil). The press will handle infinitely variable formats from 12 to 33 inches and uses servo-driven, shaftless technology and sleeves.

 **No.304**

Rotocolor

Rotocolor will be showing Rotova, a gravure and flexo printing press for narrow width printing, which can also be used for laminating and coating. They will also be presenting a newly developed matrix rewind unit that changes reels automatically.



Ko-pack Euroflex 250

Uteco Converting

Uteco Converting has been making waves in the film label converting business recently and will be showing a new gravure press and a central impression 8-color gearless flexo press.

 **No.305**

Kammann

Werner Kammann Maschinenfabrik GmbH will be showcasing its new servo-driven K61-OS web-fed press. Traditionally specialists in screen-printing, Kammann is configuring the press on display to run screen and offset. The first flat screen print station will be followed by four waterless offset printing stations with UV-curing after each color. The modular design means that further components such as foil hot-stamping, laminating, lacquering, die-cutting and rotogravure stations for printing metallic inks can be added. The offset print plates are created by Kammann's own CTP system, the K26-O, developed specifically for their presses. Kammann is also showcasing its new K26-S CTS system, a machine designed to bring the advantages of CTP to screen-printing.

 **No.306**

Heidelberg-Gallus

Gallus will be present on the Heidelberg stand with a KM 410/510 narrow web inline carton press. The configuration of the press will be 8 platform units, 6 flexo printing units for UV or water-based flexo printing and varnishing, one screen printing unit, one hot foil stamping with foil saving and hologram inseting device, one laminating unit on a rail system, dual rotary processing unit and the Gallus FSM 410 flat-bed die-cutter.

Consisting of an infeed section with web storage area, optional waste removal station for window stripping, shredder and moveable operator panel, the Gallus FSM 410 uses the flat bed die-cutting method for fast make ready with less expensive tooling, so essential for short run competitiveness. With optional unwind unit, the Gallus FSM 410 is capable of working offline, too. The 'wider' Gallus KM 510 is available with rotary die cutting. A Gallus FSM 510 flat-bed diecutter is being developed and will be available as of 2005.

 **No.307**

Digital

Dotrix/Agfa

Agfa will be demonstrating Direct-to-Press inkjet printing for packaging with recently acquired dotrix. Alongside the existing stand-alone roll-to-roll version of the .factory press, dotrix will demonstrate its suitability for folding carton applications and roll-to-roll label applications with the integration of a jumbo unwinder and sheet cutter.

 **No.308**

Domino Printing Sciences

Domino Printing Sciences will be exhibiting iDomino on Demand, a variable inkjet system designed to operate on a wide range of narrow web presses.

Domino on Demand is suitable for UV-cured or solvent-based inks and also supports Pantone colors. The product comprises of single or multiple print heads and from a single master print engine controller, 16 print heads can be controlled. Print heads are available up to 2.8" print width and the system allows four print heads per cabinet.

 **No.309**

Matan Digital Printers

Matan Digital Printers will be exhibiting the Matan Spring digital printing system, designed specifically for the tag and label market. Spring was first introduced at Labelexpo Europe 2003 in Brussels and since December 2003 Matan has sold a dozen units worldwide. The Spring uses Matan's thermal transfer technology, which claims enhanced resolution (up to 400x1600 DPI) and speed (up to 274 linear meter per hour), with a more extensive color gamut. With a choice of four, five, or six-color, one-pass printing, it allows printers to offer value-added capabilities for labels, tags and decals, such as spot colors, variable data, automatic numbering and bar coding.

 **No.310**

VIPColor Technologies/GRE Engineering

VIPColor Technologies will be exhibiting the VP8020 digital print engine. Optimized to handle variable content, VIPColor claim that it is ideal for the production of forms, labels, tickets, tags, identity cards, direct mail and other printed matter in sharp, crisp, durable color. Its 'cool fusion' micro-toner system was designed to make it ideal for substrates incorporating adhesives, as well as paper or synthetic based materials across a wide range of thicknesses.

Exhibiting with VIPColor, GRE Engineering will feature its Digital Converter, a complete tag and label short run system for converting digitally printed stock. Options are available to tailor the GRE Digital Converter to meet requirements including sheeting, foil stamping, UV coating and curing.

 **No.311**



HP Indigo

HP Indigo's industrial division has several new partnerships and press features to announce at Drupa.

● Integration with Esko Graphics and Artwork Systems

HP Indigo has formed partnerships with Esko Graphics and Artwork Systems to provide a direct link to their workflow software on the ws4000. HP Indigo has been beta testing the software on its presses and it will be fully integrated and ready to launch at Drupa. This integration will give printers a choice of output device without further prepress processes.

● FDA approval for pharmaceuticals

A dedicated 'Pharma Validation' report will be available from Drupa that contains all the necessary FDA compliance documents, test reports and guidelines to support a straightforward validation of the HP Indigo press ws4000 for the pharmaceutical industry (in compliance with relevant FDA regulations laid down in 21CFR 11 and 21 CFR211).

The pharmaceutical industry is particularly stringent when it comes down to digital printing. Conventional printing is largely predictable – it's been around for a long time – but the relatively young digital technology is regarded as a bit of a wild card by authorities.

'This has proved to be an impediment to digital printing for the pharmaceutical industry in the past,' comments Danny Dams, industry marketing manager Europe, 'and when you are dealing with authorities like the FDA, there is no room for error. We have been busy implementing changes to the press so that it is compliant. Every step of the process is checked, proofed and authorized. For example, we have installed a new system so that the press operator and the supervisor both have different access codes. The supervisor

dictates exactly what the operator will work on that day and they cannot implement any unauthorized changes.'

To further aid approval, Hp Indigo has partnered with AVT web inspection systems to provide a watertight proofing system. When you are providing labels used to aid the administering of drugs, issues like color consistency and other errors suddenly become very important.

● Fully-digital finishing

Hp Indigo has also been working with ABG International to produce an affordable Omega laser die-cutting system that will be introduced at Drupa. The die-cutter can increase productivity by operating at maximum press speed, and driving both the printing and finishing processes by the same workflow will also aid efficiency.

'Set-up in conventional printing is time-consuming,' says Dams. 'The future is going to be with digital – you don't need plates or dies. Laser die-cutting is much more straightforward.'

The new die-cutter will be available from Labelexpo Americas in September.

● New substrates

New 'no label look' substrates can now be used on HP Indigo label presses, extending the variety of substrates that can be used as well as the range of applications possible.

● Coating solutions

Two new coating solutions from Cooper Printing Equipment will be shown at drupa to enable HP Indigo press owners to carry out substrate coating. The Cooper Reflex is a roll-to-roll solution, while the Cooper Flexopress can be used for coating sheet-fed substrates.

No.312

Ink

Flint Ink Corporation

Flint Ink Corporation – including Flint-Schmidt, Jetrion LLC, and Precisia LLC – will introduce new ink systems as well as proprietary hardware. In collaboration with other key exhibitors, it will also host a passport tour designed to demonstrate the unique capabilities of RFID technology.

No.313

Zeller+Gmelin

Zeller+Gmelin, together with its UK subsidiary Intercol, will present OPTISCREEN, the new range of UV-screen printing inks for rotary and flat bed screen-printing. OPTISCREEN is designed for use on papers, transparent and opaque plastic substrates and to be overprinted in-line with Zeller+Gmelin UV curing products whether UV-flexo, UV-letterpress or UV-offset formulations. Zeller+Gmelin has also

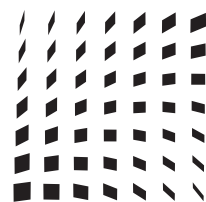
developed a new ink series for UV-Waterless applications, called TORACURE, and recently optimized the existing UVALUX U2 and LABELCUREUF (especially for labels) series for offset and letterpress printing on plastic films, synthetic papers and foil.

No.314

Wolstenholme International

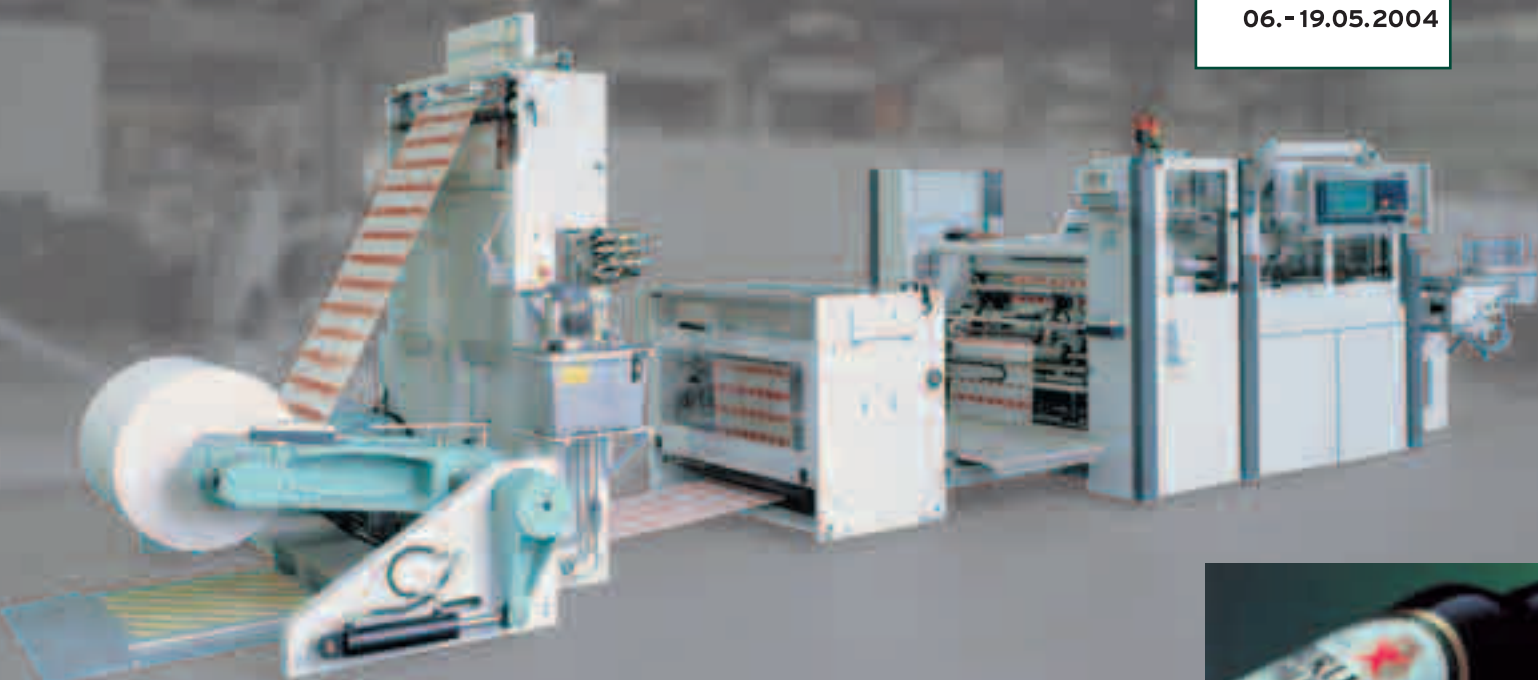
Wolstenholme International's free Inkantation calculating tool will be on display at Drupa. It helps printers select the most cost-effective metallic finish for a variety of printing applications. The calculation formulae are based solely on application comparisons between different metallic effects, such as inks, metallized substrates and hot and cold foil stamping. The tool enables the operator to key in over 150 printing variables, such as print quantity, paper selection and the process and finish most appropriate for carton and label printing.

No.315



print media messe
drupa

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STAND A62
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KUGLER-WOMAKO LabelCut 102

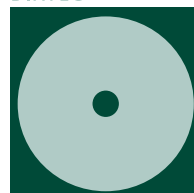
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e No. 135

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Light Impressions International Ltd

Light Impressions is launching a range of machine-readable holograms:

Optocode are pressure sensitive holographic labels that incorporate flying null technology for authentication and track and trace requirements; Magdot is a new technology from the USA that uses the unique characteristics of magnetic ink to provide unique identities to holographic labels or hot stamping foil; and Smartmark is holographic hot stamping foil and labels incorporating structured magnetics for both track and trace and authentication.

No.316

Coatings and adhesives

Rohm and Haas

As part of the company's 'Total Packaging Solutions' program, Rohm and Haas will feature the full range of its high-efficiency product lines, including the Mor-Free ELM Series extreme low monomer solventless adhesives, ROBOND L Series water-based adhesives for dry bond laminating, and ROBOND CS Cold Seal adhesives.

No.317

Ciba Specialty Chemicals

Ciba Specialty Chemicals will demonstrate Ciba Prime IT, a patented technology to improve adhesion of UV-curable inks, coatings and adhesives on plastics. Good results can be achieved with water-based inks as well. It has virtually unlimited storage stability and is suitable for use in printing and laminating on flexible and rigid packaging, smart cards, labels and commercial printing.

No.318

Finishing

Schober GmbH

Schober will be introducing its servo-driven Vector Cut on a roll-to-roll converting machine, as well as its computer-controlled Laser Cut and perforating system which can be installed either on or offline. Powered by a CO2 laser, it can

convert films, laminates, cartons, pressure-sensitive and multi-layer papers. Schober customized rotary punching machines will be demonstrated by punching premium foils and other samples.

No.319

Polar

Polar will introduce a new series of high speed cutters, the X and XT. These guillotines are sturdier in design, have a new unique knife changing facility and have artificial intelligence built in. They are also fully prepared for JDF and other emerging standards. The 'P-Net' networking option will be retrofittable and it will also allow software updates to be shipped electronically and remote control diagnostics.

No.320

Management Information Solutions

DiMS! organizing print

DiMS!' new MIS release offers a simple way in which to manage complex, often disparate financial transactions across the entire organization. It includes a new setup table enabling the user to link profit centers, company profiles and financial companies to each other.

No.321

Shuttleworth MIS

Shuttleworth introduces a new labels-focused, JDF-compliant MIS package. A key feature is Intelligent Templates, which give the user the ability to create user-defined template pages which can be tailored to almost any requirement. By applying functions and formulae to these templates, users can perform complex calculations with just a few keystrokes.

A web front end is under development to involve everyone in the estimating, job creation, delivery, stock control and purchasing functions to create a community of remote and local users of varying authority, all using the web as the common platform.

No.322

Pre-press and platemaking

Mitsubishi Heavy Industries

On the Mitsubishi Heavy Industries stand a new re-imageable plate system will be demonstrated, the Rewritable Plate System (RPS). The aluminum plate serves as a bed on which a special polymer coating film is applied. Images are created on the film by direct digital imaging. After printing, the film is washed from the plate and a new coating film applied, thereby enabling one plate to be used repeatedly.

Unlike conventional direct imaging (DI) presses, the RPS is a separate offline erasing and writing system.

No.323



Omet Varyflex packaging press



printing
processes

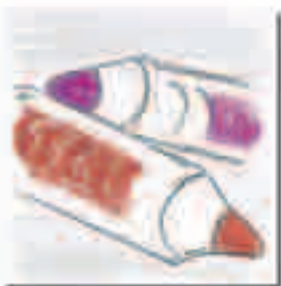
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Creo

Creo's big news is its entry into the gravure cylinder imaging market through a partnership with Milan, Italy-based Acigraf. The Exactus thermal gravure system combines Creo's established SQUAREspot thermal laser imaging heads with the electrolytic copper removal process developed by Acigraf. Creo says the thermal gravure system should significantly reduce the cost of the gravure cylinder process, compared to the much slower, traditional diamond engraving process that has been the industry standard for more than 20 years.

On the software front there will be JDF-compliant, packaging specific workflow updates and two new 'Spotless' software packages which allow printers to dramatically reduce the use of special inks in their press room by replacing them with process inks. The new Prinergy PDF workflow release includes support for multiple color databases, for Staccato Extended Color Screens and Spotless printing, as well as the ability to auto process JDF-based Job Tickets. The Synapse Director prepress workflow management module, meanwhile, will allow the Brisque 5.0 workflow environment to access real-time production information from management information systems via JDF job tickets.

 **No.323**

Stork Prints

Stork will also be showcasing its Mini Unit, a new addition to the RSI (Rotary Screen Integration) program. Stork claims that it is light enough to be fitted manually, and that setting up takes about 10 minutes. Adjustable support bearings allow fast repeat-size changeover within a restricted environment, without the need for recalibration.

Stork Prints will be introducing a new system for flexo-plate engraving. The BDE 4131, Agrios 413X and the Morpheus 611X direct engravers have been developed in collaboration with BASF. A demo of the Morpheus 611X will be given at the stand on rubber and polymer plates, and the BDE will be shown at the BASF-stand. Stork is also launching a range of seamless nickel sleeves for flexo, gravure, offset, embossing and digital printing. The nickel sleeves are used in combination with a printing plate on an air cylinder, and are much lighter than an entire cylinder that is conventionally used.

 **No.324**

Agfa

ApogeeX Packaging is Agfa's first workflow system which specifically addresses packaging and labels requirements. The JDF-compliant system is integral to the launch of Apogee X v2.00, which scales the program up to industrial levels.

Incorporated into Apogee Packaging is Alterno, new color conversion software which supports multiple color processes

and offers spot color simulation. Alterno

will work not only with FM screening, but also with 'cross-modulation' screening technology such as Agfa's Sublima. Alterno operates at the prepress stage and generates a new PDF file with the conversion data. Apogee Packaging integrates with the Pandora step and repeat programme.

 **No.325**

Artwork Systems

Artwork Systems will demonstrate exchange of packaging data through the use of Certified PDF in ArtPro and Nexus 8.0, complete with new technology for trapping and RIPping PDF 1.4 files. Certified PDF will provide ArtPro and Nexus users with a full edit and history trail on their PDF exchange, all the way up to final plate output. New is the Mnemo digital asset management system, which keeps track of pre-press production files and their contents based on a MySQL database. Artwork will also show the latest additions to its Odystar workflow environment, including true system scalability, multi-document support and use of JDF for effective communication of production data to MIS systems.

 **No.326**

Esko-Graphics

Esko-Graphics will be introducing Scope at Drupa, its most advanced workflow environment so far. It covers a wide range of functions, from job and product specification, through graphic and structural design and expert pre-production operations, to platemaking for printing and tool-making for converting. Scope adds capabilities for project coordination, digital asset management and distributed proofing and approval, enabling the many partners and stakeholders across the entire supply chain to communicate and collaborate globally, in real time.

Esko-Graphics will be presenting real-world examples of Scope workflows for a wide range of market segments including tags and labels, flexible packaging, folding cartons, corrugated converting and POP.

 **No.327**

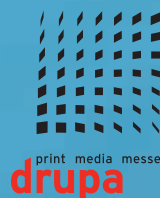
Kodak Polychrome Graphics (KPG)

The big news on the plate front is the debut of Kodak Polychrome Graphics' (KPG) first CTP flexo plate. The company will show a technology demonstration of its Flexcel NX CtP Plate, compatible with CtP devices with a sensitivity range of 830nm to 1064nm. KPG says the plate can run on press with alcohol and water-based, as well as UV inks and is designed with wide exposure latitude and short drying times. The Flexcel family of flexographic printing plates contains three additional versions that serve all segments of the package printing market including flexible packaging, label and tag, folding carton, corrugated, envelope and wide web paper.

 **No.328**



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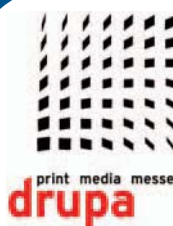
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e No.104

From its proofing portfolio, KPG will launch the First Check Desktop Proofing System Macintosh RIP, which can reproduce opaque white and metallic colors. The First Check Transfer Film can be laminated to a variety of substrates to achieve realistic mock-ups. Proofing to First Check Shrink Film is ideal for flexographic proofing applications.


KPG will also show additions to the KPG Matchprint Digital Halftone Proofing System. New silver, gold and opaque white media enable users to create digital halftone proofs incorporating metallics or an opaque white underlayer.  **No.329**

Visions Inspection systems

Advanced Vision Technology Ltd


AVT's PrintVision platforms are at the heart of its systems. solutions for narrow web and labels applications, including the PrintVision/Jupiter-Compact and the PrintVision/Helios Color with the Closed Loop option as well as the enhanced offline verification tool, ProoFit.

Also at the booth, AVT will demonstrate new features, such as PrintFlow and PrintFlow Manager Software, that extend the reach of AVT's systems to the managerial level where supervisors, quality assurance managers and production managers can evaluate press performance and print quality.

More improved options include RiteSeal 100 per cent cold seal inspection, pRegister for register pre-setting and control, ABCV – Automatic Bar Code Verification, and IDEal for delta-E color measurement.  **No.330**

eltromat GmbH

eltromat will be exhibiting its newly developed web video_3000, a modular system for monitoring, inspecting, and controlling production. It will be shown together with expansion modules such as SIS inspection, CI register control, and BC bar-code verification equipment. The equipment will feature the e_desk with touch_frame (camera operation frame) for fast, high-precision positioning of the camera. Operators just have to touch a finger once on a 1:1 printing copy to determine camera position and zoom at the same time.

The eltromat color control system fss_3 the inline/real-time colormetric system accucolor will also be on show at Drupa. accucolor offers contact-free color measuring and constantly checks product-relevant parameters. Any color deviations are immediately signaled to the printer.  **No.331**

Tectonic International

Tectonic International will be showing its 'JAGUAR' inspection system, designed to automatically inspect 100 per cent of the web. The Windows NT based system includes a multiprocessor to control and service events in real-time, performing different analysis on common images using only one progressive-scan digital camera as standard.

Jaguar's open system architecture allows the system to be upgraded with additional plug-and-play modules to provide a cost-effective, versatile quality control tool for barcodes, pharmaceutical codes and print defect detection. Color monitoring analyses regions of interest for RGB, hue, saturation and intensity variance, with an external alarm for threshold violation using internationally recognized CIELAB standards.

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The system can provide a history of the job and stores the information on-line or off-line through any remote PC or by use of the factory SPC system.

 **No.333**

Web guides

Accuweb

AccuWeb will be introducing its new patent-pending steering guide at Drupa. It has a moving frame supported by an assembly with grooved inner and outer tracks, which Accuweb claims is more efficient for web steering. It has been designed to reduce complexity and cost, as well as simplifying assembly and maintenance. Other AccuWeb system components will also be on display, including WideArray edge detectors, AccuBeam II digital line guide sensors, Micro 1000 and 4000NET controllers, and AccuWeb's new brushless linear actuator.

 **No.334**

Web cleaning

KELVA

KELVA will be giving multi-media presentations on three screens to show KELVA web cleaning applications, products and advantages, installation guides and customized presentations. It will also be showing its new contact web cleaners for label cleaning.

 **No.335**

UV curing

Prime UV

Prime UV will have several new products on display. The new Prime UV FLEXfilm UV processor, designed specifically for heat sensitive substrates and flexible packaging, features an open base UV lamp facing a water-cooled chill roll. Designed for installation on all types of flexo presses, the FLEXfilm system can be installed after the coating station on a CI flexo press as well as between stations on in-line flexo web presses.

Prime UV is unveiling the Prime UV Diamond Series, which it says features the most intense UV-lamp system manufactured in the world (at 3,420 mw/cm²), but taking up significantly less space. Prime UV is also showing its UV in-line coating system for gravure, flexo and offset presses. It's available in widths from 10 to 110 inches, and features remote diagnostics and service. The Prime UV Smart 2100 Control Platform, which allows Prime engineers and technicians to operate, control, and troubleshoot Prime UV operating systems throughout the world, will also be on demonstration.

 **No.336**

Arccure

The newly developed Inline Process Control (IPC) system from Arccure promises to increase the life of UV lamps. After the serviceable life of a lamp expires, the output usually drops and it becomes necessary to exchange it. Arccure claims that with the IPC it becomes possible to exploit the lamp better throughout its useful life.

 **No.337**

Color management

X-Rite

X-Rite is launching its DTP32 Series II automatic strip reading densitometer. The new densitometer is designed to calibrate and ensure quality color output for PostScript color copiers, color printers, and color proofing systems. The DTP32 Series II is four times faster than previous models and claims to give on-demand color consistency through time and across multiple print jobs, a reduction in waste and printer downtime and easy interfacing with PC, Macintosh, Sun, and SGI platforms

 **No.338**

Plate mounting

Tectonic International

Drupa will see Tectonics' latest addition to the Flexico V5 range, as well as the V5 MP, designed to manage plates for more than one make and model of press. The VS design moves away from mounting a plate from the front of the machine, and includes a semi-rotating plate-bed which, situated behind the cylinder, accepts the plate providing hands-free management of the plate before and during registration. When in position a pneumatically operated bar holds the plate gently in position allowing fine alignment through rotation of the plate-bed using adjusting wheels which are located on either side of the bed.

 **No.339**

JM Heaford

JM Heaford will be premiering an advanced version of its open-fronted rotogravure proof press for fast and accurate cylinder proofing at engraving houses or printing companies. n

 **No.340**

The servo-driven Schober Vector Cut





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Digital down under

HP Indigo has taken its global roadshow to Australia to promote digital printing in general and the ws4000 in particular.

Natalie Martin reports on the reactions of label converters and end users

'**A**ustralians are some of the fastest adopters of new technology and trends in the world,' says Rob West, industrial specialist, HP Indigo. Australian consumers demand a high level of product quality and decoration, pushing end users to respond quickly with new marketing solutions.

Considering that there are only some 250 label printers in this market and that the jobs are typically short run due to the limited size of the consumer population, HP Indigo decided it was time to showcase the capabilities of its ws4000 digital press to the Australian label converting community.

Currie Group, HP Indigo's distributor in Australia, recently held a two week series of Open Houses, along with private demos, at its premises in Sydney. Phillip Rennell, HP Indigo business manager at Currie explains, 'Although this press has been shown worldwide at Labelexpo shows, we wanted to offer Australian converters the opportunity to see it up close.' The press was configured with an Omega Digicon finishing system with coating, overlaminating, hot foiling, and digital die cutting.

The Open Houses were intended not only for label printers, but also to educate end users and labeling associations. The end users who attended the event were mostly impressed by the quality of digital as well as its flexibility and ability to print variable information. 'End users will never demand digital,' says Rob West. 'They see the process of printing labels as a means to an end. But as the end user migrates towards shorter runs, JIT inventory and lower risk product

introductions, they learn that digital satisfies these requirements and more.'

West and Rennell see big potential for digital in the wine sector – two years ago a new winery was opening every 48 hours – as well as in the pharmaceuticals, nutraceuticals, beauty and healthcare industries. With the rise of exports of pre-labeled pharmaceuticals to Asia, digital can either act as complimentary or as an alternative to conventional label printing, says West.

Phillip Rennell agrees: 'As digital allows for the printing of very small, tricky labels that only take up a small portion of the web, it can match the requirements for that type of job profile.'

HP Indigo has installed four ws4000 presses between Sydney and Melbourne, with a fifth one recently added at AC Labels. Frank Gavrilos, managing director for AC Labels, based out of New South Wales, purchased the press with the Omega finishing system. Asked why, Gavrilos responds, 'There's just not the sheer volume to produce long runs. We looked for the best short run option, with the lowest set-up time that would still offer high quality, and digital lends itself to all of that. We bought the press purely for new business growth.'

So, what does the future hold for digital in Australia? Rob West is confident that once end users get a taste for it, it's a trend that is a 'one way street' and that equally, converters, by going digital, will be able to expand their portfolio of services to these customers. ■

 No. 406



Rob West (right), industrial specialist, HP Indigo, gives a presentation on the benefits of digital printing to the top Australian label printers





Label Industry Awards for Achievement and Innovation

Nominations are now open for the inaugural Label Industry Global Awards

A global label industry Man of Achievement Award was first launched in 1992 by the Labelexpo/Cowise Group (now Tarsus), to recognise the achievements of key industry figures who had made a significant innovative contribution to the international growth of the pressure-sensitive roll-label industry.

Between 1992 and 1998 six industry pioneers from North America, Europe and Asia were presented with a Man of Achievement Award by the Group during ceremonies alongside Labelexpo shows in Chicago, Brussels and Singapore. Winners of these Awards were:

1992 **R. Stanton Avery**, manufacturer and marketer of the world's first self-adhesive labels in 1935

1993 **Ferd Rüesch Snr**, who over a period of 40 years successfully turned a small, Swiss family precision machinery manufacturer and specialized printing equipment business into the renowned Gallus organization

1994 **Werner Jackstädt**, who grew the Jac organisation to become the world's largest private manufacturer of self-adhesive papers, films and labels, with over 50,000 customers in more than 100 countries. Jackstädt GmbH was acquired by Avery Dennison in 2002

1996 **Mark Andrews Snr**, founder of Mark Andy, one of the world's leading press manufacturers

1996 **Richard Rosemann**, the founder of RotoMetrics in 1957, Rosemann was a key North American pioneer in the design and manufacturing of simple rotary dies for the earliest flexographic label press manufacturers

1998 **Nozumu Shiwaku** joined the Fuji Shiko Co Ltd (now known as Lintec) in 1950 as executive vice president. At that time the company was a small family gummed tape business, but his efforts rapidly made Fuji Shiko a leading gummd tape manufacturer in Japan and also took the company into the self-adhesive materials, label applicator and label printing machinery markets

Nominations are now open for the inaugural Label Industry Global Awards 2004. Anyone from the label industry may nominate any individual, or company, in the label business by going online at www.labelawards.com. Nominations for the Awards will close at the end of May, and the winners will be announced at the Label Industry Global Awards Ceremony and Gala Dinner on Monday 13 September at the Donald E Stephens Convention Centre in

"The Label Industry Global Awards will take place annually and will involve three major awards, with leading labels' industry players sponsoring each one"

Rosemont, Illinois – the first evening of Labelexpo Americas 2004.

The Label Industry Global Awards, that will take place annually, involve three major awards, with leading labels' industry players sponsoring each one:

- **The R. Stanton Avery Lifetime Achievement Award Sponsored by Avery Dennison**

The Award recognises the values and vision of Stan Avery and his pioneering efforts in the label industry. This Award is for an individual who meets the following selection criteria:

- Has served a minimum of 15 years in the label industry
- Has made a significant contribution to the promotion and growth of the label industry
- Has been active in the industry over many years
- Has participated in industry associations, conferences and activities
- Is a high profile, industry influencer and motivator
- Is a person of high integrity, honesty and respect
- Operates on both a national and international scale

- **The Label Industry Award for Continuous Innovation Sponsored by Labels & Labeling, Label & Narrow Web, and NarroWebTech**

This award is for a long-established supplier or converter company within the label industry that meets the following selection criteria:

- Is an innovative and pioneering company
- Has been instrumental in continuously developing the science and technology of the label industry
- Has developed markets/ products for the benefit of the whole industry
- Has been involved in the industry, listens to customers needs and has acted on them
- Is a longstanding player in the industry – minimum of 10 years
- Operates with business integrity
- Is a good employer – committed to education, training and staff development
- Is a company that has given something back to the label industry
- Is environmentally aware/friendly
- **The Label Industry Award for New Innovation Sponsored by HP and Creo**

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No.134



The Market Next-door



As the Latin American Label Summit approaches, **Jennifer Dochstader** looks at opportunities for the label industry in Mexico

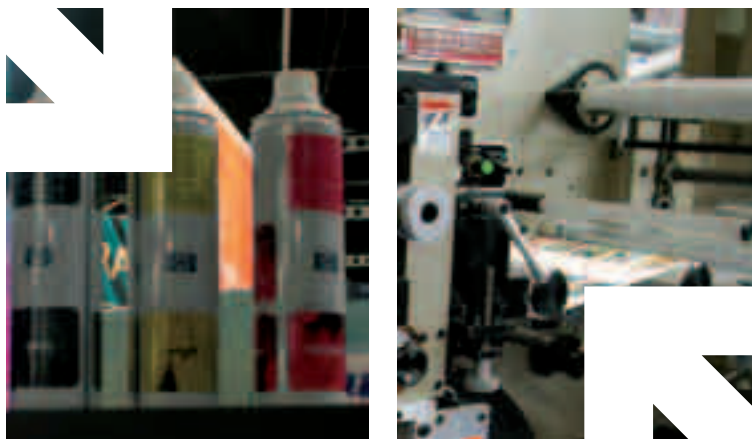
The Mexican packaging market seems to have a lot going for it: A growing middle class, a labor class with increasing amounts of disposable income, an economy that has been able to sustain moderate growth since 2000 while its mighty neighbor to the north has fiscally stumbled. So why aren't more industry suppliers experiencing big gains from this market? The answer to that question is a complex one, and one that necessitates a brief history lesson on the volatile ebb-and-tide nature of the Mexican pressure sensitive labeling market.

Unlike its other sizable Latin American counterparts, Mexico's label-printing industry was primarily dominated and affected by US market trends. (Whereas the Brazilian and Argentinean industries were influenced primarily by Europe.) When Mexico became a full member of GATT, General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, in 1986, the country's tariff barriers were dramatically reduced driving US-Mexican trade up 167 per cent from 1986 to 1991. During this time, the majority of American and Canadian press manufacturers began to realize the vast potential of a virtually untapped region – and one that didn't require travel through six time zones to arrive at. The American label market had a solution for this nascent industry, and that solution was flexo.

Flexo presses were exported from the US and Canada at unprecedented levels in the mid to late 1980s. While the major

South American markets were maintaining their loyalty to letterpress and gravure, Mexican companies mirrored the purchasing trends of their American counterparts. The founder of one of Mexico's largest PS label printing companies located in the northern industrial city of Monterrey, recently reminisced, 'When I bought my first flexo press, Mark Andrews [founder of Mark Andy, Inc.] met me at the border. He had my press on the back of his pick-up truck and we transferred it to the back of mine. Those days are long gone with all the flexo capacity that entered this country in the eighties and early nineties.'

As flexo presses were trucked across the border in droves in the 1980s, one important element in the equation stayed home – the hand-holding continuous customer service that newly anointed flexo printers required. Twenty years ago, flexo was a different process than it is today. While it was certainly a high-quality process contender in many American end-use sectors, the process was a more variable-ridden one that required a level of expertise American and Canadian plants could tap into by picking up the telephone, or, by insisting a press manufacturer, or plate or anilox roll supplier, get-a-technician-on-a-plane-right-now-because-my-press-is-down, dammit. This wasn't the case for Mexican label converters. Cultural and language barriers often meant that a Mexican company was on its own, and this has created an incredibly resilient population of



“Cultural and language barriers often meant that a Mexican company was on its own, and this has created an incredibly resilient population of independent and self-sustaining label printers”

independent and self-sustaining label printers. However, it has also had a significant impact on Mexico's print-quality curve, and how effectively the market was able to assimilate, and maximize, technology.

In 1990, the first combination letterpress / rotary screen press systems were shipped to Mexico City, and suddenly brands like Wella, Ponds, Mennen and L'Oreal had a local source for combination-printed film PS labels. You can still count the number of companies that purchased this type of machinery on two hands however, and the Mexican labeling industry today is very much a fragmented one still trying to find its own persuasive voice in effectively convincing Mexican end-users that most of the country's highest quality label consumption can be sourced from within the country's borders.

Persuading end-users

The TLMI's recently published North American Label Study 2004 (NALS 2004) dedicates a chapter to the Mexican pressure sensitive labeling industry. According to the NALS 2004, the challenges that Mexican PS label converters presently face in growing their businesses include the following factors:

Due to decades of economic volatility, antiquated label application systems and fragmented supply channels, Mexicans have had a far greater challenge than their American counterparts in producing a consistent printed product.

American converters have had the ability to enforce far more stringent customer service expectations on their equipment and consumable goods suppliers than Mexican companies.

Many end-users, particularly in the prime label sector, equate quality

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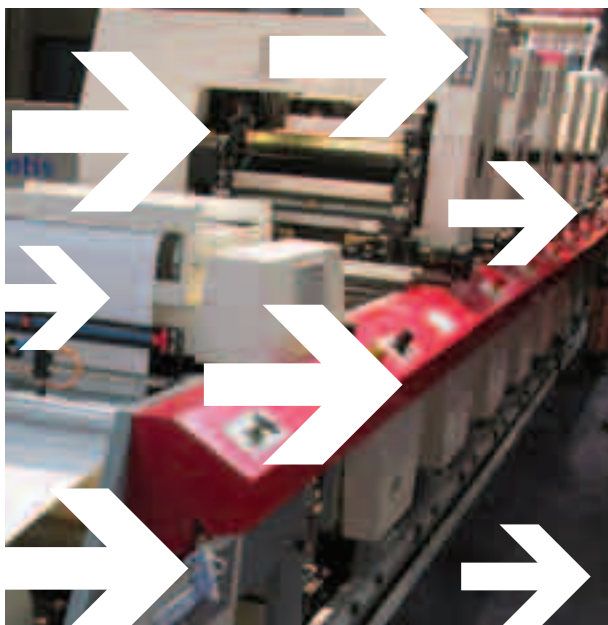
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“Exhibiting suppliers recognize the unique opportunity the Label Summit offers, as these companies increasingly look to developing markets as key profit centers”

printing with American production standards, even packaging procurement personnel who are Mexican, and whose companies are located in Mexico.

Cheaper labor rates are no longer enough to entice multinational consumer products companies to secure Mexican label supply channels. Mexican companies have to prove themselves technically capable of matching American print, delivery and customer service standards.

As then President Porfirio Diaz fittingly stated about his country toward the end of the nineteenth century, ‘Mexico. So far from God, so close to the United States.’ Elements of this quote still ring true today, as an estimated 35-40 percent of high quality PS labels consumed within the country of Mexico, are imported from the United States. In compiling the NALS 2004, Mexican end-users were polled as to their current feelings about purchasing labels locally, versus importing them from the US. When asked what their comfort levels were in securing increasing volumes of labels from local label converters were, their responses are reflected in the chart opposite.

As this chart indicates, nearly one quarter of those Mexican end-users polled for the TLMI’s study indicated that their comfort level in procuring high quality labels from within Mexico was actually decreasing, and nearly half of the total Mexican end-user universe polled stated that their comfort level was the same and that they would continue to purchase the same volumes of labels locally, and continue to import the same volumes from the United States.

The challenge for Mexican label printers is a formidable one;

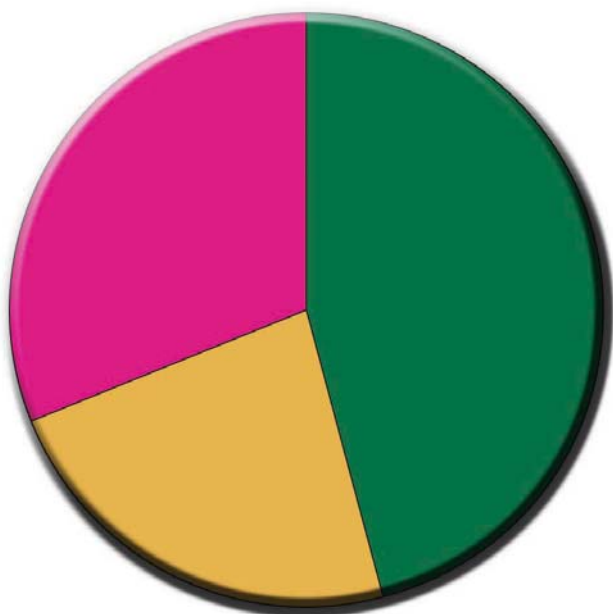
to prove they’re capable of matching US label-converting standards on a consistent basis. Labels have never been a great export crop, and trucking them over a border is no exception – even when that border isn’t very far away. Printed product still has to go through the customs-clearing process, and as end-user lead time requirements continue to diminish, these companies are going to have to source higher label volumes from within their own borders.

Dear industry supplier, Pay attention.

The Mexican labeling industry is poised for growth, and many economic firms are referring to 2004 as “Latin America’s comeback year” predicting that Mexico will lead the way. Economic analyses show that real wage gains in Mexico (net income after food and housing expenses) have increased by 25 per cent over the past three years, and Mexico has been the only major economy in the Latin American marketplace that has witnessed positive per capita growth in each of the last seven years. Why pay attention to these statistics? Because consumer products companies do. The top consumer products companies seek out indicator performance criteria spread over a certain time period, and when they find it, they invest resources in that market. They expand and establish bottling and filling operations. They introduce new products and brand line extensions. They purchase regional companies. And, in turn, label demand rises.

Tarsus’ upcoming Latin American Label Summit to be held June 8th and 9th in Mexico City will be the first of its kind,

Mexico end-users' current feelings about purchasing labels locally, versus importing them from the US



- **46%** My comfort level will not change, we will keep the same number of US and Mexican label converters supply us products that we currently have
- **23%** My comfort level is actually getting lower, and we will be importing increasing volumes of labels from US converters
- **31%** My comfort level is high and we will be securing more labels from Mexican converters in the coming year.

including a two-day conference at which industry experts will deliver technical presentations to Mexican label-printing attendees. Presentation topics include pressure sensitive film labelstocks, digital printing and RFID, inks, package decoration trends, press technology and more. This unique forum presents both industry suppliers, and Mexican label printers, with an invaluable opportunity to exchange information and establish cross-border partnerships.

Over the past two decades, the Mexican market has been a profit-and-loss roller coaster ride for industry suppliers. A boom cycle will suddenly rise from the ashes of currency devaluation and hyper inflation, and just as suddenly a peso-crashing roadblock will halt market exuberance and send jittery investor-suppliers back across the border. However, recent political and economic reforms have made Mexico a more stable and resilient nation, and for those suppliers who are paying attention, the famous Mexican mañana could put hefty profits into their pockets today. ■

No.343

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No. 134



The Central American way

Etiflex, in Guatemala City, is making itself a major force in the region **Katy Wight** reports

‘We could teach printers in the US a thing or two!’ says Alejandro Carrasco, gerente general at converter Etiflex, Guatemala City, Guatemala. It was a tongue-in-cheek comment, but perhaps it isn’t that far from the truth.

Carrasco’s father, Alejandro senior, started the business in 1962. He was importing price marking tools, labelstock and other tools from Germany and reselling them in Central America. In terms of label printing, the father-son team recognized that the Guatemalan market required a better service. In 1990 they bought their first press – a Mark Andy 830 – to eliminate the delays caused by importing labels and to grow their business. They named the new label-printing arm Etiflex.

The combined capabilities of Etiflex and parent companies America Commercial SA and DACSA make them an impressive force in the region. They are able to convert adhesive labels, tags, tape and flexible packaging, implement barcode systems and equipment, POS equipment, measuring scales and ID systems.

‘Ours is a very small market,’ explains Carrasco, ‘so we have to diversify and maintain many different lines to get the volume of sales. You can’t specialize in one market. We need to be good in different market sectors, whereas a lot of companies in the US focus on just one area.’

The strategy seems to be working. Based in Guatemala, with a sales office in El Salvador, Etiflex also exports to Nicaragua,

Honduras, the Dominican Republic and Costa Rica. With six presses already and an impending investment in two more, Etiflex is regarded as one of the leading converters in Central America. It has three Mark Andy 830s (1990, 1994, 1997 models), a Comco Captain with UV, a Siat L36 and a UV flexo Nilpeter Fa 2500 with cold foil and film upgrade.

Etiflex itself can design, manufacture and print flexo and UV flexo in up to eight colors on paper and synthetic self-adhesive substrates, couché paper and Texcote. Its finishing range includes UV varnish, security inks, water resistance, security cuts and laminates. It also specializes in price marking labels for Meto, Sato and Monarch tools, barcode labels and labels for most usual printers – Sato, Datamax, Zebra, Eltron, Tec, Intermec, direct and thermal transfer, dot matrix and ink jet technologies.

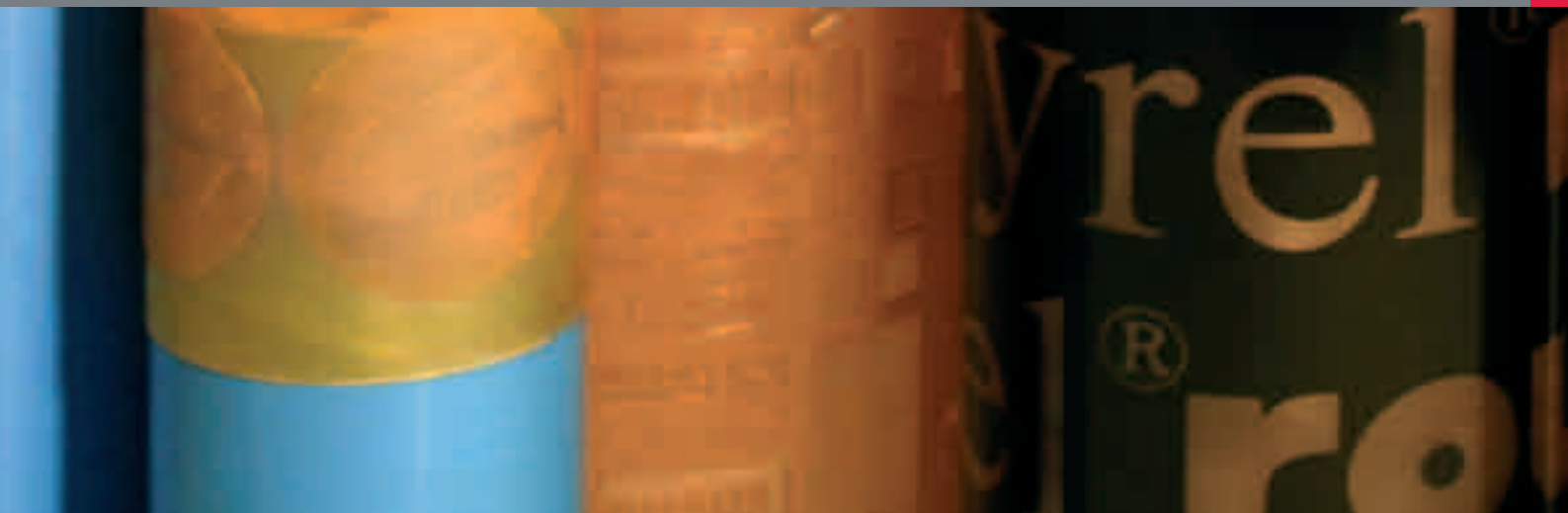
‘We are growing,’ Carrasco says. ‘This year we made an investment in more land and we are building another production facility and warehouse. We are expanding our current operation from 2,800 square meters to 5,800 square meters. The new premises will be open at the end of the year.’

‘The market has grown in volume too. Initially we had three people in production and now we need 30. Etiflex has 75 employees. In the beginning, the market demanded less quality. A lot of people just wanted paper wet-glue labels, but the market changed to self-adhesive. More and more customers were demanding self-adhesive labels of a premier quality. One year



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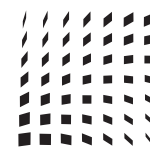


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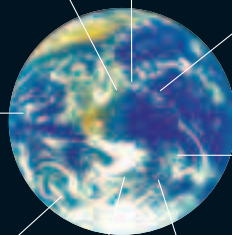
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e No. 174

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Alejandro Carrasco senior and son Alejandro

ago we moved into unsupported film and flexible packaging on our Nilpeter press.'

Etiflex can convert everything from a 20-micron film to a 12-point cardboard and can easily handle labels, flexible packaging and tags. Carrasco wants the new presses to also print shrink sleeves so that they have all of their bases covered. He intends to invest in a Karlville slitter/rewinder to complement the investment.

'We're a small market, but we have all of the multinational companies like Colgate-Palmolive, Pepsi and Sabritas. Our competitors are growing, but they are just converting labels. The multi-national companies are demanding more than that though. They are trying to get the same standards in Europe and the Americas and we are investing in the new equipment to keep ahead of that. One of our strategies is keeping up with new technology, which is a risky business in a small market.'

Roughly forty per cent of Etiflex' workflow is for multinational companies and the rest is local work. The label marketplace in Guatemala is becoming increasingly competitive with more and more printers moving to flexo, but Etiflex maintains its leading position by guaranteeing quality work and service.

'By trying to improve our operation constantly, we are ensuring that we provide the best quality. Our customers are demanding a faster response to orders and we need to have the ability to answer quickly to that,' he explains. 'We are going to increase production and make sure that we keep up with all of the new technology. For example, the last press that we bought had cold foiling capability, which is the kind of thing you need to be able to offer your customer added value. Recently we did a very nice job producing security labels for US pharmaceuticals using cold foils from API. We had to have the knowledge and ability – the special inks, coatings and die cutting tools – to provide the solution for the customer.'

Trying to maintain this level of service faces a few challenges in Central America. The biggest problem that Etiflex faces is customs and excise. Carrasco explains that goods can spend a long time in customs when being exported from Guatemala, which can cause delays and mean missed deadlines and 'that means that we can't service the market and give it a fast response,' he says. 'The most important thing is service.'

This is likely to restrict Etiflex' willingness to export further afield in the future. Carrasco wants to maintain the highest level of customer service and build on the opportunities that the Central American market offers.

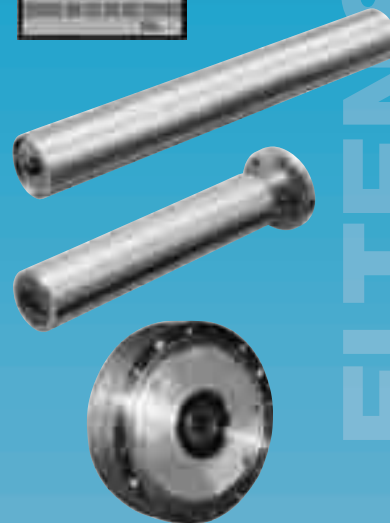
'If we wanted to increase our exports to the USA for example, we might have to compromise our service. In the future, we want to invest more in equipment and diversify more into flexible packaging and shrink sleeves. We think that there is going to be huge growth in shrink sleeves over the next few years,' he adds.

Guatemala is currently negotiating a Central-American TLC free-trade agreement with the USA, which Carrasco thinks could increase competition levels, 'so we need to be prepared,' he says. He has a strong idea about the future of the company and how he plans to continue growing it. He aims to stay one step ahead of the game – maybe he could teach his counterparts in the US a thing or two after all! ■

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e No.118



“We’ve been aware of Indigo, but have been careful because in Mexico it is hard to sell that kind of quality”

Mexico Roadshow

When HP Indigo took its roadshow to Mexico City, L&L went along to gauge the readiness of Mexico for digital technology and talk to some of the major label printers in the country.

Andy Thomas reports

Mexico City will play host to the first Latin America Label Summit in June this year, an event organised by Labelexpo and sponsored by *Labels & Labeling*. So it was with great interest that L&L interviewed some of the country’s most important label printers to assess the current state of the industry.

The occasion was HP Indigo’s Mexican leg of a global roadshow, organised in conjunction with the company’s Mexican agent Sun Digital. On demo was a ws4000 digital press running in-line to a Nilpeter Digital Label Converter, incorporating UV flexo varnishing station, laminating and digital die-cutting.

Over three days, around 80 Mexican label converters were welcomed to the roadshow by Sun Digital director general Ricardo del Castillo and sales director Gustavo Gutierrez. This writer gave a presentation on the global labels market, while HP Indigo’s Christian Menegon lectured on the niche position occupied by digital offset printing – offering short to medium runs of high quality labels which are not profitable to produce conventionally.

Mexico is emerging as a key player in the wider economy of the Americas. Wal-Mart clearly recognises this centrality, locating a vast distribution centre in Monterey, North Mexico, which it uses to distribute throughout Mexico and South America.

Maximiliano Garcia Hopkins, Latin America director of France-based Hologram Industries, agrees Mexico has a central role to play. Around 90 per cent of the company’s labels business is authentication seals for medicine cartons, and Hopkins sees a combination of holograms and variable text as a key brand security technology in a region plagued by dangerous counterfeits.

‘Mexico is the best base to tackle the Latin American market,’ says Hopkins. ‘It is the biggest economy outside Brazil. But Brazil is Portuguese speaking and that’s why it’s not as powerful. Also Brazil is very local. If you do not have a company based in Brazil it’s very difficult to do business there.’

Although Mexico is seeing good growth the labels business, Mexican label converters still face big problems, as Baldomero Miguel Gomez, director general of Litho Offset America explains. The company is 98 per cent a business forms printer and this is its second year in flexo labels. ‘My main concern is to find hard working and decent people for the flexo part of the business,’ says Gomez. ‘There is little art in business forms but there is a shortage of well trained people for flexo. Another problem in flexo is that once you train printers they go somewhere else, and it’s hard to develop loyalty.’

Gomez has ambitious plans, however. ‘We plan to migrate to flexo and to interactive web design since the internet is killing the forms business.’ The company has made a rapid move into flexo labels with its Mark Andy 830 machines. 70 per cent of its label materials are PS.

And what about digital printing? ‘We have been aware of Indigo since 1996, but I have been careful because in Mexico it is hard to sell that kind of quality,’ cautions Gomez ‘There might

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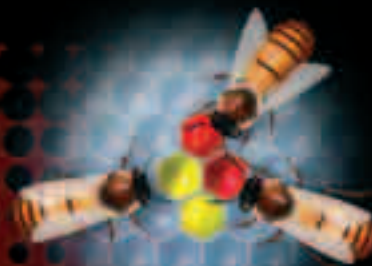
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“An ROI longer than 18 months is risky because in Mexico we have a crisis every six years”

be a market for putting promotional images onto foil, board and plastics, but a ROI longer than 18 months is risky because in Mexico we have a crisis every six years. Also I am concerned about operator costs – \$1500 a month versus \$700/month for a pressman, although I accept that they would not need to be experienced pressmen. We do like the Nilpeter finishing side, however.’

Jorge Martinez V, director general of Etimex, points to the intense competition in the Mexican market. ‘Everyone fights for the same customers in the prime labels formats and retail shelf pricing.’ Etimex has just made its first move into UV with a 7-color Nilpeter FA2500. A good part of the company’s business comes from concert tickets in VIP formats for the end user to print on demand and the Nilpeter is used extensively in this application as well as prime labels.

Martinez believes digital printing has a place in the ticketing market, where run lengths are around 15-30,000 and may go up to 100,000, which is still a short run for the FA2500. ‘There is also scope for personalisation, sequential numbering and collectibles with different players’ names.’

The company has had a joint venture partnership with Nashau Corp since 1998, specialising in toner and substrates for the scale-weight label business. Etimex, based around Monterey, is a big enough player to be affected by Walmart’s decision to implement RFID tagging on its pallet and carton labels: ‘We’re looking at RF technology and how we can move to it this year,’ says Martinez. ‘Some Mexican regional airlines are

also considering RFID for boarding passes, so we must be prepared.’ Given all this activity, Martinez believes the Mexico Labels Summit in June makes a lot of sense. ‘We need education and to know what other markets are doing, so it’s a smart move. Also, what other opportunities are there for me in this Mexican market?’

Ari Vonderwalde is director of operations at prime labels specialist Etiflex. ‘I looked at digital six months ago and I think everybody is looking more closely at cost control and which areas are making money and where losing money. A lot of printers are taking jobs they should not be taking and we are looking for different technologies to make orders profitable. There’s no longer any money in long run orders where reverse auctions are killing printers. So we must diversify into new markets.’

Another trend which emerged from L&L’s interviews is that Mexican packaging printers – like many of their European and US counterparts – are actively considering a move from sheetfed offset to roll-fed labels. Carlos Alberto Alduncin of Litografia Latina, for example, prints both labels and cartons sheetfed for the food and liquor sectors, but also owns a 50 per cent share in a flexo company. ‘We want to get into flexo in our own business,’ states Alduncin. Interestingly, Alduncin notes that package printing in Mexico is often to a higher standard than in America, with up to 300 line screen work not uncommon.

In conclusion it looks like HP Indigo and its finishing systems partners are having some challenges selling into Mexico – much like the situation some time ago in more developed markets. But, as the company’s Christian Menegon points out, ‘globalisation, local market requirements and the economics driving brands are now being felt in Mexico.’ At the same time there is already a high degree of knowledge about the fundamentals of digital printing and a real willingness to take on the technology if the financial arguments can be made to add up.

For more information on the Latin America Labels Summit, visit www.labelsummit.com. ■

 No.345



Eighty Mexican label converters came to hear about the benefits of digital offset



Netherlands networking

In the last issue of L&L we looked at the relationship between two label printers on different continents – in Lima, Peru, and Europe. Here, **Andy Thomas**, examines the European side of the partnership

Located near Arnhem on the Dutch-German border, Kolibri is pioneering an alliance across continents with label printer Kuresa in Lima. The partnership came about after Daniel Blanchard from press manufacturer ILM, asked Kolibri's Jan Federik Vink if he would train his Peruvian press operators (L&L issue 1 2004).

Vink agreed and two future Kuresa pressmen turned up in Arnhem to learn the secrets of combination printing on ILMA 340 presses. 'We were helped with our ILMA installation in 2000 by Knaup in Germany, and when I was asked by Daniel if we could help Kuresa set up their presses I was only too happy,' recalls Vink.

'We're planting seeds and as you get a more intense working relationship you get more ideas. Already we see things coming back. At first you must have faith in your personal contacts and if they ask for help, to help them, and in the future you can expect all sorts of help back. We all get invited to the ILM factory and see new developments early – for example a system to feed a printed roll back through the machine. We have also discovered a new supplier, Herma, for pressure sensitive materials, which was supplying Kuresa. We share common customers and there could be customers who want the same label in Latin America and Europe.'

Jan Federik Vink also sees a bigger project in his role as board member of FINAT, where he is promoting the idea of putting European label printers in touch with converters in Russia and China. 'We want to find those converters with a vision for the future.'

Kolibri – markets and technology

Kolibri operates in two main markets – as a supplier of unprinted labels to the direct mail/promotional market, and industrial/prime labels. Customers who buy prime labels will in many cases also buy unprinted for promotional labelling applications, so it made sense to integrate the two previously separate operations.

Kolibri's success is attributed by managing director Jan Federik Vink to its complementary machine concepts. At the

top sits the ILMA letterpress machines from ILM which handle the bulk of the prime label work. Below the ILMAs sit the Etipol Combi machines, which handle runs down to 1,500-2,000 labels. 'Now we have a need for a special machine concept the same width as the ILMA – between 330-400mm – with a higher speed than the Combi 270,' says Vink. The same requirement has been identified at Kuresa in Lima, and the two companies are now jointly investigating the options, developing a common specification and visiting potential press suppliers as a team.

As well as the rotary presses, Kolibri has six flatbed Iwasaki Screen presses which handle the very short run work, still going strong after 25 years and handling runs down to a couple of thousand.

Alongside, runs the silkscreen department with a Klemm and Franchini press, the latter with a hotstamp unit. The Franchini has recently been converted from solvent to UV as part of a plan to get rid of the solvent-safe area – although some specialist screen security inks are solvent only. The screen presses are often used to print the UV screen white on clear labels, which are then color-printed on the Combi letterpress machines.

Interestingly, Kolibri was involved in developing the first roll-to-roll Klemm screen press, including a registration system which reads a punched hole rather than a printed mark.

The blank label side of the business specializes in extremely short runs often ordered over the company's website, choosing from a set of possibilities which include anti-counterfeit, polycarbonates and sequentially numbered. Kolibri maintains an in-house slitter for safety stock.

This division is constantly innovating, the latest idea being self-adhesive 'paperclips' printed full color with dedicated logos or other images.

Direct mail/promotional labels account for around 30 per cent of Kolibri's business, printed screen, on foil presses and letterpress. Kolibri handles around 14,000 jobs a year, and this job profile – multiple batches of short run work often involving sequential numbering – would seem ideal for digital printing. 'We looked at digital printing a long time – for eight years in fact,' says Vink. 'We do have a lot of small orders, but the printing costs of



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Web Offset - Sheet Fed Offset - Business Forms - Self-Adhesive Labels - Carton/Box - Rotogravure - Flexographic - Coating & Laminating - Slitter Rewinders - Sheeters

FLEXO

1996 ALLIED GEAR FLEXOMASTER 300,

260 web, 4 col flexo, 3 rotary die, interstation hot air.

Ref:V8833-L

1998 AQUAFLEX ZXB,

26" web, 9 col flexo, UV, hot air, chill rollers, Kemp Smith die.

Ref:V8118-L

1996 ARPECO IMPRESSIONIST,

16" web, 6 flexo, UV varnish, 3 rotary die, delam/relam, T bar, rewind.

Ref:V7690-L

1998 ARSOMA EM280,

280mm web, 6 flexo, UV varnish, hot air+UV, 3 rotary die, magnetic cys, rewind.

Ref:V8189-L

1997 ARSOMA EM410,

410mm web, 7 col flexo, hot air+1UV, 3 rotary die, rewind+sheet.

Ref:V8015-L

1998 ARSOMA EM410,

16" web, 6 col flexo, UV with cooling roll, single rotary die, rewind.

Ref:V8573-L

1994 ARSOMA EM410,

410mm web, 5 col flexo, hot air + 1 UV, 2 rotary die, TR 450 Turret rewind.

Ref:V8574-L

1997 ARSOMA EM510,

510mm web, 6 col flexo, hot air, 2 rotary die, rewind + sheet.

Ref:V8436-L

1998 COMCO FLEXOPACK,

18" web, 6 col flexo, chill rolls, UV, rotary die for cartons.

Ref:V6492-L

1998 EDALE G250-60,

250mm web, 6 flexo, hot air, 1UV, delam/relam, 3 rotary die, rewind.

Ref:V8150-L

1990 EDALE E250S,

10" web, 5 col flexo, hot air, 1UV, 3 rotary die, dual rewind.

Ref:V8711-L

1985 MARK ANDY 4120,

16" web, 6 col flexo, hot air, 3 rotary die, rewind.

Ref:V6165-L

1989 MARK ANDY 4120,

16" web, 6 col flexo, UV, hot air, 3 rotary die, rewind.

Ref:V8288-L

1999 MARK ANDY 4150,

16" web, 8 flexo, UV+hot air, auto register, lamination, 3 rotary die, rewind.

Ref:V8496-L

1993 MARK ANDY 4150,

16" web, 7 col flexo, hot air + 1UV, 1 rotary die, rewind.

Ref:V7609-L

1994 MARK ANDY 2200,

10" web, 6 col flexo, 2UV, T bar, delam/relam, 3 rotary die, rewind.

Ref:V8274-L

1991 MARK ANDY 2200,

7" web, 6 col flexo, hot air + UV on last, 3 dies, sheeter, dual rewind.

Ref:V8622-L

2000 MARK ANDY 2200,

13" web, 4 flexo, hot air, 3 rotary die, rewind/sheet.

Ref:V8825-L

1989 MARK ANDY 830,

7" web, 3 col flexo + 1 add-on flexo, 3 die stations, dual rewind.

Ref:V8712-L

2001 MARK ANDY 830,

10" web, 3 col flexo, hot air + IR drying, 3 rotary die, dual rewind.

Ref:V8785-L

1999 NILPETER FA3000,

300mm web, 10 col flexo, hot air + 7 UV, 3 rotary die, rewind.

Ref:V8492-L

1996 NILPETER FS3000,

300mm web, 6 col flexo, 2 rotary screen, UV, rotary foil, 3 rotary die, rewind.

Ref:V6194-L

2000 NILPETER FA2500,

280mm web, 6 col flexo, 6 hot air, 1UV, 3 rotary die, 60+ print cys, 10 Anilox.

Ref:V8713-L

1997 NILPETER F2400,

240mm web, 6 col flexo, UV, 3 rotary die, rewind.

Ref:V8714-L

2001 OMET MULTIFILM 620,

620mm web, 7 col flexo, UV, chill rolls, hot air, cold foil, 3 rotary die, rewind.

Ref:V7766-L

1995 PROPHETEER 1800,

18" web, 40" unw, 6 col flexo, auto register, lamination, 3 rotary die, rewind.

Ref:V8771-L

1999 SIAT L53-200,

200mm web, 5 col flexo on CI drum, 1 UV, double rewind for tape printing.

Ref:V8486-L

LETTERPRESS

1996 CODIMAG VIVA 300,

300mm web, 5 col L/P, 1 flexo varnish, UV, 1 rotary die, video inspection, rewind, many cys.

Ref: V8932-L

1989 GALLUS R300,

5 col L/P, 2 rotary screen, rotary hot foil, UV varnish, full UV, 2 rotary die, turret rewind.

Ref: V8933-L

1991 GALLUS R200 B/S,

200mm web, 6 col L/P, 3 col screen, 1 flexo, rotary foil, 3 rotary die, rewind.

Ref:V8223-L

1994 GALLUS R200 B/S,

200mm web, 6 col L/P, 3 col screen, 1 flexo, rotary foil, 3 rotary die, rewind.

Ref:V8224-L

1982 GALLUS R160B,

170mm web, 5 col L/P, 1 flexo, flat & rotary die, rewind.

Ref:V8403-L

1990 KOPACK 250,

10" web, 7 col L/P, 1 flexo, flat & rotary die, rewind.

Ref: V8867-L

1988 KOPACK 250 SUPER,

7 col L/P + varnish, 1 flat & rotary die, rewind.

Ref:V8146-L

2001 LINTEC LPM 300,

300mm web, 5 col L/P, flexo UV, rotary die magnetic cylinders, rewind.

Ref:V8730-L

1985 NILPETER ROTOLABEL B200,

205mm web, 6 col L/P, 3 rotary & 1 flat die, UV, hot foil, rewind.

Ref:V6925-L

1986 NILPETER B200,

205mm web, 6 col L/P, varnish, UV, gold foil, 3 rotary + flat die, rewind.

Ref:V7908-L

1994 NILPETER B3000,

300mm web, 7 col L/P, 2 col screen, foil, 3 rotary + 1 flat die, rewind.

Ref:V8430-L

1990 SANJO P270,

270mm web, 6 col L/P, flexo varnish, 7 UV, 2 rotary die.

Ref:V8729-L

SCREEN

1994 SMAG-S/400,

Unwind 600mm, 400mm web, 2 col screen, UV, flat die, strobe, 2 rewind.

Ref:V8162-L

MISCELLANEOUS

2002 DAN MEKANO, IN MOULD LABEL PUNCH

400mm web, 1m unwind, rotary die, non stop stack delivery.

Ref: V8914-L

1996 ROTOFLEX DLI500,

500mm web, sheeter for A4 labels, single die, glue free edge.

Ref:V4718-L

1984 ARPECO TRACKER,

13" web, shear slitting, strobe, label counter, web guide.

Ref:V8158-L

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Jan Federik Vink, presenting a plaque to Edmundo Tseng, MD, Kuresa

digital are three times higher than conventional. We can already deliver small label runs in 2-3 days, and our job changes are very fast, so digital printing would not be faster. But in the future, when investment costs reduce, when you can print on a wider range of substrates, and there is a demand for more sophisticated industrial labels, then we will move to digital printing.'

Proofing and trialling

Kolibri runs a sophisticated wet proofing operation which is used to develop new concepts. Samples can be produced in combination with screen print and there will soon be the option to incorporate hot foil. This will mean complex wet proofs no longer have to be produced on-press.

'We were impressed with what we saw in Lima, where Kuresa has an area dedicated to testing and research,' says Vink. Kolibri now plans a dedicated wet proofing/product development area where brand managers, marketers and designers can spend time in interactive product development and trialling. 'We already encourage our customers and repro suppliers to spend a day on the proofing press. Some products have been developed and approved here without going near a press. Even our bigger customers often don't know what decoration possibilities we have on particular jobs and we want to inspire them – for example looking at silkscreen silvers.'

Another area of innovation is re-sealable labels, produced in-line on the ILMAs. Several projects are now out for evaluation at major customers.

Kolibri is also a registered security printer, producing tax seals and guarantee labels for Ford genuine spare parts. This expertise is now being applied to the brand protection market, using special optical inks on a vodka label for example. 'We are also applying this knowledge to cosmetics and more expensive personal care items and we see a great interest in the future for anti-counterfeit labels,' says Jan Federik. 'This might involve

special foils, holographic foils, printing microtext, invisible inks, color shifting materials. These low level security solutions can bring great benefits to end users.'

Knaup provided the inspiration and experience for Kolibri to move into clear tube labels.

Pushing letterpress

The decision to purchase the first ILMA press was taken back in 1999, when Kolibri adopted a strategy of moving from short runs of blank/promotional labels into industrial/prime labels, a decision confirmed after the management buyout in August 2001. 'As far back as 1993 when I joined the company I realized that big customers needed to be visited to discuss and consult on new technology developments,' says Vink.

The decision to go letterpress reflects both the continuing strength of this technology in Europe and Kolibri's existing letterpress pre-press expertise.

'I'm very impressed with UV flexo,' says Marco Haanstra, technical manager at Kolibri, 'but you still have to split colors between multiple print stations to get the same coverage you can get with one letterpress station. Also it would be a steep learning curve for us.'

The two ILMAs are placed next to each other with a common job preparation area in the middle servicing the press crews with mounted cylinders, pre-mixed inks and dies. The BASF-supplied letterpress plates are metal-backed and mounted onto magnetic cylinders, which Henk believes is more accurate than tape. The planning and preparation department is responsible for purchasing all dies, hot foil cylinders and materials, a controlling function which becomes more important the more sophisticated the work.

The machines are specified with seven color stations, UV screen, hot stamping, lamination and the ability to print on the adhesive in one machine pass. Both presses will soon have Teknek double-sided web cleaners after successful trials on the first machine (a success which inspired Kuresa to install the same equipment).

The ILMAs are kept loaded with process color inks on four stations, which reduces the need to clean down between jobs. The print stations can be rapidly changed between letterpress, flexo, screen and hot stamping without requiring exchange cassettes, creating a wide range of decorating possibilities. It takes Kolibri's operators around 10 minutes to change from letterpress to screen per station.

The company is currently trialling Esko-Graphics screening technology which eliminates the appearance of the hard dot letterpress edge by replacing conventional screens with FM screening where dots reach a critical threshold of 2-3 per cent.

Kolibri's philosophy on the ILMAs is to do everything in line, including back slitting the web feeding into a Vectra rewinder with automatic core changing. ■

No.431



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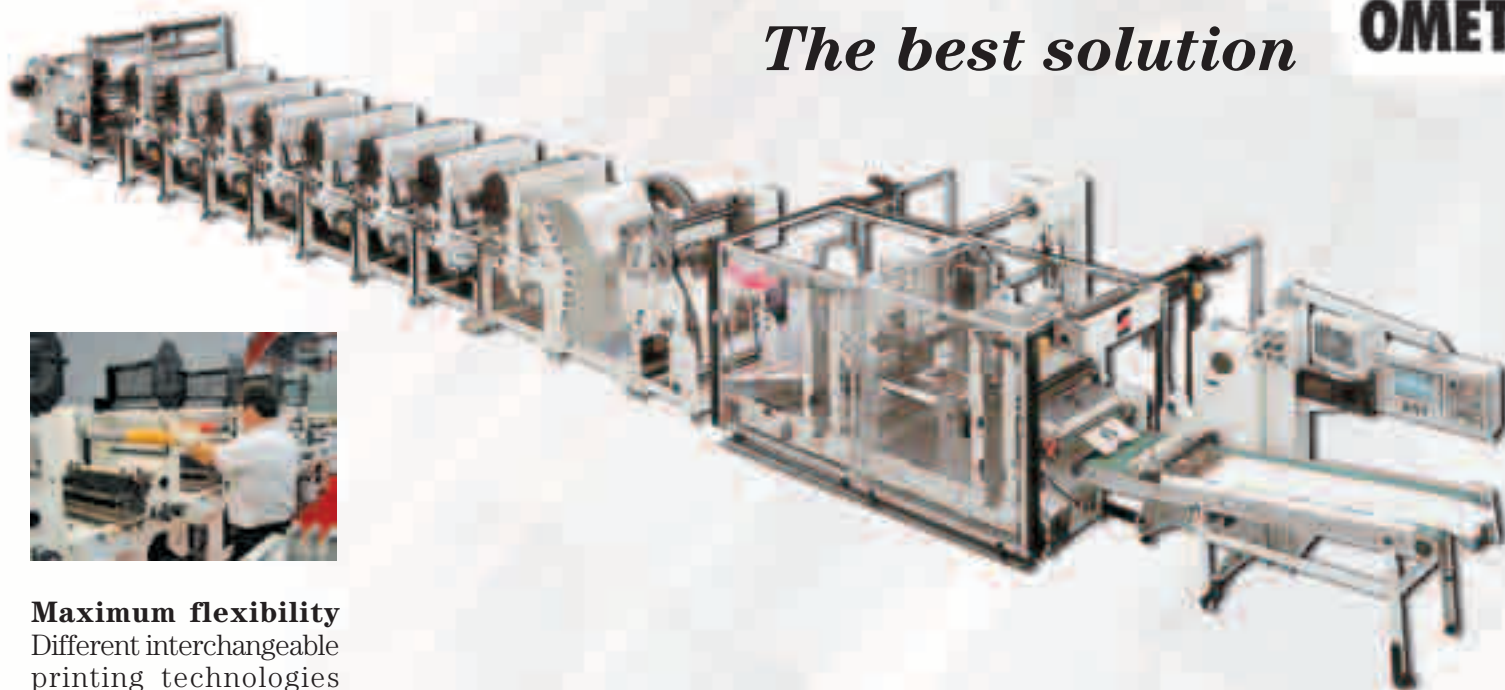
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Graham Jones, chairman Acorn Maltone and George Russell managing director

Breaking with tradition

The name George Russell will be familiar to many in the European labels business as the character who ran the UK sales operations for Didde and Aquaflex in the 1990s, before moving on to Edale. Disillusioned with the press salesman's life, Russell made a high risk, but highly rewarding career move back to the coal-face - as a partner in Lincolnshire, UK-based Acorn Maltone Labels. It will come as no surprise to those who know him that interesting plans are afoot.

It was clear to Russell from the outset that there would be little point in establishing another 'me too' operation, and Acorn Labels is now the proud owner of one of the first ETI Metronome flexographic presses to be sold in Europe. Some words of explanation are in order.

The decision to opt for the new ETI machine harks back to the days when Russell was selling Aquaflex presses. One of his key accounts was his present-day partner Graham Jones, who bought three Instaprep 8-color 10in machines for his Clearprint Labels operation in Preston, UK. When, three years ago, Jones offered him the chance to try his hand at growing a medium-sized print business in the group, Russell jumped at the opportunity. Since then Acorn Maltone has moved into new premises and gone from strength to strength.

Acorn specialises in the food and industrial labels sectors, with 80 per cent of its work produced for the trade. Russell has

George Russell has moved from selling Aquaflex and Edale presses to running his own labels printing business. Now he plans a revolutionary laminate manufacturing and printing operation.

Andy Thomas reports

big plans: 'The aim is to grow the business and move towards added value synthetic label production on the ETI press. My ultimate goal is to transform the company from a label printer into a manufacturer. We want to be able to print first, and then make the label itself, which is where the margins are much higher. We're now at the first stage, and the ETI Metronome press will eventually form the basis of this in-line print and manufacturing operation.'

ETI provides another link to George Russell's past, since ETI president and founder Francois Bayzelon was originally the founder of Aquaflex/Chromas. Five years ago he struck out on his



Left: print unit featuring quick set-up SAPS system (see box below), below left: Metronome press, below: Auto Peel-off allows waste stripping to start automatically



SAPS changeover sequence

1. The gauge is placed between the anilox and substrate
2. The plate cylinder holder is locked in the right position, in reference to the gauge
3. The gauge is removed from holder and replaced by the plate cylinder
4. Plate cylinder is perfectly aligned and ready.

own to develop a concept for a one pass printing and manufacturing system for pressure-sensitive coated labelstocks. The Metronome is the printing line, and the Cohesio (see below) the label manufacturing section.

The 8-color Metronome press installed at Acorn Labels is 13in wide to match the web width of the Cohesio manufacturing line. Available in web (print) widths of 10" (254mm), 13" (330mm) and 16" (406mm), the Metronome can be UV, waterbase or a combination of both, and is configured for the full range of film, paper and pressure sensitive paper products which can be run through the Cohesio coater in a thickness range between 0.001 – 0.010in (25 – 254 micron). Maximum press speed is 500 ft/min (150 m/min). Repeat length is 8-24in (203-610mm).

George Russell cites the key benefits of the Metronome press as its durable construction, unique quick makeready cassette print heads and innovative drying system. 'We needed a machine with the best possible registration available and ultra-fast makeready. Obviously the marketplace can only become more competitive and this machine will help us service our key trade clients.'

Key design concepts set the Metronome apart in this very crowded

"ETI's Self-Aligning Pressure Setting system allows instant and automatic adjustment of anilox and printing pressure in around 10 seconds per print unit"

market:

- The over-sized 16in Impression cylinder means the dot is in contact with the plate for longer and prints flatter, so forming a better dot shape. 'It prints flat, more like a litho environment,' enthuses Russell. 'Having the very big impression cylinder and one inch steel sideframes provides massive stability, making it very rugged and very stable on process work, and not sensitive to speed variation. Longer dwell also helps ensure the dot is cured.' The press is configured with Hot air and IR combo drying, 'a lot of drying power for waterbase inks,' points out Russell.

- The Metronome is configured with an anilox cassette system and plate cylinder carriers, mounted on carts, which allow the print units to be exchanged in around a minute. Furthermore, any anilox cassette is interchangeable with a silk screen or die cutting cassette, with an equally fast changeover time. The dual horizontal die-cut station allows easy access and fast change-over using the cassette and cart system.

- ETI's unique Self-Aligning Pressure Setting system (SAPS) allows instant and automatic adjustment of anilox and printing pressure in around 10 seconds per print unit (see SAPS boxout).

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Cohesio laminate manufacturing system from ETI is Acorn's next move

- The company's patent-pending Auto Peel-Off system allows waste stripping to start automatically, without having to stop the press and manually roll waste around the rewinder. The roll is split with a knife which takes the matrix to the rewind without manual intervention, eliminating the risk of paper tearing during peel off.
- Makeready is carried on outside the machine in the removable cassettes. ETI says a six unit changeover can be performed in around 10 minutes including changing all print and converting cassettes, setting impression and running up to print.

From label printer to manufacturer

The next stage at Acorn Labels will be the installation of ETI's Cohesio labelstock manufacturing system. About 12 metres (30 feet) long – the same footprint as the Metronome – the Cohesio is a complete label manufacturing line, flexible enough to let converters produce any kind of pressure-sensitive material in-house, from basic self-adhesive paper to complex multi-layer applications.

The release paper and face stock are simultaneously unwound and led through the Cohesio with independent electronic tension control on both webs. The liner is first coated with silicone, then with the adhesive before lamination to the face stock. The Cohesio can be equipped with an in-line, registered rotary die-cutter which allows final labels to be converted in one operation. Two print units can be added to the Cohesio, or for a full-color operation, it is run in tandem with the Metronome press.

Once the label stock roll is ready, it can be replaced on the machine as face stock and re-run with another roll of liner, enabling production of multiple layers to make piggy back, coupon, or back-to-back labels. Other interesting decoration options include embossing before lamination.

'Double-sided PP labels seem to be the next trend,' says Bayzelon. 'And while label printers are struggling to print on the inside, or to multiply layers, label manufacturers have the easiest solution.'

Other key possibilities include linerless labels and insertion of

electronic chips and spiral antennae for RFID applications before the glue is applied – avoiding the necessity for delam-relam.

Although the second web can be used to run an overlamine film, a more interesting possibility is to print on the reverse of clear film before the adhesive is applied. This avoids the requirement for extra laminations or varnishes, since the print is sandwiched between the film and the adhesive. This also delivers a high gloss finish and means you can use cheaper, water-based flexo inks, since rub resistance is no longer an issue. 'People mainly buy UV for its hardness and resistance. Here, the waterbase is rock solid between the face and the adhesive,' points out Bayzelon.

Running the Metronome printing press in tandem with the Cohesio leads to a reduction in waste since only the face stock is being processed through the Metronome press – rather than the complete laminate.

Because you can coat the liner before siliconisation – using UV or waterbase systems – you can use a very wide range of different material qualities and types, including film.

Becoming your own laminator gives the converter the freedom to use any glue system from hot melt to the cheaper acrylic systems. UV silicone is an exciting technology for an in-house coating operation since it does not require major drying ovens or modifying the PH by remoisturising the web. You also have full control over the choice and pattern application of the adhesive, giving full control over perf or peelable constructions for example.

For narrow web printers there is a 10 per cent additional coverage across a 330mm web, since most coatings stop 2mm from the web edge. George Russell has done his own calculations on the payback to be expected from the Metronome/Cohesio combination, including the savings to be made from buying raw materials direct instead of in a finished laminate. He estimates a minimum requirement is a turnover of £2.5M on labels, which means a spend of £1M in raw materials. Return on investment works out at under a year. ■

No. 402

Acorn kit list

Apart from the Metronome press, Acorn is an Edale house, with the most recent installation a 6-color Edale Beta 250. Two 13in Rotoflex slitter rewinders have been installed to be compatible with the Metronome. Acorn handles its own platemaking, with an Agfa Accuset 800 imagesetter and BASF Combi F1 platemaker. 'We've had a look at CTP, but we're not ready yet,' says Russell.

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Converting profit

The 2004 TLMI converter meeting brought label printers together from all over the US to battle the same issue – profit.

Katy Wight reports

The theme of the 2004 TLMI Converter Meeting – Enhancing profitability in the 21st century – faced issues about the bottom line head-on. Delegates took part in a packed itinerary of seminars aimed at harnessing and exploiting emerging technology, held at the Westin Rio Mar Beach Resort in Puerto Rico – and some even found time to squeeze in a little golf.

Online auctions: we know the cons...are there pros?

The issue of reverse auctions reared its ugly head in a heated debate chaired by Elisha Tropper of Prestige Label. Jeff Zeman of FreeMarkets, the world's largest third party supply management organization, took up the gauntlet of outlining his view of why converters should embrace the tool. Since 1995, \$81 billion has been sourced through FreeMarkets – \$60 billion of that being sourced in the US. With 122,000 suppliers participating in FreeMarkets' activities, the service is an attractive forum for buyers trying to ensure that their purchasing is competitive.

'As converters, online auctions can present you with new opportunities, with new customers that you may never have had access to,' says Zeman. 'For example, we work with all four of the top four petrochemical customers, three out of the top four food and beverage companies – it's an easy introduction.'

But delegates weren't convinced about this direction of business growth. What about the converter that has invested ten years in forging a strong relationship with that customer? Will opportunities only exist for the lowest priced contenders and will

this compromise quality?

'Buyers just want to make sure that they are not paying too much for the service that they receive, and they are using the auctions as a tool to find this out, but integrity still matters,' he says. 'The lowest price doesn't always get the business – in fact only 15 per cent of the lowest priced bidders actually win the business. Fifteen to sixteen per cent usually stays with the incumbent, but at a lower price.'

FreeMarkets compiles data to carefully classify companies to ensure that only 'qualified suppliers' are put forward for auctions. FreeMarkets qualifies companies itself and buyers can also specify which suppliers they want to include according to their own criteria.

'It's not just about the auction,' says Zeman, 'for our customers it is about streamlining the process. Buyers want more information available to them and they want it more quickly. We are developing and maintaining data in a standard format which can help accelerate a sourcing market.'

Mark Dawkins is director purchasing Fasson Roll America and used to work as a buyer for P&G. He presented a survey of fifty end users, identifying what they hoped to achieve – namely cost reduction, labor reduction, inventory control and electronic order management – and why they used reverse auctions to try and achieve this.

'You have your own perceived values of the service that you give – but your clients may not perceive the same values. They believe that value* is being withheld,' he says. 'As a buyer, we do not know whether we are getting the best price. In fact, it would

*value = price + quality + service + innovation (Dawkins)



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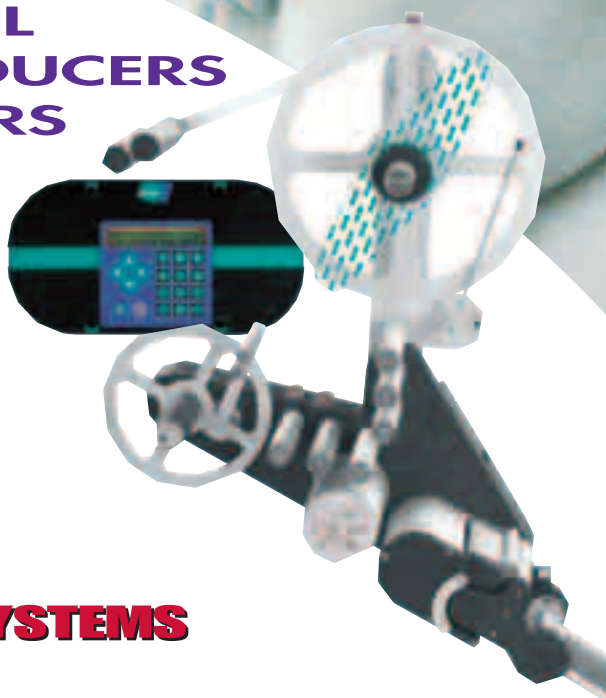
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“The benefits for the buyer are obvious and auctions are likely to become more and more prevalent. Dawkins has clear advice on how to survive”

be illegal if we did know!’

The benefits for the buyer are obvious and auctions are likely to become more and more prevalent. Dawkins has clear advice on how to survive: ‘Understand where you are with your buyers and build different relationships with each of them,’ he says. ‘Make sure that you have the right infrastructure to make the right decisions and practice like you play. Exercise discipline in the market place to do what you say you will.’

The importance of having the structure to deal with the auction, and to know the parameters of what you can afford, was highlighted by a practical exercise where attendees were split into groups and took part in a mock auction – interestingly, one group made three people redundant in the race for the lowest offer!

As easy as it may make business, it’s hard for converters to get excited about a tool that essentially erodes their margins and breaks down the business relationships that they have spent years nurturing. In pursuit of the lowest price possible, aren’t buyers risking a decrease in their own customer satisfaction, innovation and quality? On the other hand, reverse auctions are only going to increase in popularity, so printers and converters should arm themselves with the best strategy to cope with aggressive price competition. With preparation, printers can make sure that they are best placed to win new business.

Smart Label Technology: here today, mandatory tomorrow

RFID is the hot topic in the label industry right now, but as Gerald Steinwasser, general manager of Mühlbauer, explains the technology is nothing new. It was a system initially developed in the Second World War to identify enemy planes and it has been used for the past thirty years in the cattle industry.

‘Take for example the recent mad cow disease (BSE) scare in the US,’ he says. ‘Why do you think it was so easy for them to trace the origins of that cow back to a farm in Canada? For the past 20-30 years the animals have been tagged.’

So why has it become such an issue all of a sudden?

Mühlbauer designs, develops, manufactures and markets turn-key solutions in the area of smart cards, semiconductor backend, in-board handling and in-precision parts and system fabrication and has been at the forefront of new chip technology. Steinwasser believes that new developments taking us past the traditional IC-based RFID are promoting the change.

‘The process has been optimized over a number of years, he says. ‘The new ‘flip chip’ uses just one process to manufacture rather than the previous three that were necessary. This is driving the semi-conductor industry as a whole and if you take a look at your cell phone, you will find a number of flip chips.’ The technology is in place. The key issue is making it cheap enough for mass production.

Alien Technology Corporation was the first company to deliver electronic product code (EPC) class 1 hardware. It has been focusing on a manufacturing process that ensures the reliable and cost-efficient delivery of RFID tags in high volumes, as vice president corporate development Thomas Pounds explains: ‘The RFID market is poised for rapid growth and the transition will change the dynamics of your industry landscape over the next three to four years. There will be significant rewards for the winners.

‘Wal-Mart, Tesco, US Department of Defence, Target – they are all in the experimentation stage, but have all set deadlines for their strategies. It goes beyond the retail supply chain though,

Current RFID options for end-users:

- They can opt for a turnkey solution and approach a company like IBM or Accenture. They will do all the necessary research and suggest what should be implemented
- They can approach converters directly. Companies such as Avery, CCL, Paxar and Rafsec are already committing resources to finding solutions
- They can approach the hardware integration/installation experts directly, such as Zebra or Sato
- They can go directly to the software companies for advice



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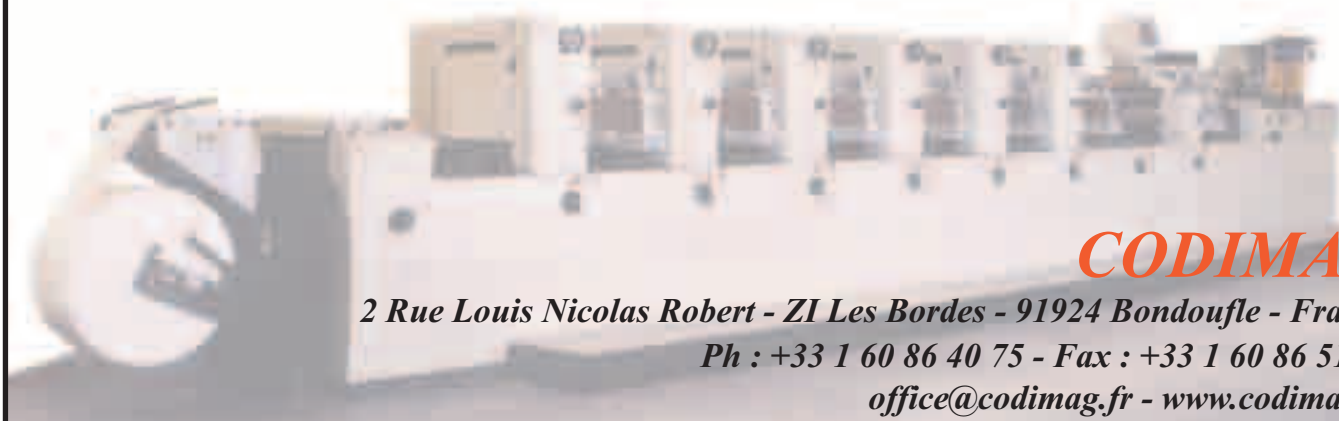
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Top: Seven TLMI companies were honored in the recent World Label Awards Competition. Present to accept their awards from TLMI Awards Committee Chair Mike Buystedt, Director New Market Development for Akzo Nobel Inks (second from right), are (from left) TLMI President John Bankson, President, Label Technology; Danette Zimla, Director Account Services, Banta Specialty Converting; Trevor Maunder, General Manager, Adams Label & Tag Ltd.; and Dave McDowell, President, McDowell Label & Screen Printing.

Bottom: TLMI President John Bankson, center, presents the TLMI Eugene Singer Award for Management Excellence to representatives of the winning companies. Pictured, from left, are Joel Carmany, President of Consolidated Label Co.; Bob Biava, President of Driscoll Label Co., and his wife, Patti; Bruce Bell, President of Belmark, Inc., and Suzanne and Bob Zaccane, President and Vice President of Graphic Solutions, Inc.

Potential RFID markets:

Supply chain management	Public transportation
Source tagging	Airline services
Sensor technology	Item tracking
Access control	Parcel services
Event ticketing	Logistics
	Airline services

its ability to track and trace will mean that it will have its uses in the pharmaceutical industry, in baggage handling and even in courier services.'

Pounds predicts that industry implementation will roll out on a large scale at the pallet and case level between 2005-07. He thinks that the tagging of consumer packaging goods (CPG) at

item level will take place between 2006-09 and that market revenue will be about 30-50 billion units by 2008. Pounds is referring to UHF applications, which although a small market at present, is the direction that tags are moving in. This is opposed to the 13.56MHz market, which has been traditionally been used by the airline industry, for luggage tags for example, and is still the standard. Wal-Mart has demanded UHF tags and RFID can only move forward in one direction. Standardization in the market is still the major problem.

'RFID has a lot of use at the level of the supply chain,' says Pounds. 'Each chip has about 96 bits of memory, which is enough to store between 16-24 characters of EPC, with a range of about three meters. One of the main benefits is the fact that the codes can be read extremely fast.'

Manufacturing the tags at 100 million units a year has an established minimum cost of \$0.22 (a minimum of \$0.12 for the chip, \$0.04 or more for an etched copper or coil antenna, \$0.03 to attach the antenna and \$0.03 for the cost of converting), the most expensive component being the chip.

'One way to reduce this cost is by reducing the size of the chip, but in doing this, you also increase your assembly costs. We have looked for a unique assembly to decrease the size of the chip whilst also keeping the assembly costs down. We have been cutting the chips out of silicon wafer. But the chips are small – they are like dust – so how do you handle them? We have suspended them in a dye, which is then run over a material with tiny wells cut into it. As the dye runs over it, the tiny ICs drop into place in the wells into a form that can be handled. The leads can then be screen printed on.'

Production on a large scale could take the chip, the antenna, attaching and converting costs down to less than \$0.05 per unit. Alien has patented this manufacturing process – Fluidic Self Assembly (FSA) – which allows assembly into EPC tags at rates upwards of 2,000,000 per hour, versus the approximately 10,000 per hour possible with conventional methods. It could be very influential technology for the production of EPC tags in quantities of billions or even trillions when RFID goes to product level.

Alien is preparing for the future and is currently building new capacity in Fargo, North Dakota. Pounds predicts that by 2006 Alien will be producing third generation chips at 10 billion units per year on each line.

'The mix of product will change over the next few years,' adds Pounds. 'Initially it is all going to be about the 4"x6" (the labels specified by Wal-Mart), but then we are going to move into straps and then into RFID which is fully integrated into the packaging.' The challenges for RFID now revolve around finding new, flexible antenna materials and the high speed testing of chips.

Gerald Steinwasser of Mühlbauer highlights another major area for cost-saving: 'You need an assembly process that has a high yield. When it arrives, it has to work. You don't want to waste a chip as it will waste a whole label. You want a solution where they will all work all of the time.'

Defective transponders are a big issue at present, as Max Golter of bielomatik Jagenburg explains: 'The reject rate for defective transponders could be scary. It can be anything up to 30 per cent and be affected by a number of things happening in

“The reject rate for defective transponders could be scary. It can be anything up to 30 per cent and affected by a number of things happening in the supply chain”

30 per cent and be affected by a number of things happening in the supply chain. And these are going to get returned to you. It's a big problem, but it is going to be overcome and we will see a big reduction in defective transponders in the future.'

The transponders are very sensitive to handling and should be tested before and after you have handled them to make sure that your process is not affecting them. bielomatik has developed a universal high speed reader to qualify RFID product, which is ISO 10373-7 certified. It can provide performance tests for inlays (chip packaging) and smart products before and after lamination. The bielomatik T100 reel-to-reel multi-web laminator marries the substrate with the qualified antenna and inlay, providing either dual or triple layer products. High end models can process up to 150 million units per year, so that you can qualify them before shipping.

Opportunities for converters

'Converters need to be ready,' says Golter of bielomatik. 'The Wal-Mart standard is a 4"x6" UHF label and these need to be in place by January 2005. This means that distribution of the labels will have to commence in the fall. So converters will effectively need to be installing new equipment now.' However, only Texas Instruments and Philips are currently producing the new UHF chips, and according to Steinwasser of Mühlbauer, only Alien and one or two other companies can actually supply these inlays at present, and he says, 'they are not produced in high quantities as the technology isn't there yet.'

It's a difficult time for converters who don't want to miss the boat, but are remaining cautious to see what the dominant technology will be, and this was reflected in the TLMI members' questions. Should they use a transponder supplier, where they can apply the hotmelt or PS substrate themselves? Will they be able to buy already-integrated labelstock? And if the transponder is so sensitive, wouldn't it just be easier to add the chip after printing?

'If you're thinking about RFID – and I really don't think that

you have a choice – your future customer is going to be your existing customer,' adds Golter. 'You need to speak to them about their transponder specification. They may need a system integrator to recommend and install the software and readers, so get involved. Then select a laminating machine that will fulfill your needs and promote it.'

He outlines certain critical success factors in manufacturing:

- Avoid capacity constraints by system design – reel-to-reel processing is key
- High speed narrow web is more efficient than multi-track/slow speed
- Low set-up time is important
- Keep the number of reels in the system low and ensure large diameter rolls
- Use flexible systems which are open for technology changes and growth
- Ensure the lowest cost materials and tooling

'You must make sure that your supplier is committed to continuous RFID support and development,' says Golter. 'Ensure that they have consulting and product development capabilities, and can assert performance tests. They should also be able to provide you with proof for the lowest possible product cost to support your ROI.'

Basically there is no definitive solution for converters, but as Pounds of Alien explains, 'the winners will benefit from rapid revenue growth, higher value product and increased market share'.

Other presentations included 'Get sales now!' by Bill Farquharson of Print Tec Network, who claimed that 'the loyal customer is dead' and extolled the importance of training sales staff, and 'Growth processes for all time horizons' with Dave Edwards of Avery Dennison who outlined an internal initiative to get employees engaged by solving problem projects for clients.

The meeting was topped off with the 14th World Label Association Awards where eight TLMI converter members scooped nine awards at a ceremony dinner at the resort. ■

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Smart workflows

Prepress workflows have revolutionized the processing of digital information for printing and converting labels. **Barry Hunt** examines some trends

Not too long ago prepress invariably meant closed proprietary systems. They had limited or unpredictable integration with third-party devices and were costly to install and maintain. Also, users were locked in to a single manufacturer's innovation cycle. That has all changed. Today, packaging prepress means various levels of digitized workflows using modular, open system applications. They have simplified most creative desktop tasks and helped to automate such essential pre-production tasks as step-and-repeat and color trapping. Other innovations include web-enabled business systems, allowing the exchange of data with e-commerce and management information systems. Customers can also login to selective parts of the system and send files for new jobs, check a job's status and plug-in to remote proofing systems.

Many of these developments have trickled down from the commercial prepress world and adapted to meet the needs of label and packaging converters. In fact, this sector is providing a rich vein of new business to the more commercially oriented suppliers like Agfa and Kodak Polychrome Graphics. There are also more sales and service departments looking after the needs of the packaging sector. At the same time, it is seeing a plethora of new hardware and software in scaled-down versions for a growing number of in-house applications. Of course, vendors must be equally mindful of retaining links with the larger trade repro and platemaking houses who have been the main buyers of big-ticket prepress systems in recent years.

A common language

It's not hard to see how open, industry-standard data formats

have been the prime mover in most recent prepress developments. For example, color management took a leap forward with the introduction of a recommended model from the International Colour Consortium. Users of ICC color profiles could identify or map device-independent color values, allowing the matching of profiles to specific input and output devices for color consistency. Arguably, the biggest contribution towards predictable and consistent prepress results has been the widespread adoption of Adobe System's PostScript. Initially developed as a language for describing pages and controlling printers, it was sufficiently flexible to become the data format for carrying all prepress and production information.

Early versions did have drawbacks however. It was necessary for PostScript to read the entire file for each application and understand the contents before it could act on that file. Much memory was needed to make the simplest change or update and create a new file. PostScript 3 eliminated much of this apparent arbitrariness, but importantly also paved the way for the now ubiquitous Portable Document Format (PDF), which forms part of Adobe's Acrobat suite. Among its benefits, PDF accesses only the information needed when making incremental updates to files, which simplifies the imaging operations. A PDF file can be considered as a database of objects with direct access to each object, and each page of a PDF document is independent of the others.

At the post-print stages, a typical PDF scenario would allow a designer to create a document in a page layout program that included scanned FPO (for placement only) versions of high-resolution images and then output the document to a PDF file. Any printing control features



It's not hard to see how open, industry-standard data formats have been the prime mover in most recent prepress developments

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“More recently, JDF (Job Definition Format) has taken file sharing between different graphics workflows to a higher level”

Buckleys in the UK has implemented an Artwork Systems workflow system, including the step and repeat module seen here

specified in the authoring application are maintained. The PDF file includes Open Prepress Interface comments specified in the PostScript file, so high-resolution images can be incorporated into the file before going to press. A compressed PDF file is then transmitted to the print shop for on-screen preflighting, allowing last-minute text changes. The document is usually output to a PostScript language file at this stage, maintaining the print controls originally specified in the authoring application. It then passes through a prepress workflow, which includes replacing FPO images in the file with the high-resolution versions, ready for proofing and platemaking.

According to Amnon Shalev, marketing manager for Creo's Packaging Segment, the input from designers and print buyers has helped drive the demand for PDF: 'If you consider the print approval cycle, where legal, marketing, quality assurance and other people in an organization need to approve the job, then what is easier, more portable and more open format than PDF? Other formats force them to use a proprietary technology, which makes communication very difficult. We have used PDF to support packaging production since 1999. Since then our competitors have introduced PDF based workflows, so we must have done something right.'

Jan Ruysschaert, UK managing director of Artwork Systems, agrees that PDF has become the accepted file format for the graphic arts community, but adds: 'The full acceptance of PDF in the packaging environment has been slow, due to technical particularities inherent to packaging work. Drupa 2004 will represent a major milestone in the endeavor to achieve PDF standardization.'

He claims the latest Version 8.0 of ArtPro and Nexus offers a full set of software tools that will make PDF more popular in the packaging field. However, the need to track the path of a job and the integrity of the output file is an important issue towards this end. 'We have integrated the Enfocus Certified PDF technology within ArtPro and Nexus version 8.0. This means that when a PDF file has been certified and thus preflighted with a certain standard profile, the receiver can confidently trust the quality of the file and run its content

without taking any responsibility for it.

'In packaging environments a Certified PDF label will guarantee not only a quality label, but will provide ArtPro and Nexus users with a full edit and history trail on their PDF exchange. We have adopted Certified PDF in a unique way, which means the traceability of the incoming PDF will never be broken, even though the file may have undergone serious editing.'

More recently, JDF (Job Definition Format) has taken file sharing between different graphics workflows to a higher level. Dubbed the digital equivalent of the printer's job bag, it offers the potential to seamlessly integrate elements of job preparation, prepress, post-press, management information systems (MIS), press control and even off-press finishing tasks. It was developed by the CIP4 consortium (www.cip4.org) and currently comprises an alliance of 36 graphic industries members. They have also formed the Networked Graphic Production, which has defined a standard set of interfaces based on the JDF standard for integrating cross-vendor applications at different stages of the print production and MIS process. (This plug-and-play method is defined in five documents posted at www.ngppartners.org.)

Jan Ruysschaert says JDF implementation will become increasingly important within the packaging sector: 'It will take time, but eventually everyone operating in this field will be involved or influenced by JDF in some form. The opportunities offered by the technology are too great not to be embraced by all sectors of graphic arts as everyone strives for improved efficiency, reduced costs and increased profitability.'

Workflow developments

Creo, a member of the NGP consortium, has applied JDF data structures to its Prinergy Powerpack and Brisque Pack software. Pandora 2.6, a step-and-repeat tool for folding cartons and labels, uses both PDF and JDF file standards to integrate with other workflow systems. Intended for Mac OS X platforms, it now has a preview window for reviewing artwork and joins Pandora 2.5 for Mac OS 9.

Creo has also released Synapse InSite 3.5.5. Remote



“it’s worth noting the contribution that the latest flexo screening techniques have made in raising flexo quality”

customers or design agencies can submit compressed and encrypted job files to an Internet portal using either Windows or Macintosh OS X platforms without requiring customized software. They can login at any time and check the progress of jobs, as well as monitor copy changes and, if required, see updated charges online for accurate billing. Synapse InSite works with third-party workflows. Its updated file transfer engine is said to give faster uploads of job files into the prepress workflow and faster downloads of job files for remote proofing.

When integrated with Synapse Prepare, users can create press-ready PDF files, uploaded directly from a desktop application to the Synapse InSite server without launching a web browser. New tools include image rotation, an enhanced measurement tool and the ability to place guides to aid the review process. Users can also create and download a multi-page PDF of selected pages for desktop proofing.

ApogeeX from Agfa is another example of a PDF-based packaging workflow that uses JDF data for automated tasks. These include step-and-repeat and nesting applications, integrated proofing and more. JDF files can include artwork, color strips, markers, customer information and step-and-repeat positioning parameters, which are processed jobs according to the embedded JDF specification. To ensure that each step or nested artwork is identical, operators can first render one artwork and then step it according to the JDF specification by using ApogeeX’s post render step-and-repeat component.

For offset printing, Apogee allows the importing and conversion of Copydot files for output to a platesetter or imagesetter. An Apogee Power Converter outputs native files directly on a printer/proofers for imposition and content proofing to generate PS and PDF files for contract proofing on Agfa’s Sherpa digital proofing system. Agfa’s Raster Blaster add-on allows files to be passed through a RIP for imaging on non-Agfa flexo ctp devices, such as Creo’s Thermoflex and DuPont’s CDI ranges.

Third-party RIPs

Many converters base their prepress departments around a third-party raster-imaging processor (RIP) to drive their imagesetters, CTP platesetters and proofing systems. Monitors allow operators to preflight, or preview, the various production functions created on the workstation, including trapping, distortion and hybrid screening before RIPping.

Artwork Systems (which claims around 8,200 ‘seats’ for its Mac-based ArtPro origination system introduced in 1995) offers NexusRIP, based on the secure ROOM principle (RIP Once Output Many). In other words, a single RIPped file generates

multiple outputs. New features include access drivers for five, six and seven-color proofers, as well as the latest DotSpy 2.0 tool for checking screened digital data before film for plate output. NexusRIP also controls Nexus workflows upgraded to allow for hi-fi screening applications. Users can automatically convert files in Pantone, Hexachrome, Opaltone and other systems using more than four separations to achieve standardized ink sets. There is increased control over trapping pairs in automated workflows. Users can predefine how trapping is handled for certain colors or inks, which reduce manual operations. Also new is a step-and-repeat facility for cartons.

The OpenRIP FLE (flexo-label edition) from RIPit Computer Corp typifies the versatility of modern high-end RIPs. It accepts Java-based PS 3, PDF 1.4, Encapsulated PostScript (EPS) files printed from ArtPro and PackEdge origination programs, as well as generic applications like Quark Xpress, Adobe Illustrator, CorelDraw and InDesign, using Macintosh (OS9 and OS X), Unix and Windows-based platforms. Users can take files from network servers, but another option is to send edited files as customized Print Queues that emulate network printers.

Recent updates for Esko-Graphics’ packaging software include PackEdge 3.0 workflow system and Plato 2.0, a plate layout application with optional step-and-repeat capability. They can be augmented with BackStageEdit and PlatoEdit, which are client/server versions of PackEdge and Plato carrying an identical set of features, but with an optimized link to BackStage, a workflow server for volume processing of packaging graphics. DeskPack for Adobe Illustrator adds a series of powerful plug-ins that are said to increase Illustrator’s functionality, including a trapping application. Both Plato and PackEdge contain updated SmartMarks print production controls, such as color bars, sheet corner marks, center marks and trim marks, which automatically adjust to changes in the job. SmartNames allows the production software to link to a database through the use of SQL queries. Both released products now integrate OutRight2, an updated output module that, beyond driving most imagesetters, platesetters and proofers, generates PS/PDF/PDF for Illustrator, EPS, DCS at high speed. PackEdge 3.0 integrates with BackStage and ColorStitch, a new trapping method with pre-defined trapping tickets, ensuring exceptional speed and quality. A new option is the ShrinkSleeve module with 3D rendering.

Esko-Graphics now offers a free plug-in for its ArtiosCAD 5.0 package design software. Instead of exporting an EPS file, users can open or place native ArtiosCAD files into Adobe Illustrator without any file conversion. After opening, the design’s structure and properties are kept and placed in a separate working layer.

Finally, it’s worth noting the contribution that the latest flexo screening techniques have made in raising flexo quality. This involves combining FM screening for the highlights and AM screening for the rest of the halftone scale, so eliminating or minimizing the noticeable transition from inked to non-inked areas. Current examples include RIPit’s PerfectBlend Flexo hybrid screening technology and Artwork System’s HybridScreening. Creo’s MaxTone provides smooth and complete vignettes, while Hyperflex gives support for finer dots. Combined with Maxtone Raster Scaling, both systems help overcome dot distortion on small-diameter cylinders. ■



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Bespoke solutions

Understanding all your application requirements at the outset can prevent problems further down the line.

Dave Constantine, senior product development chemist at pressure-sensitive film manufacturer FLEXcon explains

When film suppliers set out to recommend or create a product for an application, they want to make sure that you get the best possible construction. As the converter, your input is an invaluable part of this process. You understand the application's converting and end use requirements better than anyone else.

You can help your supplier understand all of your particular application needs so that he can provide the best product to meet your customer's request. This involves asking a series of questions to get at the heart of the end use and converting requirements. The answers to these questions can play a dramatic role in the ultimate success or failure of the application.

The more comprehensive your answers, the more accurate the solution. By cutting down the design-to-product timeframe, you can respond to your customers with quicker, more accurate information. This helps you to lock in business and improve your bottom line.

Intended end use

Understanding the actual end use of the product is critical to determining what pressure-sensitive material the supplier will recommend.

What environmental pressures will the label be under?

Specific environmental exposure questions will aid us, the supplier, in determining what you need to create an enduring label or graphic. Certain under-the-hood applications require labeling which will withstand the heat of an engine block while a primary label for a bottle of beer may need to pass both pasteurization and ice chest tests. Personal care labeling may need to endure the challenging shower environment, and yet remain fully squeezable for the life of the product.

Indoor versus outdoor use can have a significant bearing on the adhesive and film selection as well. A pressure-sensitive film construction that does well on the wall of a temperature-controlled store in New York will not be the same one you would use in the humid bayous of Louisiana on a boat. Outdoor applications may be exposed to UV light, high humidity or significant temperature variations. Any one of these factors can make the difference between an application's ultimate success and failure.

How will the labels be dispensed?

How the label is dispensed is another prime consideration, especially as regards to liner selection. A product that will undergo high-speed automatic dispensing may need a different adhesive/liner/film combination than one that will be hand dispensed. Even the size and shape of the label may influence our recommendation.

What demands will be made on the adhesive?

Does the application need to be permanent, as in the case of a product identification label? Perhaps it should be permanent/removable, such as for a floor graphic. In this case, the application also often demands that it be cleanly removable. Or maybe a cling vinyl window graphic with no adhesive is the best solution.

Adhesive questions also focus on the type of surface to which the application will be adhered. The surface material, cleanliness and smoothness must all be considered. For example, is the surface glass, polyester, galvanized steel or powder paint? Is the surface smooth or rough? Curved or flat? Dry or moist? Or perhaps you are looking to adhere to something composed of Teflon, wood, polypropylene, foam or fabric. Each presents its own unique challenges. Similarly, what are the bonding expectations? Must the bond be immediately permanent?

“you can respond to your customers with quicker, more accurate information, lock in business and improve your bottom line”

What is the life-expectancy of your label and graphics?

A short-term trade show graphic will not require the same durability as an exterior rating plate that is expected to survive extreme weather conditions. Films are available for everything from short-term indoor use to long-term outdoor applications including overlaminates to extend graphic durability and longevity.

How do you want it to look?

Does the application call for a clear or colored label, or does it need to be translucent or opaque? Each of these factors plays a role.



Dave Constantine, senior product development chemist, FLEXcon

Do you have to adhere to any legal requirements?

Some labels or graphics may need to meet state, federal or industry specifications. In these cases, you might be asked to provide specific regulatory requirements. For example, a label for a piece of electronic equipment may be subject to requirements set by the Canadian Standards Association

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(CSA) or Underwriters Laboratories (UL).

If the application will come into direct or indirect contact with food products, it may face scrutiny from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Military, automotive, pharmaceutical, non-slip and child safety standards are among the many different industry requirements that a label or graphic may face.

Converting concerns

How will the label be converted?

One of the first considerations for any product selection involves knowing how it will be converted – roll, sheet or roll-to-sheet. When we

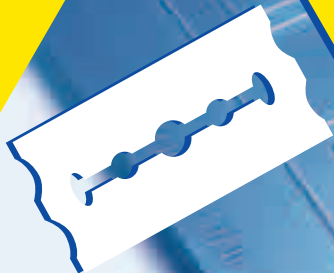
understand the conditions that the material will face, we can better align your needs with a particular film, adhesive, topcoat and liner combination. Any pre-press converting requirements must also be addressed.

How will it be printed?

The printing process is also critical to choosing a film and topcoat. This allows us to match the proper film and topcoat (and in some cases, liner) to the printing method. This could be anything from flexo to letterpress to hotstamp to web screen. No one product will satisfy each and every method. This is especially true with the rapidly expanding market for variable information processing. Digital printing methods, including inkjet, electrostatic image transfer (e-stat), thermal transfer and digital offset each have their own set of requirements. The same may be said for thermal transfer, laser and dye sublimation.

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What inks and coatings have you selected?

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Non-printing converting requirements, too, play a part here. We need to understand if the application will involve back slitting, rewind, perforation or diecutting. Storage time may also be examined. For example, will the product be stored in inventory before being converted? If so, for how long and under what conditions? A product that has been corona treated may lose its surface energy if stored for an extended period of time. Similarly,



Very different demands are made on filmic substrates from the beer (above) to the automotive industry (upper left)

a calendered vinyl may experience plasticizer migration. Both of these scenarios can have a negative impact on the film's printability.

How do you want the labels delivered?

If you are scaling up an existing application, for example, your timing needs may be very different than someone who needs to create a product immediately to lock in a particular piece of business. And when it comes time to ship the product to your loading dock, we want to make sure that it is packaged to your specification. Your product format, unit size, tolerances, packaging and labeling needs are of important to this process.

Finding the best product – together

Working together with your supplier to determine the converting and end use needs you can cut down on the design-to-market timeframe, provide your customers with the best product for the application and you have the opportunity to lock in business and improve your bottom line. ■

No. 405

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Is your business growing?



Who wouldn't agree that growing a business is more exciting and rewarding than the converse? Is your business green and growing? Or is it ripe and maintaining the status quo? It can be challenging to stimulate and grow business in a fast-paced, demanding, make it 'better, faster, lower cost' economy. **Mark Gillis** discusses the strategies available to grow your business

Before getting into the strategies that could stimulate and sustain growth, let's identify some of the barriers to market growth. While talking with business leaders around the industry, a number of common impediments to growth exist today. Some businesses face unique challenges, but understanding these shared barriers can help us to develop growth opportunities.

Barriers to growth

Are we through with industry consolidations and mergers? Probably not. When companies consolidate, it creates turmoil and chaos for suppliers. As the new organization develops, confusion prevails about sourcing processes. Past relationships may not be fruitful. Turmoil in the supply chain exists. It is difficult to grow business while there's merger uncertainty.

In business today, speed matters! The pressure for faster processes and faster services continues. The cycle time for new products is under pressure to become shorter and shorter, and run sizes are decreasing. Private branding, product proliferations and just-in-time inventory programs add to business pressures. Material supply systems require timely performance, even if customer lead times are unrealistic. Your business isn't alone in facing speed pressures. Your customers face the same challenges you do. When your pace is different from your customer, growth will not be possible. Your customer will move the business to a supplier that can provide the speed desired.

Are you out of touch with your customers' perception of your values as a supplier? Have you wondered why price seemed to be the only real difference between you and your competitors, despite the technology, quality and services you included? What happened? The differences you previously enjoyed don't carry the same weight in the customer's value equation. Rather than lose the customer business, the price is lowered and margins reduced. When your offer does not carry any unique differentiating value to the customer, real or perceived, then price will be the primary differentiator. Unless you are the low cost leader in your market, price reductions and pressures will flatten business levels.

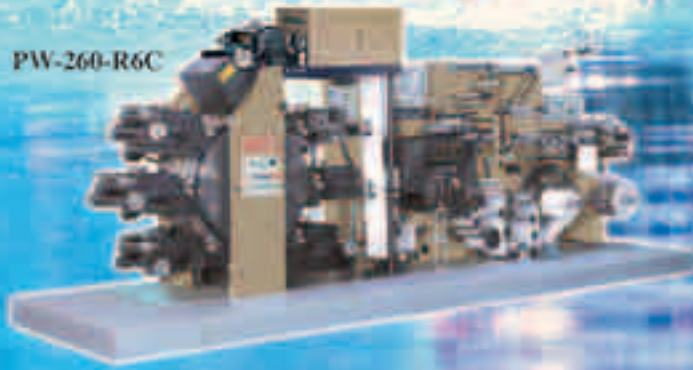
Attempting to find ways to lower costs and become more competitive, companies are sourcing globally at a brisk pace. When a company decides to globally source products, it usually includes the packaging for those outsourced products. This means printers in the sourced countries get a favored chance to provide labels and packaging that were previously furnished elsewhere. Occasionally, when new sources can't meet the quality required, you get another chance to supply the customer but now at a reduced pricing level because the customer is now comparing your price to the unqualified price. Global sourcing of products with the related packaging decreases market opportunities and revenues.

A recent ad in an airline magazine touted 'Buy Printing Online – printing for less'. The Internet has brought some exciting advantages into our lives. The Internet also serves as a platform for lowest cost supply. As consumers, we relish the abundance of

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information and shopping alternatives the Internet offers us. However, for printers supplying long time customers, it is quite unsettling to face competition for the latest customer contract via an Internet auction. What about the unspecified work practices that exist when supplying your customer – things that a customer hardly knows happens? How can you differentiate your offering on the web besides price? Internet auctions are about driving down costs for the buyer . . . and the revenues of the seller.

Development can be difficult to justify. Prime label and carton business opportunities are down. Pricing and margins are under tremendous pressure. Customer business is changing so fast, where would development be effective? You see the need to grow to replace shrinking business revenues but aren't sure whether to concentrate on sleeves, pouches, flexible packaging, lamination, RFID or digital printing. Which ones should you focus on first? And while interest rates have been at an all time low, the criteria of the banks, has stiffened.

A walk down the shopping aisle will confirm the explosion of new packaging designs and products on the shelves for our 'on the go' society. The pace for new packaging designs and products is blistering. The product that was formerly a labeled glass jar is now a new stand up pouch. The carton previously used on beverage packaging is now flexible packaging. We have

Without the right people who can envision, develop, and sustain growth initiatives, a business will never grow. It starts with getting the right people on your team, getting them intimate with competencies and creating an environment where performance truly matters. Assembling the right team in today's business environment means combining internal and external resources to work together toward common goals. A passionate champion who can lead business growth in a particular area is also recommended.

What about redefining your market? Instead of considering yourself as serving the label market, or carton market, how about defining your market as anything printed? Think differently about what you do for customers. Imagine what opens up for you to consider when you broaden the market to this definition?

Develop new products around your core competencies. In 1990, Prahalad and Hamel defined core competence as being that which:

- provides access to a wide variety of markets, and
- contributes significantly to the end-product benefits, and is difficult for competitors to imitate

Some examples of core competence include:

- Sony – miniaturization
- Honda – gasoline powered engines
- 3M – substrates, coatings and adhesives

“The industry over-capacity is driving down revenues as more suppliers compete for the same business. Expansion outside of your established market is necessary for survival”

all seen these and noticed how package designs are continuing to change. Flexible packaging is growing as a replacement for glass, cartons, cans and other packages with labels. It appears there is a competitive landscape change . . . for the worse. Long-term trust relationships are less important these days. Cut-rate competition prevails. Customers are constantly looking at new initiatives that will favorably impact their business results. Frequently, these initiatives require a lot of support that are not revenue recoverable. Customers are demanding more and paying less.

If you are a prime label or carton converting business, you may realize your markets are flat and have more supply than demand. The industry over-capacity is driving down revenues as more suppliers compete for same business. Expansion outside of your established market is necessary for survival.

Growth strategies

Revenue growth is possible for narrow and mid web printers. What are some strategies that could be considered?

Narrow and mid web printers have competencies you may not realize. Consider that you print gravure quality line screens, are skilled with short runs, can incorporate various converting operations to make a product and are accustomed to short lead times as potential competency skills. Also consider that many of your operating costs such as plates, aniloxes, number of repeats across the web and easy mounting are less than a wide web producer. Imagine if you could use your speed competency against organizations that are not used to your lead times, or those that can't match your print excellence for the cost? How about combining these competencies together when going after new market opportunities? Organize your business around competencies and watch the new ideas develop.

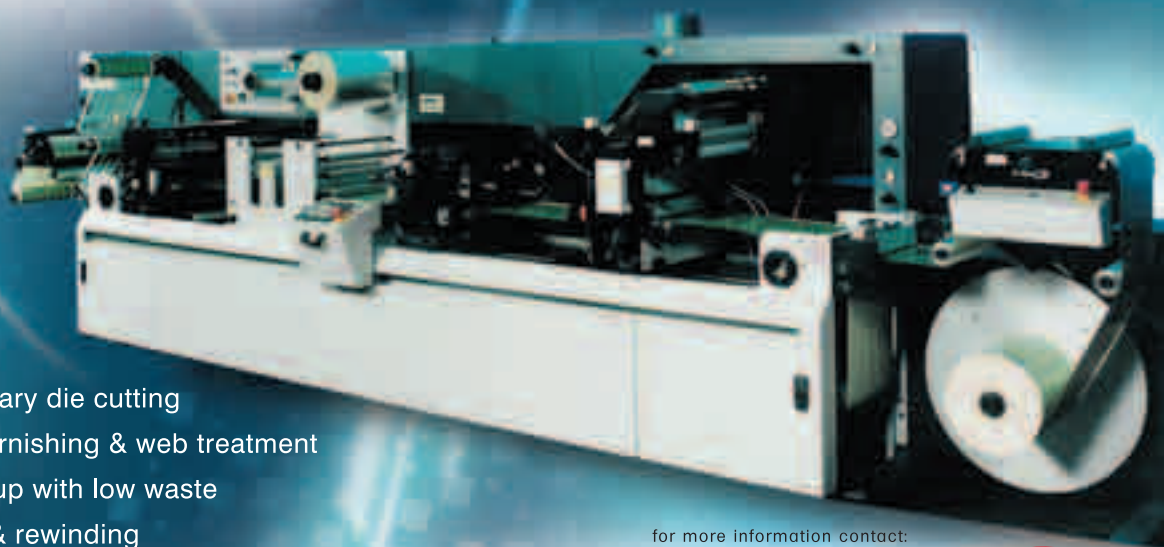
Differentiate your product or service for growth of revenue and profits. When a product or service is unique, it is scarce. Scarce products command unusual revenue. As Dennis Calamusa pointed out in his Flexible Packaging August 2003 article, our customers face the same challenges we do. We are all competing for customers and revenue. Make a list of your strengths and abilities and get reacquainted with your customer. What has

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changed in your customer's business? What changes does your customer envision impacting his business in the future? How could your strengths help the customer in new ways?

Grow into new packaging forms based on competencies and differentiation. There are a number of product changes that have been successfully introduced as line extensions, which fostered revenue growth for the companies involved. Perhaps my favorite is 'designer dirt'. When faced with finding new ways to increase revenue, this company introduced boutique potting soil (previously 'dirt') sold in a new standup pouch with a pressure close zipper. Sales exploded as home gardeners paid premium prices for the product. How about replacing the traditional catsup glass bottle with the unusual looking upside down squeezable bottle? Imagine what that did for revenue?

Here are several other examples you may have noticed recently.

These were new products added to product lines, not replacements. More than ever, the package creates the value of the product to the end consumer.

Consider growth beyond labels into flexible packaging, a growing \$21 billion market in the US alone. Europe is reported to be about the same size with the rest of the world being another \$20 billion plus market. What about pouches, security devices, credit cards, RFID or sleeved products for expansion areas? Consider food and non-food product packaging opportunities. What your existing equipment can't process could easily be processed on new servo driven multi-substrate equipment that can process thin film through carton stock. Some of the flexible packaging products that fit a narrow press include personal care, promotional items, condiments, soups, small food packages and pouch products. Private branding growth is driving the creation of many new products.

One caution to those crossing into the flexible packaging products market regards the materials side of the business. Films are far different from labels and carton materials. You will need a materials competency on your team. The scalability of materials supply is another issue to be considered. You may not be able to compete doing just flexible packaging short runs. Materials represent the largest share of cost with flexible packaging products. Suppliers who are in both long and short run flexible packaging will enjoy favorable material cost advantages over a short run supplier. Perhaps a materials buying consortium composed of short run narrow and mid web printers is needed to offset these cost differences?

The best growth opportunities are 'disruptive' ones. Ask yourself what would be out of the ordinary, in a positive way of course, for your customer's business. Traditionally, we have stripped the disruptive qualities away from most new developed

products and this has watered down good ideas and allowed quick copying by competitors. If we could find the disruptive quality of our new products, we would realize stronger revenue potential.

Vertically integrate, or change the scope of supply for growth. What opportunities upstream and downstream exist to more effectively position, or differentiate, your business for growth? Some of the benefits of vertical integration include:

- reduced transportation costs
- capture of other operations profit margins
- differentiation based on increased control
- more difficult for competitors to copy
- improved supply chain coordination

Don't be content to just make the packaging material on a roll.

As an example, are there benefits to your customer for furnishing pre-made pouches in a ready to fill state? However, cost and control are two issues that should be considered. Transaction costs cannot escalate with the change. Control of assets that assure cooperation of key value-adding partners is also a consideration.

Growth Can Overcome Barriers

There are many ways to grow your business and overcome barriers. A quick recap of those mentioned here includes:

- Get the right people on your team; appoint a passionate champion
- Redefine and broaden your market to anything printed
- Identify and build around core competencies
- Differentiate and separate based on technology and services, not just pricing
- Develop new product extensions
- Join the flexible packaging surge
- Get 'disruptive' for best results
- Vertically integrate for new opportunities

If your business is stagnant, a combination of these mentioned strategies can stimulate your business. Be proactive, aggressive and develop a 'can do' attitude. Growth will be your reward. ■

No. 401

About the writer

Mark Gillis is President of Gil-Mar Solutions, LLC, a US based business development firm serving global customers. www.gilmarsolutions.com

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Screen if you want to go faster!

Holfeld Graphics, one of the leading origination houses in Ireland, is approaching new markets with a screen re-imaging service guaranteeing a 36-hour turnaround

With the growing installed base of multi-process presses, Ireland's premier origination house, Holfeld Graphics, is now offering narrow-web printers a re-imaging service for screens.

As Holfeld Graphics celebrates 25 years in business, it has plenty of good reasons to reflect on progress, to becoming one of Ireland's leading origination houses for the roll label, medical packaging and continuous stationery print markets.

Success has come because they have done everything to keep the 'reel to reel' printers one step ahead in an age where speed-to-market, highly flexible delivery systems – not to mention uncompromising quality – is the order of the day. Pre-press and proofing are becoming increasingly sophisticated, specialist fields, so it makes perfect sense for printers to leave it to the experts, and focus on the make-ready part.

That is certainly proven to be a successful approach. Operating from the marina resort of Dun Laoghaire, just south of Dublin, Holfeld Graphics now has a workforce of 18. From starting out in photopolymer flexo and letterpress plates, it soon branched out into dry-offset and direct coating plates. For over a decade it has been a major supplier to the growing number of printers using rotary screen printing on their presses.

With pack presentation becoming a more demanding affair, printers are using rotary silk screen to achieve many creative effects to reinforce their products' high value qualities. Varnish effects are en-vogue for creating high-lustre on cosmetic products; metallic finishes can be applied to wine labels without wastage and, with a little extra push from a few big retailers, Braille printing is also an in-demand application.

In the early 1990's, Holfeld Graphics started supplying one-way use screens. However, the need for flexibility in today's marketplace has led to a growing interest in Stork's reusable RotaMesh screens. These can be re-imaged several times, or simply stored for a re-run of the same job. Although designed for Stork's own units, they are also compatible with other leading combination printing presses on the market today.

Quite simply, things just aren't as predictable as they used to be. Small orders and frequent job-changes are the order of the day.

As Rory Connaughton, Managing Director of Holfeld Graphics, explains, there are a lot of demands on today's printer to be more flexible, 'much of the label and package value chain has moved to the just-in-time delivery system. It means customers want smaller deliveries, more frequently, without any stockpiles of raw materials sitting in warehouses. Another point is that package changes occur more often. There can be many reasons for this, brand owners may suddenly want to add a temporary promotional offer to the package, brands may be sold from one owner to another, or become available in more countries so slight alterations with regard to house style and number of languages on the pack may have to be made. There may be changes in regulations – for example with incorporation of health warnings or ingredient listings, recycle logo or even the barcode. These all mean small, yet vital alterations to the original plate or screen.'

'With all this,' Connaughton adds, 'the time when a printer could print the complete job lot in one go are, for many, a distant memory. A printer has to find the solutions that deliver the shortest changeover times between runs and consumables that don't involve too many variable costs with repeat usage.'

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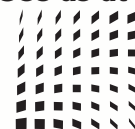
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e No.187

“With pack presentation becoming a more demanding affair, printers are using rotary silk screen to achieve many creative effects to reinforce their products’ high value qualities”

Fast turnarounds

This recognition of the need for flexibility together with the growing demand for rotary screen printing in narrow web has led Holfeld Graphics to start offering a re-imaging service for Stork RotaMesh screens. They have installed the complete pre and post-press equipment, and are offering customers a 36 hour re-imaging turnaround.

As a result, there has been strong interest in Stork’s multi-use nickel RotaMesh screens. Adds Connaughton: ‘What impresses us most about Stork RotaMesh screens is their re-usability. You can re-image them up to 10 and in some cases 15 times (provided the screen is not damaged). So that is a big saving in the long term if you are using a screen on a regular basis. The fact the screen is supplied by Stork already welded is another benefit, too.’

The re-imaging procedure that Holfeld offers its customers works like this: when the screens come in from the printer, they are washed down, and put into a stripping unit, where the emulsion is removed, so the new image can be engraved on to it.

The screen is coated with an even and smooth light-sensitive emulsion which, once dry, is exposed using positive film to UV-light. The non-exposed area is removed by spraying the screen with water in the developing unit. Following a quality check, the screen then goes back to the printer, ready to glue the endrings.

Cutting edge of pre-press

Besides the rotary screen printing operation, Holfeld Graphics has been keeping to the forefront of all aspects of pre-press. Much of today’s investment concerns digital file management. In fact, a wet proof is a rarity today – although, of course, Holfeld can still supply if necessary. The Internet is used extensively for soft-proofing.

Connaughton says there is a strong trend to digital sign-offs against wet proofing. ‘Of course you can’t easily show spot colours – that is a big disadvantage of digital proofing. Against that, doing it digitally you are saving time. With the modern ‘RIP-once’ systems, you can output your film as well as output a proof.’

The company is also getting more involved in digital asset management where printers do not have the level of expertise in-house to do it efficiently. ‘Or it may take up so much time it detracts from their core business. Certainly, they can receive a piece of artwork from a design house, but then there is the problem of knowing what to do with it, where to keep it, how to make sure it is brought up to date, how amendments are logged etc. A whole management system has to be in place.’

A significant recent investment has been Art Pro and Nexus Workflow. Standard features include preflight with automatic corrections, PDF and PS import with complete editability, all editing tools in one editor, WYSIWYG preview, including transparencies and easy exports to PDF and PS formats. ■

No.421

Steps in the re-imaging of screen cylinders



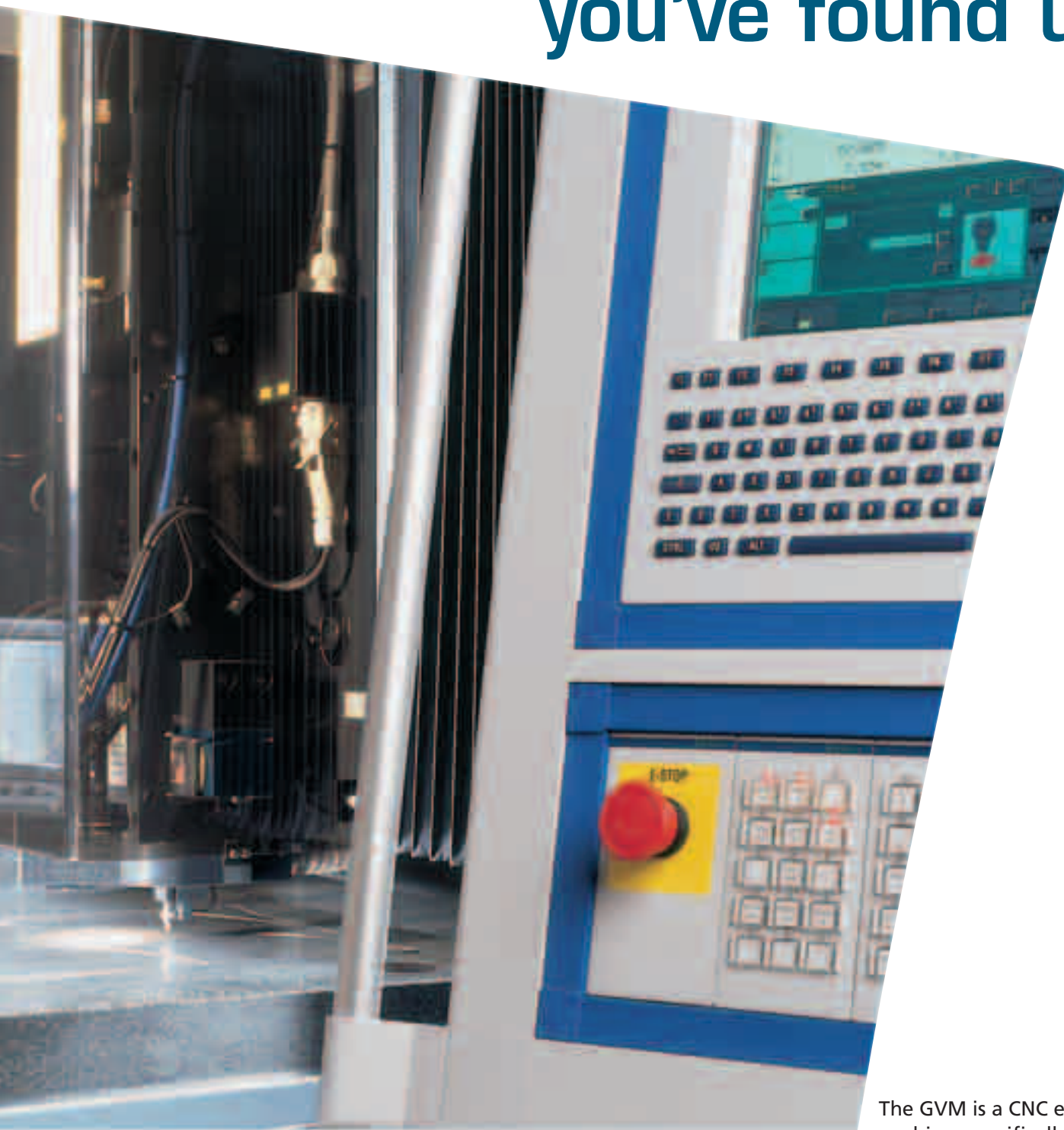
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Making a case for shrink

Roll fed shrink and shrink sleeve labeling technology was the focus of Comco's fourth Educator Series Seminars.

Jennifer Dochstader reports

Mark Andy's recent seminar, 'Flexo Rolls' – An Expedition into the Art, Science and Business of Roll Fed Label Production', drew more than 130 visitors to Comco's Advanced Technology and Training Center in Cincinnati, OH. The seminar was the fourth in a series of forums aiming to educate printers and suppliers as to the growth opportunities in flexography in certain sectors. It targeted the expanding non-PS roll label and shrink sleeve sectors, and the growth of in-line flexo in these unique packaging niches.

As end-users increasingly seek economic ways to achieve product differentiation, roll fed and shrink film decoration offer consumer product companies an attention-grabbing way to display graphics and maintain label application speed requirements.

Presentations at the Mark Andy seminar covered a range of topics including radical inks for roll label and shrink applications, bio filmic materials, label application systems, and in-depth discussions of the North American roll-fed and shrink sleeve sectors focusing on application trends, growth opportunities, and consumer product case studies.

Mark Andy's presence in the non-PS film sector certainly isn't a new one. In the late eighties and into the early nineties, Comco pioneered the

augmentation of conventional label presses in order to effectively convert thinner, unsupported film substrates. While the majority of other narrow web press manufacturers maintained their focused allegiance to the self adhesive label market, Comco realized the potential opportunities in converting non-PS materials were more than just a marketing hunch. Carbonated soft drink (CSD) companies were beginning to realize the value of regionally based promotional marketing strategies and the wide web flexo and gravure converters serving the CSD market could not convert these smaller run sizes economically, nor in the quick turnaround time frames CSD players were requiring. In stepped Comco with a line of presses that offered a more flexible, short-run solution to growing segments of what had historically been the domain of wider web press systems.

Seems like everything's shrinking (except shrink's marketshare)

In today's label converting marketplace, double-digit annual growth percentages for any decoration technology are rare. Not so in the shrink film sector. In his presentation titled 'Roll-Fed, Roll-Fed Shrink, and Shrink Sleeve Markets' at Mark Andy's seminar, Keith Huston of KeyMark Associates presented current trends within the shrink label sector, and those key markets that are currently witnessing the most growth.

Graph 1 shows estimated growth percentages in certain North American beverage sectors for 2002.

As it indicates, single-serve and ready-to-drink (RTD) trends continue to drive growth across the North American beverage sector. And what is the most likely packaging decoration contender as these markets surge ahead? Shrink, according to beverage



Seminar attendees gather round a Comco ProGlide MSP

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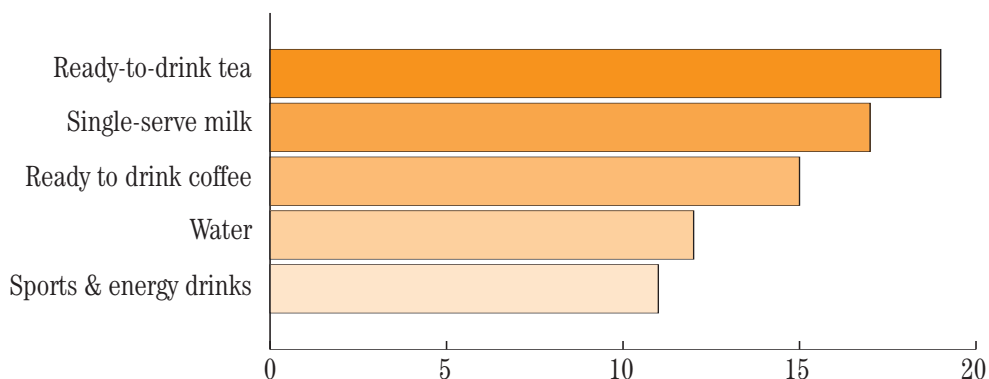


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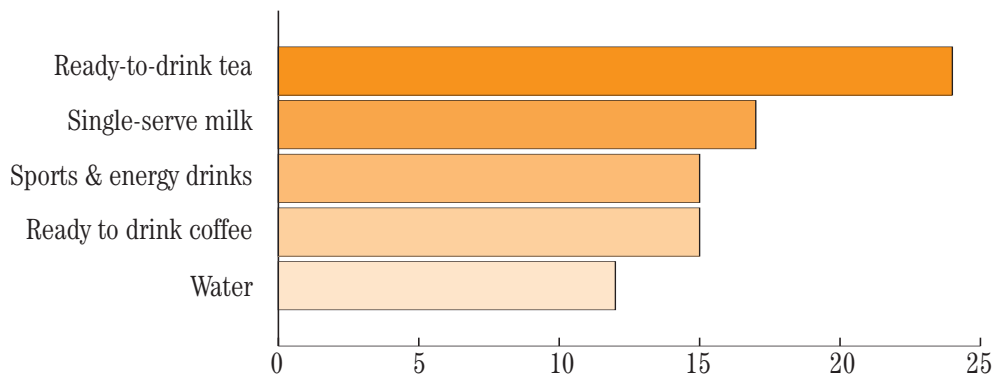
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e No.127

Graph 1: Estimated growth percentages in North American beverage sectors



Graph 2: Estimated growth percentages of shrink film labels in North American beverage sectors



industry research firms and think tanks.

According to KeyMark, North American sales for shrink labels have more than doubled since 1999, and 2004 will see the market surpass \$400 million in converter sales. Graph 2 shows estimated growth percentages of shrink film labels in certain North American beverage sectors for 2002.

Over the course of the past half decade, consumer products companies in North America have been dedicating more and more research and marketing resources to the ageing baby boomer population. The behavioral trends of this growing population sector are having a critical impact on the ways consumer products companies develop their products, and the packaging they choose to decorate them. As baby boomers get older, they increasingly adopt healthier lifestyle choices, having a direct impact on the food and beverage packaging sectors. Bottle water and isotonic beverages are growing at the expense of carbonated soft drinks. There have been 36 brands of 'added-value water' launched in the United States in the past year (water containing vitamins, minerals, herbs and oxygenation). According to the United Soybean Board, 28 per cent of the American population consumed a soy food and/or beverage on a weekly basis in 2002.

Roll fed shrink and shrink sleeve labeling decoration is riding

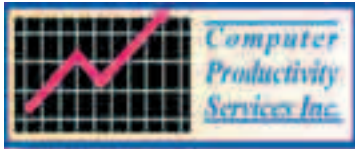
the wave of these consumer trends, as 'healthy' lifestyle alternatives are being introduced on grocery store shelves at increasing rates via products such as drinkable yogurt, single-serve soymilk beverages, vegetable juices, and single-serve soup containers such as Campbell's Soup at Hand.

Wearing their art on their sleeve

The shrink label success stories reach beyond food and beverage. Recent consumer product categories the market has witnessed migrate to shrink include coffee, ketchup, children's shampoos, non-dairy creamer, baby food, candies, shaving cream and even motor oil.

The overriding product branding advantage of shrink label decoration is an obvious one, and one consumer products companies are increasingly seeking: the billboard effect. A shrink label allows a company the most surface area bang for their decoration buck, as graphics can cover a container in its entirety. Brand managers have also turned to shrink label decoration in hopes of enlivening an existing brand, as this has been witnessed recently in North America with well known products like Bailey's Irish Cream and Canadian Club Whiskey.

Shrink label decoration additionally offers brand owners an



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Mark Andy Comco president, Paul Brauss, welcomes delegates to Cincinnati training center

“If you’re currently printing PS films, you’re eighty percent of the way there to converting shrink applications – the migration isn’t a major jump”

extra shelf differentiation kick with promotional campaigns. One example of this trend was Mott’s highly successful Austin Powers Shagadelic Shakers campaign which the company introduced after the first Austin Power movie became a box office hit in North America. The eight-color, 2-mil PVC shrink sleeves were printed gravure.

The narrow web shrink equation

Ron Ryback of R&R consulting delivered the day’s final presentation at Mark Andy’s seminar, examining just what the opportunities are for narrow web label converters in the shrink sleeve and roll fed shrink label market. According to Ryback, there are currently four primary factors that lead label

Focus on flexibles

Comco concluded its 2003 seminar schedule with a one day forum entitled ‘Focus on Flexibles – Mastering Multi-Layer Laminations,’ writes **Andy Thomas**.

Although handling complex laminations might be a daunting task for the average medium-sized label converter, an interesting alternative model is being explored by Glenroy Corporation.

Glenroy is a converter of flexible packaging on wide-web CI presses. The company’s Glenn Jones confirmed the trend towards shorter runs leading to an increasing number of jobs which are not economic to run on the big machines. So Glenroy has developed a Narrow Web Printer program, which identifies partner narrow web converters who can take on these shorter run printing jobs using the laminates manufactured by Glenroy.

‘Small converters can make short runs and run a lot of different styles, so there are big opportunities.’ This is often done in alliance with contract packers, enabling the team to get to products to market quickly.’ The benefits of partnering with companies like Glenroy is that they are already set up to carry out the necessary migration and barrier testing, along with their existing expertise in laminating.

Dennis Calamusa of Alliedflex Technologies and Gary Gates – who was launching his consultancy Garron Group – looked at the growing importance of the pouch market for a diverse range of consumer products from Tuna fish to garden chemicals.

Jay Hansley of Ashland Chemicals described how solvent continues to be very cost-effective and will fulfil all performance criteria, despite the issues presented by handling hazardous materials and increasingly hostile legislation.

Hansley looked at progress being made in solventless systems, which can now stand up to retort environments. A major drawback, however is that you cannot use water-based inks with solventless systems. ‘The initial laminate bonds are weak and the rolls have to be stored for 1-3 days in a hot room to complete the bond. The solventless adhesive breaks the bonds of the ink to the film, so as the laminate starts to curl up just pulls the ink right off the substrate. Everyone is working on an adhesive system which will work with waterbased inks and we are 90 per cent of the way there.’

Hansley does not see Electron beam as a viable for laminating adhesives on narrow web presses: ‘In the future it will be water-based versus solvents.’ The ‘hot topic’ for narrow web converters is to print, coat and laminate in-line with water-based adhesives. ‘If converters are prepared to learn the rules, this is not rocket science,’ concluded Hansley.

The talks were supported by a demonstration of in-line water-based lamination on a Comco ProGlide MSP.

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“The label printer is going to have to help educate the end-user if he isn’t familiar with the shrink label application process, but is considering it for a particular product”

converters to cross over into shrink label production:

- An existing customer that currently purchases PS labels asks if they currently, or are planning in the future, to convert shrink label applications
- A label converter seeks new applications for extra press capacity.
- Label converters are looking for ways to expand their businesses.
- Converters already print film substrates, and it’s not an overly complex migration

According to Ryback, ‘If you’re currently printing PS films,

GiDue offers solvent-ready Combat

GiDue also has its eye on the emerging narrow web flexible packaging sector with the launch of a solvent-ready variant of its Combat press. The FS-Combat 530 has a printing width of 520mm (20 1/2”) and is specially designed to use solvent-based inks. Inter-station drying is provided through large volume, double flow air fans that use pre-heated air to achieve fast drying, permitting production speeds of up to 150 M/min. GiDue claims this completely eliminates any trace of solvent from the printed ink. Large volume chill drums assist web transport and prevent distortion of the substrate while allowing maximum exposure to the heated air-flow. Tension control is provided through GiDue’s DDM system as standard. Non-stop, unwind and rewind are available as options.

Comments joint MD Federico d’Annunzio, ‘Solvent based inks are recognised as giving the best adhesion and shrinkability on films. The addition of the FS-Combat 530 to our product offering allows GiDue to offer wide web, gravure and flexographic printers equipment to meet short runs while using the solvent based inks traditional to the flexible packaging industry. Printers seeking to meet the growing trend towards the use of thinner films in the label industry can also use the FS Combat.’

you’re eighty percent of the way there to converting shrink applications. You have the in-line presses, you have the press operators that can run them, and the migration isn’t a major jump.’ Ryback additionally stresses that it’s essential label converters don’t scrimp on the education process. ‘The label printer is going to have to help educate the end-user if the end-user isn’t familiar with the shrink label application process, but is considering it for a particular product line,’ Ryback states. ‘The label converter becomes the technology collector, and they better be informed when their customers start asking about the shrink label application process.’

Is shrink the magic bullet for label converters seeking new ways to grow their businesses? The answer to that question depends on who you speak to. The major players in the North American shrink label market certainly make formidable competitors. Big names like American Fuji Seal, Alcan/Lawson Mardon and Alcoa have had plenty of time, and deep enough pockets, to establish themselves as experts in this expanding decoration sector. And not all end-users view shrink as the panacea some companies want you to believe it is. Mary Ellen Reis, President of the packaging development consulting firm Packnology and former Vice President of Packaging for the Snapple Beverage Group (now part of Cadbury Schweppes), currently assists key consumer product companies in packaging development and packaging trends effecting new products. She has had extensive experience in working with label converters across various label decoration processes. She cautions, ‘From my experience, roll on shrink labeling is not a no-brainer. Bear in mind that the label has a lap area that needs to be secured before the labeled container passes into the heating oven/gun to be ‘shrunk.’ The challenge is to get the adhesive just right in order to prevent any movement of the label while the heat is being applied. The label lap area can open, causing the label to shift on the container, or come off completely.’

Another significant barrier to entry hurdle in the shrink label marketplace is cost. According to Keith Huston, shrink material cost can be up to three times that of non-shrink wraparound films, and is consistently higher than glue-applied and PS. Automatic high-speed labeling machine systems can run two to three times the cost of wraparound non-shrink application machinery and PS label applicators.

Sound insurmountable? For some label converters it may be, however it’s important to keep in mind that there are a growing number of label printers who have successfully integrated shrink label applications into their range of products, and in doing so, have solved the too-much-capacity conundrum while offering their existing customers another key service in the one-stop-shop vendor platform of the increasingly consolidated future. ■

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Anilox sleeves – the evolution continues

As narrow web press manufacturers move towards incorporating sleeve technology, Harper Corporation's **Art Ehrenberg** looks at the development of anilox sleeves

Anilox sleeves have been around for about eight years now and have dramatically made their presence known over the last two years. Many press manufacturers are going gearless and are exploring the benefits of sleeved technology – take into account ergonomics, storage and shipping costs for example.

I have personally been involved with anilox sleeve technology from the very beginning, when we were struggling with the earliest versions of sleeves. The problem was getting the ceramic to adhere to the composite materials of the outer sleeve.

We had the idea of cladding or covering the sleeve with an aluminum or steel shell – basically a sleeve over a sleeve – and thus the early version of the anilox sleeve was born.

But, there was more to the anilox sleeve manufacturing process than just getting the ceramic to adhere. Most anilox sleeves are installed on, and adhered to, the press mandrels by an inner compressible layer, or 'bladder', that is actuated by air. The sleeve slides on the mandrel as its bladder expands under the air pressure. When air is removed, the bladder contracts and the sleeve fits snug on the mandrel. It sounds innocent enough and in practice works very well, but this technology introduced several variables that needed to be conquered by the anilox manufacturer.

In the anilox manufacturing process, machining, grinding and polishing all exert pressures on the sleeve which can compress the bladder. So in essence we are attempting to hold precise tolerances on the sleeves but having to work through a potentially moving target. Earlier sleeve versions had rather thick bladders which made the problem much worse.

Today, anilox sleeve manufacturers that utilize bladder technology have made tremendous strides in the material and construction that has made dramatic improvements in their stability. But problems still occur from time to time. As an anilox manufacturer we have to understand sleeves in their

entirety and know how they react to our processes in order to provide a high quality, reliable product.

Total Indicated Runout

One major factor to understand is the Total Indicated Runout (TIR) of the sleeve, an important dimensional tolerance on all anilox rolls. But more important with sleeves, is circularity.

Circularity can be misleading when comparing sleeved anilox to steel anilox. What we have witnessed is that some sleeves have a bladder material that has a better memory, which means once deflated, some bladders spring back to their original shape and some do not. If the sleeve does not respond or return to its original shape after one of our processes, we might measure a TIR condition that typically is out of the OEM tolerance. But, the real question is, is the sleeve circular? If the sleeve is circular to within .0005" or less and, due to the memory of the bladder, the TIR is out up to say .003", (which is three times most OEM specifications); this will in most cases not affect the sleeves' performance. This is due to the fact that once under load of the plate and doctor blade assembly, the bladder has equally displaced pressure and any irregularities in the bladders memory is negated.

However, if this situation does exist prior to laser engraving, the key is to be able to offset the TIR during the engraving process. If this is not or cannot be accomplished there will be irregularities in the engraving around the circumference of the sleeve and you will see this on press typically as a banding effect in the print due to inconsistent engraving. So if trouble shooting sleeves on a press we must be careful when measuring TIR with a dial indicator, and be sure not to use this information alone to determine if the sleeve is problematic. The real key is circularity and not necessarily TIR.

If the press or anilox manufacturing mandrel has TIR beyond the manufacturer's specifications, this is a totally different story and will definitely cause problems

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Anilox sleeves are migrating to mid-web presses

“For sleeves without a metal clad, reconditioning can be accomplished but as stated earlier this is a bit tricky”

Obviously the best case is one where we do not have to deal with sleeves moving around and thus all tolerances stay in check. There are sleeves today that provide the expansion or fit without a compressible bladder, but none are 100 per cent foolproof.

One press manufacturer utilizes a mechanical mandrel, which expands by hydraulic action rather than air, and locks on to steel bores at the end of the sleeves' inner diameter. These are very rigid and run like a typical steel core anilox roll, but are also much more expensive due to their carbon fiber construction.

Overall, bladders are under much better control with today's newer sleeve technology. However, we still need to carefully monitor the sleeve dimensions throughout the anilox process. All dimensional measurements should be done on mounted sleeves.

Reconditioned sleeves

One of the most frequent questions I am asked concerns whether anilox rolls can be reconditioned. There are two factors to consider here. The first is the thickness of the metal or aluminum cladding on the sleeve, which the ceramic is applied to. As with steel anilox rolls, when the old ceramic is removed, a small amount of the base – or in the case of sleeves, the cladding – is also removed. So depending on how thick the cladding is and how much of it is removed during the reconditioning process will equate to how many times the sleeve can be reconditioned and hold its stability. (The maximum target for base or cladding removal is .010", on diameter, with traditional machining.)

The timing and associated costs of re-cladding verses purchasing a new sleeve makes this unfeasible. A thermally sprayed metal is a possible life extender to replace the cladding but that coating would not be reusable and the cost of re-applying it may not be economical.

For sleeves without a metal clad, reconditioning can be accomplished but as stated earlier this is a bit tricky and the adhesion and damage resistance of the ceramic is sometimes questionable. I believe the more important question on the reuse issue is one of the expanding bladders holding up, or retaining their memory over time.

Handling tips for sleeves.

- Don't rest a sleeve on its end or too heavily on any surface. The ceramic at the ends can chip, leading to cracking that can expand when the sleeve is being mounted. It's best to use a rack arrangement for storage and handling
- Sometimes a slight worming action is used to start the sleeve on or remove it from the mandrel end. Be sure not to over exaggerate this movement as it can result in damage
- We suggest that sleeves not be cleaned in ultrasonic tanks, chemical cleaning tanks, caustic solutions or in general any submersible methods to clean them. This will help keep the bladder and inner diameter material in its original condition. Certain cleaning solutions can damage the aluminum cladding and cause blistering of the ceramics.

Art Ehrenberg is vice president of Harper Corporation's Green Bay division. He has been in the printing industry for 25 years and with Harper for 22 years working in various capacities. ■

No. 407

Pain-free labeling

National label has been proactive in developing extended label solutions to meet the requirements of the new pharmaceutical legislation



When new federal legislation required McNeil Consumer and Specialty Pharmaceuticals to revamp the labeling for its popular Tylenol vial package, several suppliers helped solve the labeling headache. Label-Lyte 302 oriented polypropylene film from ExxonMobil Chemical was selected by National Label Company as a key component of its customized label structure developed for Tylenol's point-of-purchase product. The new label configuration made it possible for Tylenol to continue producing its vial-sized container.

Most over-the-counter (OTC) medicines manufactured after May 2002 must carry the "Drug Facts" label as mandated by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA). The label uses simple language and an easy-to-read format to help consumers compare and select OTC medicines and then follow the dosage instructions. The package's outside container or wrapper must include information about the medication in a standardized order: active ingredients, its purpose, uses/indications, warnings, dosage instructions and inactive ingredients. In addition, the FDA mandates a minimum type size and specific layout details to improve readability for the "Drug Facts" label.

Diagnosing the problem

To accommodate the required information and format, Tylenol faced the challenge of needing more space on its vial label while, at the same time, not wanting to change the size or shape of the container. Displayed at the register or behind the counter, the tubular package measures approximately 2.5" long with a circumference of .5"—perfect for impulse sales at the point-of-purchase. However, the small size meant significant modifications to the label were necessary to accommodate the "Drug Facts" information.

'Prior to the new FDA regulations, Tylenol's vial container featured a PVC shrink sleeve with single-panel label,' says Neil Sellars, director of product development & marketing, National Label Company. 'A number of alternatives were considered and discarded. A multi-panel, extended leaflet label was deemed too expensive, while packing in a blister card would have negated a key selling point of the vial: its convenient display in a self-serve dispenser. We had our work cut out for us.'

Developing a label design that accomplished all of these tasks proved particularly difficult because the vial was tapered. With a number of other health care customers facing similar situations, National Label was proactive in devising a solution: the now-patented 900° Extended Wrap Label Design. The extended wrap label was originally planned to anchor to a tapered vial and include a tamper-evident feature that would allow consumers to tear off the top of the label to access the product. However, since the FDA guidelines stipulate that consumers be able to read the "Drug Facts" information before and after they purchase the product, National Label needed a package design whose label could be opened and reclosed at the store level without

"A multi-panel, extended leaflet label was deemed too expensive, while packing in a blister card would have negated a key selling point of the vial"

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e No.113



“the label had to be difficult for people to break by accident during the normal process of opening and closing the container”

fracturing the tamper-evident cap.

Prescription for success

Along with the new FDA guidelines, National Label had another requirement to meet as it looked to replace the PVC shrink band and one-panel label. This entailed building in key tamper-evident qualities that the product (label) would destruct if someone tried to remove it to prevent labels from being reused.

The uniqueness of the design parameters was beyond the capabilities of National Label's existing equipment, so the company brought in Harland Machine Systems (HMS) of Manchester, England. After reviewing the specifications for the label, Harland developed a highly customized system that allows the label to wrap around 900 degrees to the vial in a consistent manner. This permits the consumer to open and close the package, while leaving the size and other aspects of the vial intact.

'It took us awhile to convince McNeil that this could actually work,' says Sellars. 'Once we had the customer's approval to order the equipment, we were ready to develop the new label. ExxonMobil Chemical brought us the perfect film solution, Label-Lyte 302.'

Selecting the right solution

Label-Lyte 302 is a 65 micron white, corona-treated polypropylene label facestock designed for rigid and semi-rigid pressure-sensitive applications requiring durability, opacity, and excellent graphic appeal. National Label selected Label-Lyte 302 for its cost effectiveness, printability on press and

resealing properties. Label-Lyte 302 also adds a layer of consumer protection with its proprietary, cavitated core that provides tamper-evident capabilities. The cavitation, caused by the creation of air voids in the cure of Label-Lyte 302 during the film orientation process, allows the label to break apart from its base if someone tries to remove it.

According to Sellars, the vial's very low surface energy made it difficult to create a traditional tamper-evident label that would leave behind its base if removed. Attempts were made to corona-treat and flame-treat the PP containers, but the results were still not acceptable when a normal pressure sensitive adhesive was used. To overcome this obstacle, National Label employed two solutions. The first was to have the material coated by Ritrama with a special aggressive adhesive that had good bonding strength to the vial surface. Part II of this solution entailed adding special T/E (tamper evident) slits to the cutting die. These two solutions combined were sufficient to encourage destruction upon tampering. At the same time, Sellars says, the label had to be difficult for people to break by accident during the normal process of opening and closing the container.

'We had to make it hard for customers to rip the label by accident because we have people opening and closing the extended label all the time before purchase. The label needed to maintain its appearance to attract sales,' adds Sellars.

The right medicine

With all the pieces of the puzzle in place, including the label itself and the customized labeling equipment, McNeil adopted the entire process and brought it into one of its contract manufactures to start decorating the vials. The label design is so effective that it earned National Label a patent.

'The entire project was quite a challenge, but one that was met through incredible team work,' says Sellars. 'All parties involved poured a lot of expertise and innovation into the 900 degree Extended Wrap Label to make it work on the store shelf. I have some samples in my office that are three years old and I can still open and reseal them.'

In addition to helping McNeil meet government regulations and maintain a profitable distribution method, the new label earned a Pyramid Award for Labeling Excellence from ExxonMobil Chemical earlier this year. ■


 No. 423

“The vial's very low surface energy made it difficult to create a traditional tamper-evident label that would leave behind its base if removed”

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e No.152

Networked guillotine

Polar has introduced its tenth generation of programmable guillotine which is more robust and features new knife changing and networking capabilities. And at Drupa it promises more still

Few areas are as cutting intensive as the labels sector. That means that improvements in cutting technology, and the supporting functions which enable a labels supplier to provide its customers with usable finished product, are of extreme importance.

Two years ago Polar unveiled die cutting (DC) and straight cutting (SC) systems specifically for the labels industry, which put all the labels feeding, cutting, collating and banding functions in a single efficient line. These systems remain popular and highly effective but at the core of the system, and as standalone guillotines, Polar has introduced a new series of high speed cutters.

The new ranges are the X (standing for tenth generation of programmable guillotine) and XT (a higher spec version with touch screen technology). These guillotines are sturdier in design, have a new unique knife changing facility and are even easier to operate with plenty of artificial intelligence built in.

More than that it is technology for tomorrow's networked environment, fully prepared for JDF and other emerging standards. It is the industry's inability to agree on one common standard and move this capability forward that is most frustrating to Michael Neugart, Polar's joint managing director.

'Polar has had this capability through Compucut and CIP 3 connectivity for some time but in making Ethernet networking a capability on every guillotine it is indicating its vision of this as a common practice in future,' Neugart tells L&L.

The 'P-Net' option will be retrofittable and it will also allow software updates to be shipped electronically and remote control diagnostics to service customers' in situ. And in effect the guillotines become the server so will be able to centrally adjust future peripheral equipment. Today Polar secures about a third of its sales from peripheral equipment and has extended its plant to accommodate the increased demand.

Polar has hinted that there will be more to see at Drupa and network-compatible peripherals has to be a good bet. Materials handling significantly increases cutting output in cutting intensive areas like labels.

Optiknife, a knife change and adjustment facility, on the new guillotines should ensure greater life from knives which with an HSS knife today averages around 2,500 cuts. Optiknife allows more accessible and simpler knife changing and eliminates the potential for poor fit. Adjustments are made low down in the cutting position rather than in the fully up position which to date has been an industry standard.

Whether using the 15 inch control screen on the X version or the touch screen technology on the XT model, operators will be able to have the language they need and automatic imperial-metric conversion. Simple diagrams help the operator through any job and the software means that there is little room for error when there are shift changes or flexible working arrangements. The machine itself will communicate to the operator what is going on and what process needs to be addressed next.

All the new machines have larger, heavier frames. The 78 and 92cm guillotines feature deeper front tables, the larger cutters a machine frame and front panel designed as casing.

The price differential between the X and XT will be about the same as between their predecessors, the E and ED. The new ranges are likely to come to market at about 3 per cent above the previous models although the added value should more than offset that and give even shorter return on investment figures.

Polar is close to offering an operator-less cutting system. At its factory work can be shown loading, jogging and cutting in both directions several times and then aligning and unloading in a seamless way with hardly any manual intervention.

The stumbling block to a no-operator system is jogging; the guillotine itself could run without attention, cutting and turning and aligning and moving work forward to unload. Jogging remains harder to automate than the cutting, lifting and unloading. But a system that previously required two operators is now easily controlled by one person.

Polar is likely to show an automated jogging system at Drupa working with a limited range of stocks initially, a more comprehensive solution for variable stocks and paper weights taking a little longer to develop. ■

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Europe moves East

A series of new reports covering the self-adhesive label market for the 2004 Central / Eastern European EU entrants will shed new light on this key growth area

On 1 May 2004, ten new countries join the European Union. Eight of them – Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia – are in Central/Eastern Europe. As a result of this enlargement the EU's population will increase by 30 per cent and its whole center of gravity will shift dramatically eastwards. This will have a major impact on many aspects of business including the labels and packaging sectors.

To mark the importance of the 75 million 'New Europeans' for the world's label business, a series of techno-economic market reports are being researched and written by Mike Fairley, John Penhallow and James Bevan. The contents of each country report will then form part of a comprehensive report covering the whole region.

Those who visited these Central European countries under Communism cannot fail to remember the poor quality of most packaging. As recently as the late 1980s labels everywhere in Central and Eastern Europe were for the most part gummed,

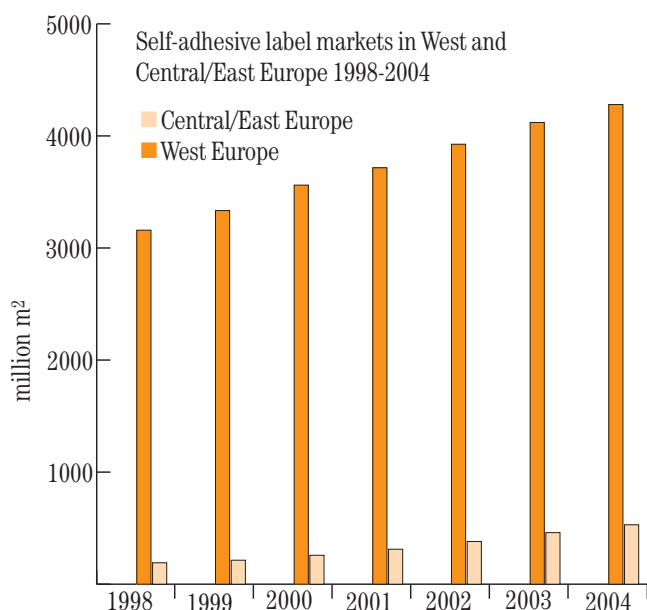
single-colour affairs which made no attempt to enhance the appearance of the product. But since everything was in short supply it hardly mattered.

Today, a mere 15 years later, the face of Central and (to a lesser extent) Eastern Europe has already been changed out of all recognition. For the packaging sector we can trace the change back to the arrival, in the early 1990s, of most of the world's biggest manufacturers of fast-moving consumer goods (FMCGs) who set up production plants particularly in Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary to take advantage of tax breaks and cheap local labour.

Packaging and label converters set up shop in all these countries aiming to meet this unprecedented demand for high-quality, Western-style packaging and labels. Many of the label converters started up with second-hand equipment and very little technical knowledge, but the best of them quickly graduated to using modern roll-to-roll presses, pre-press technology and finishing equipment.

This transition was particularly rapid in four Central European countries: Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovenia. Poland, with its 40 million inhabitants, accounts for nearly half the population and just over half the GDP of the ten newcomers.

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With its close links to Germany and the USA it has benefited from massive inward investment and was for many years the number one choice for Western firms setting up a bridgehead in the former Communist countries. The food industry, a major user of labels, is particularly well developed in Poland. The country's leading label printers compare favourably with their Western counterparts, both in technology and in business skills. Two of the world's leading manufacturers of self-adhesive rollstock have set up distribution centres near Warsaw.

The Czech Republic is small, highly developed and with an industrial and entrepreneurial tradition which was suppressed but not extinguished by forty years of communist rule. Food and wine labels are the mainstay of the country's 15-20 roll label converters, along with labels for an expanding range of FMCGs. Its importance is underlined by the fact that Prague has been chosen as the venue of the forthcoming 'Tarsus Label Summit' scheduled for October 2004.

Hungary, like the Czech Republic, has long enjoyed close economic links with Western Europe and particularly with Austria. With a population over 10 million it is the second biggest of the 'new' EU members. It is generally reckoned to be less 'entrepreneurial' than Poland or the Czech Republic in its business culture. Nonetheless many international brand owners like Danone, Nestlé, United Biscuits, Bonduelle and Unilever are manufacturing in Hungary and demand for high value-added labels is particularly strong in the hardware, glassware and components sectors.

The only part of Yugoslavia to emerge unscathed from the break-up of that

country was Slovenia. With its population of just over 1 million it has the highest standard of living of any of the former communist countries (and higher than Portugal or Greece). The label industry in Slovenia is on a par with that of Austria and the country is largely integrated into the economies of both Austria and Northern Italy.

The other 'new' members of the European Union, Slovakia, and the three Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) are all set to expand their economies over the coming years. Estonia in particular is already very closely linked to Finland, and Finnish suppliers of packaging, paper and self-adhesive laminates are well entrenched there.

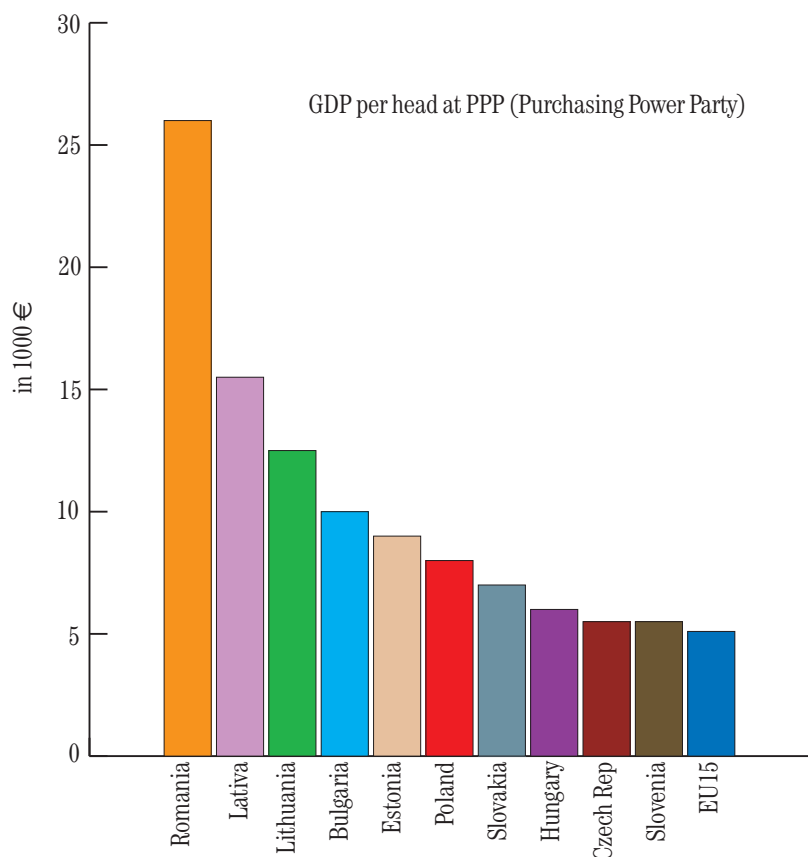
Consumption of self-adhesive laminates in Central and Eastern Europe currently stands at around 400 million m²/year, with growth rates ranging from 8 to 20 per cent annually. Within the region, only in Hungary is there a coating plant making self-adhesive materials. All other supplies are met by imports with Fasson and Raflatac being the market leaders. Label presses, inks, dies and ancillary equipment are also over 90 per cent imported to the region.

The enlarged European Union is expected to bring a period of strong and sustained growth to the European label market. There are now outstanding business opportunities in Central Europe in particular, and many Western suppliers are wisely gearing up to secure a share of the market.

It is no coincidence that at Labelexpo 2003 there were over 2,500 visitors from Central / Eastern European countries.

Published by the Vandagraf Consultancy, reports on Poland, and on the Czech Republic and Slovakia, are now available. Further volumes will be published over May-July 2004.

The contents of each country report will then form part of a comprehensive report covering the whole region "The Self-adhesive Label Market in Central / Eastern Europe", to be published in September 2004 by Vandagraf. In the meantime each country report is (or will be) available separately. For further information and ordering contact: johnpenhallow@wanadoo.fr or info@vandagraf.com ■





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e No.138

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The growing colour gamut

As narrow web converters look to move beyond flexo CMYK, the Flexographic Technical Association is to produce standardized expanded gamut colors red, green and violet as the next evolution of the FIRST system. **Mike Buystedt**, director, market development, Akzo Nobel Inks, explains

In label print terms, whatever a customer wants (and is willing to pay for) is achievable. 'Traditional' combination narrow-web print, either in-line or as separate processes, can deliver everything from embossing and metallization to dense screen solids, elegant vignettes, photo-quality halftone images, fine print, and even variable information print. However, particularly if more than one machine pass is involved, the price will be high. For a new product launch in particular, a manufacturer will wish to achieve the best possible projection of his brand image on the label – at an acceptable price. For the label converter today, with margin pressures from all sources, meeting this price/performance ratio can be a major challenge.

The need to deliver high-speed, high-quality labels giving an expanded color gamut without the high cost of combination or multi-pass print was the driving force behind the two pioneering developments in flexo print – Hexachrome and Opaltone. Together with conventional CMYK flexo process, these three options represent the most dynamically growing base of narrow-web print technologies today.

In the last 15 years, inks, plates, Anilox roller and metering technology have revolutionized CMYK flexo in the narrow-web print market.

The first standardization of the basic CMYK flexo process would not have been possible without the commitment and involvement of the Flexographic Image Reproduction Specifications and Tolerances, FIRST, a joint initiative of the Flexographic Technical Association and the EFTA. As recently as 1997, FIRST brought to the world of four-color flexo print the capability to create industry-standard specifications that would enable the printer to achieve predictable, consistent results. Bringing together a steering board of printers, print buyers, and statisticians, with ink and substrate suppliers, press

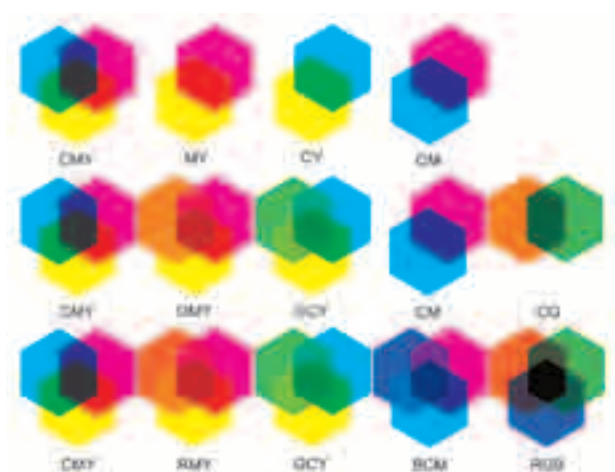
manufacturers, plate and die manufacturers, and a consumer product company advisory board of end-users and graphic designers, FIRST is wide-ranging and detailed, and covers every relevant aspect of design, prepress, and print. The third edition of the FIRST specifications is imminent.

Today, end user and printer choose four-color flexo because of the need to attract the consumer with more decorative packaging – and now with FIRST documented standards high quality graphics are achievable. The benefits of FIRST CMYK include familiarity with the technology by the industry – most proofing devices have the capability to match FIRST standards and use only four print stations to duplicate most graphic demands.

A few of the downsides of using only CMYK are its limited color gamut, and it can achieve acceptable simulated matches to only about 60 per cent of standard Pantone PMS colors. To address these deficiencies, the FFTA will shortly be producing the next evolution in FIRST: standardized expanded gamut colors red, green and violet.

Both Hexachrome and Opaltone aim to enhance the intensity and impact of the single-pass flexo-printed image through delivering greater ink density and controlling dot gain, which can

“In the last 15 years, inks, plates, Anilox roller and metering technology have revolutionized CMYK flexo in the narrow-web market”



Colour traps

significantly lower contrast values and the perception of overall print quality. Cost savings across the whole production process can mean that the narrow-web printer can profitably deliver the print results his customer wants, and achieve his customer's desired price/performance ratio.

The Hexachrome-brand process, launched in 1995 by Pantone Inc, uses reformulated four-color process CMYK inks, plus orange and green. Using this six-color process, a printer can achieve twice the color gamut of conventional CMYK, and can accurately reproduce almost 90 per cent of all solid Pantone colors. The results are dramatic: enhanced all-round performance that truly represents more than the sum of its parts.

The key to the success of Hexachrome is, of course, the inks – plus the efficiencies a printer can build through the production process. Just one set of inks brings savings in time in make-ready and savings in ink inventory costs. Hexachrome virtually eliminates the need to break up forms, and builds real logistical productivity into the press run. More colors can be created using fewer solid inks, less color correction on press, and print jobs can be 'ganged up'. Printers can also create multiple forms for regular six-color customers. Run time is optimized, downtime minimized: without the usual changeovers, print runs are completed faster and more consistently. The fast turnaround on label orders that customers demand, at no upward price penalty, are achievable – without sacrificing profit margin.

On the downside for the flexo printer, six print stations are required, no color extension is possible in blue, and achieving the specified color densities for Hexachrome orange and green can be difficult with UV flexo technologies when using fine line anilox rolls with < 1.25 BCM.

For the end user customer and the packaging designer, Hexachrome offers a huge color palette – including accurate color matching to Pantone and corporate/brand-unique colors as well – with real visual impact. Solid colors are rich and vibrant. Skin tones are realistic. Pastels and continuous tone images are excellent. Hexachrome is fully compliant with the standards of the International Color Consortium, interfaces with Macintosh-ColorSync and Windows-ICM 2.0, and is

“Flexo is still an evolving technology, and Hexachrome, Opaltone and FIRST expanded gamut colors do not provide the ultimate color solution”

compatible with leading proofing solutions such as Gretag Macbeth Profilemaker Pro 4.0, Monaco System ProfilerPro 4.0, and Creo ProfileWizard.

Opaltone takes a different route. Developed by Australia-based Opaltone Graphic Solutions P/L and launched in 1998, its driver was nevertheless the same as that of Hexachrome: the desire to improve on the deficiencies of the CMYK system – particularly in relation to matching custom spot colors. With the Opaltone seven-color process system, the printer – whether he is using flexo, gravure or litho – uses standard CMYK inks (though not all those available match the Opaltone specification, and water-based flexo may require a blend of Phthalocyanine blue and green pigments to achieve the cyan hue) plus the unique Opaltone red, green and blue additive primaries. The need for custom spot colors is reduced significantly, thanks to the system's expanded color palette.

A powerful example of the expanded color gamut offered by Opaltone is the system's response to the traditional problems, with CMYK, of achieving a clean orange or a saturated red without resorting to spot colors. By adding the Opaltone red to the ink mix, a total of 960 red hues can now be accurately reproduced – all of them offering vibrant color density.

For designers, the Opaltone system includes an application-unique plug-and-play graphic design software package which enables users to achieve their specifications, and compatible seven-color digital workflow applications include ArtPro (Multi Channel), Barco (Multi Channel), QuarkXpress (Multi-Ink), as well as Freehand and Illustrator for Spot/CMYK only.

All in all, Opaltone offers the print buyer – as well as an expanded color gamut overall in excess of 2,800 achievable colors – better greys and mid-tones, and rich shadows. For the narrow-web printer, while documented standards are available to help build specifications, there are weaknesses: seven print stations are required, and specified ink densities for the narrow-web industry are lower than CMYK and Hexachrome. This affects the pop images achieved with only CMYK.

The Opaltone system is marketed via licensing agreements with printers, ink manufacturers, and graphic designers.

Flexo is still an evolving technology, and Hexachrome, Opaltone and FIRST expanded gamut colors do not provide the ultimate color solution. They do, however, significantly expand the color capabilities of the flexo process.

About the author. Mike Buystedt has been involved in the narrow web market for 25 years and the FIRST initiative for three years, and is intimately involved with Akzo Nobel Inks' Narrow Web Business Unit in the development of inks for all the available flexo processes. ■



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Labeling news

Taggants to beat counterfeiters

Creo has developed a taggant which can add unique, yet invisible identification codes to labels. **Andy Thomas** reports exclusively from the company's R&D center in Vancouver

Creo is entering the document and brand security market with a tagging system for inks and varnishes claimed undetectable by counterfeiters. The launch comes as Creo announces the setting up of a new security and authentication business, which will leverage its core expertise across image processing, chemistry and workflow.

The Traceless security and authentication system is targeted against traditional security technology such as holograms, UV fibers, security substrates and inks, and the more complex emerging solutions, such as biometrics (DNA), printable electronics and radio frequency identification – including RF fibers added to paper pulp.

'All of these promise to deliver, but carry substantial costs – a barrier to implementation that precludes the massive companies' likelihood to use the systems,' says Dan Gelbart, Chief Technology Officer. 'But even if they become more affordable, the knowledge that they exist within certain products makes it easier for counterfeiters to mimic the system.'

Creo's Traceless taggant marks the substrate at such a low level – under two parts per million – that the traces cannot be discovered by even the most sophisticated forensic methods. Dan Gilbart showed L&L the results of an ICP-MS analysis carried out by the independent research institute Elemental Research Inc. which confirmed that the taggant was completely hidden within the chemical element of the given sample.

The Traceless particles can be detected only by a dedicated, highly sensitive reader unit developed by Creo. This can operate either as a simple present-not present authentication system or can assign a unique identity to each label based on the geometric position of the taggant particles. This ID number sits in a workflow database which can be used to authenticate and track products through the supply chain. Connecting this workflow to the end user's database will allow for full-automation of track/trace and authentication. Where there is no access to a database, a variable information printing system such as an inkjet can print a unique ID code derived from the same algorithm. Both hidden and covert codes must be present and matched to each other to verify authenticity.

'Used in a brand security packaging system, this will ensure that no two articles are the same, so counterfeiting is near-impossible,' says Gelbart.

The taggants themselves can withstand a wide range of environmental conditions, and can be added to paper, pulp or woven fiber, to printing inks and varnish, to copier and digital printer toners or to offset spray powders. The fluid dynamics ensure the taggant particles will never be geometrically positioned in the same place on any two items.

The Traceless reader can be focused by registration to read a specific location on the tagged item. The readers are waterproof and rugged and can be built for virtually any OEM application. The reader is capable of a hundred reads per second.

No.490



The dedicated reader unit (Top) can be used to identify the presence of the Traceless taggant particles (above)

Encyclopedia of labels to be launched in 2004

Labelexpo is launching the first-ever encyclopedia for the label industry at Labelexpo Americas 2004. *The Encyclopedia of Labels and Label Technology* will be made up of more than 220 pages of not only all the traditional label industry terms, but also explanations and terms relating to all of the latest technology. Key national and international label industry, printing, materials and other associations will be listed, as well as information on industry bodies and related standards authorities. Brief histories of some of the main label industry pioneers will also be highlighted.

Mike Fairley, industry specialist and author of the encyclopedia, says: 'The aim of the new encyclopedia is to simplify complicated, and often confusing, terms and terminology for people within the industry. I hope that it will both ease the transition into the industry for new players, and be valuable to those who have been around for many years.'

No.491

Paxar promotes risk-free RFID solution

Paxar Corporation, the provider of barcode and identification technologies for the retail supply chain and supplier of Monarch brand products and services, is taking orders for shipment of its RFID Implementation Kit. Paxar claims that the kit contains everything a supplier needs to implement RFID today and comply with Wal-Mart's January 2005 deadline.

The Implementation Kit includes the Monarch 9855 RFID bar code printer/encoder, the latest technology compliant Monarch RFID labels and 12 months of Paxar's Technology Investment Protection program. This provides the user with on-site upgrades of the Class 1 technology when changes are made, ensuring that the supplier remains up-to-date and compliant as the technology evolves. The user will also gain 12 months of on-site service and technical support, a full RFID

reference guide and programming manual and sample RFID compliance formats with download software.

The Monarch 9855 RFID printer/encoder completes a 'live' test of the RFID chip, encodes the chip within the label, prints the barcode and human readable data and verifies that the information is correctly 'written' to the tag.

'We are one of a very few suppliers with the capability to provide the required printer/encoders, RFID labels and tags, and verification technologies,' says Rick Bauer, Senior Director, RFID Technical Research. 'Put that technology with our ability to provide on-site service, and our unique Technology Investment Protection program, and companies have a no risk investment in this new technology that they can't find anywhere else.'

 No. 502

Strategic inkjet alliance

Agfa and Xaar has announced a strategic agreement for joint research, development and manufacturing of next-generation inkjet printheads. The agreement covers a five-year period where the two companies will co-operate to jointly develop and manufacture a new range of high-specification printheads, capable of meeting various application requirements.

The joint development has resulted in a new generation of printheads that will be previewed at Drupa 2004. The new printheads will be manufactured at Xaar's plant in Jarfalla, Sweden, and both companies will have the right to sell the new printheads into their respective markets. To support the expected production volumes and increase the capacity of certain key processes, Agfa has invested more than €2.5 million in new equipment at the Xaar facility.

 No. 501

KPG Exastore to hit Europe

Kodak Polychrome Graphics has launched Exanet's scalable storage system, Exastore, in the UK market. Already available in North America, the ExaStore family of digital storage solutions allows users to access and manage large amounts of ever-changing data.

'As we help our customers migrate to digital working, sooner or later they come up against the data storage issue and this solution is perfect for companies storing one terabyte of data or more,' says Terry Baber, UK managing director for KPG. 'It becomes harder to organise the data, flow it smoothly to users, back it up, and restore it. Customers tell us that operators can spend up to 20 per cent of their time just managing data.'

 No. 503

Heidelberg renews labels focus

Heidelberg is handing over its digital division to Eastman Kodak Co. and its web offset division to Goss International.

'The two portfolio decisions will decisively accelerate our realignment process', said Bernhard Schreier, CEO of Heidelberg Druckmaschinen AG. 'From now on, Heidelberg will strengthen its focus on the sheetfed offset business in order to optimally serve commercial, packaging and label printers with a comprehensive product portfolio. We are convinced that this strategy will lead Heidelberg back to profitability very quickly.'

 No. 504

Smithe diversifies into labels with Aquaflex acquisition

Aquaflex have been acquired by the FL Smithe Machine Company, a privately held, global group, which produces presses and finishing systems for the envelope manufacturing industry. Aquaflex manufactures printing and converting systems ranging from 10" to 26" wide for the tag and label, folding carton and flexible packaging markets.

Edgar Smithe, President of F.L. Smithe, commented on the transaction, 'We're very excited to complete this transaction on the eve of our 100th anniversary, as this allows us to diversify into the label and flexible packaging markets. Aquaflex makes an excellent product that will complement our line nicely. We look forward to building upon both companies' history—offering the highest quality products in our respective markets.'

Aquaflex was previously known as Chromas.

 No. 505

Labeling news

Creo moves into gravure cylinder imaging

Creo is entering the gravure cylinder imaging market through a partnership with Milan-based Acigraf. The Exactus thermal gravure system combines Creo's established SQUAREspot thermal laser imaging heads with the electrolytic copper removal process developed by Acigraf. Creo says the thermal gravure

system should significantly reduce the cost of the gravure cylinder process, compared to the much slower, traditional diamond engraving process that has been the industry standard for more than 20 years.

The Exactus thermal gravure process consists of five steps: applying the thermal resist layer on the copper

cylinder; imaging by direct exposure; developing the resist layer; removing the copper substrate by electrolytic process; and stripping of the remaining resist material. Creo has developed an infrared thermal resist called Graviti which is non-ablative, white-light tolerant, positive exposed, and processed in water-based solutions.

e No.506



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Keep up-to-date with industry, product and technical developments.

Mitsubishi launch re-imageable offset plate

Mitsubishi Heavy Industries has developed a re-imageable offset plate. With the Rewritable Plate System (RPS), the aluminum plate serves as a bed on which a special polymer coating film is applied. Images are created on the film by direct digital imaging. After printing, the film is washed from the

plate and a new coating film applied, thereby enabling one plate to be used repeatedly. Unlike conventional direct imaging (DI) presses, the RPS is a separate offline erasing and writing system.

e No.507

Reduce Downtime... Clean Your Web

Teknek are world leaders in contact cleaning, proven to be the most effective method of cleaning your web.

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Barry-Wehmiller acquisition

Barry-Wehmiller Companies has acquired Trine Labeling Systems of Los Angeles. Accraply, Barry-Wehmiller's labeling division, is integrating the Trine product line into their LA operations. The Trine purchase is the second consolidation of an acquired labeling company into Accraply. Barry-Wehmiller purchased the Label Equipment Group of CCL Industries in 2000, acquiring the labeling operations of Avery.

This transaction will result in Accraply becoming one of the largest producers of label machinery and operations in North America. 'With pressure sensitive, roll-fed, roll and shrink and shrink-sleeve technologies, Accraply/Trine has single source solutions to serve our new and existing customers' labeling requirements,' concluded Dave Hanson, national sales manager of Accraply.

No.508

New British label force

A group of 24 UK label printers has joined forces to create a new organization designed to promote the interests of smaller companies in the sector. The British Short Run Labelling Association (BSRLA) has established its own website, email discussion forum, and code of conduct to promote ethical, fair and sustainable trade in the marketplace.

It is also investigating group buying for some raw materials, according to Dr Adrian Steele, director of Mercian Labels

and the organization's representative.

'We hope to establish a useful forum for the smaller UK label printer to discuss topical issues, including issues such as the current wave of material price increases,' Steele said. 'We also want to encourage fair and honest practices in the trade to identify, isolate and eventually drive out any unethical practices that continue to operate in some sectors of the industry,' he added.

No.509

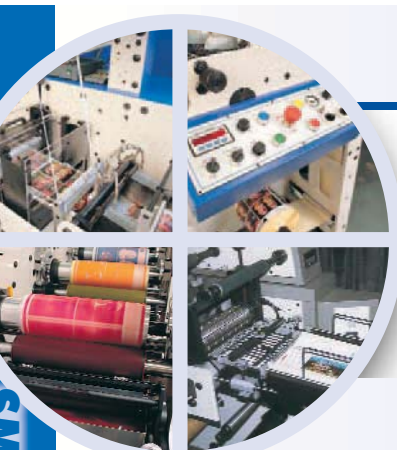
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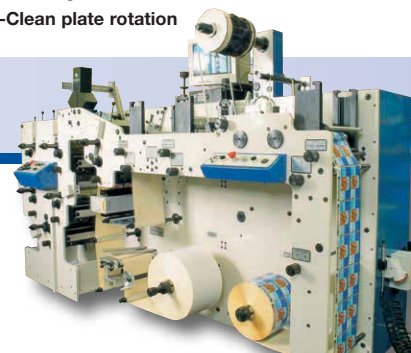


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Appointments

PCMC, Wisconsin

Mitchell Weckop Board of directors

Paper Converting Machine Company (PCMC) of Green Bay, Wisconsin, has elected Mitchell Weckop to its Board of Directors. Weckop joined PCMC in May 2003 as vice-president, Tissue and Nonwovens Converting Products.

BASF printing systems Ltd, UK

Russell Foxley Managing director

Foxley has worked for the company since 1992 when he joined as finance and administration manager. 'BASF has demonstrated its commitment to positively backing Printing Systems Ltd in the UK, and my aim is to continue to maintain profitability as part of a European group of companies. We are already targeting a larger market share, having already performed extremely well in the sheetfed sector and we are now looking to expand upon this success into other areas of the UK market,' he says.

Xaar plc

Bryan Palphreyman, Peter Addington and John Attard

Business development managers

Palphreyman and Addington will be working within the packaging department. Palphreyman will be responsible for developing relationships with new and existing customers with a particular focus on the labels market. Addington will be developing new business opportunities within the carton segment. Attard has taken on the role of business development manager for organic semiconductors and other 'functional fluid' applications.

JM Heaford

Paul Reeve, UK sales manager

Dick Bennis, European service manager

Reeve joins JM Heaford as an additional sales manager within the UK. Bennis will be based in the Netherlands and joins Ton Onstenk, European sales manager.

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REPORT 1

The Self-adhesive Label Market in Western Europe

The market rose to around 3.9 billion sq.m. p.a. (2002), and is continuing to grow at about 6% annually, while filmic label materials continue to achieve double digit annual growth. Although overall label growth has slowed since the mid 1990s and business is getting tougher, significant opportunities exist for label converters, raw materials suppliers, equipment builders and investors.

full price €3,450 or \$3,450

REPORT 2

The Self-adhesive Label Market in Central / Eastern Europe

May, 2004, sees a major EU enlargement as ten new countries join the EU. Eight of them are in Central/Eastern Europe. This is having a major impact on retailing, supply chain logistics and also product related crime. This is all highly significant for the labels/packaging sectors. The market for self-adhesive labels in Central/Eastern Europe is growing at over 20% p.a.

full price €3,250 or \$3,250

REPORT 3

The International Market for Brand Protection Solutions

Global losses due to product / brand related product piracy are running into several \$ hundred billions p.a. in today's world. This translates into major opportunities for packaging / label / security technology suppliers. This aim of this report is to provide inputs and guidance to both suppliers and brand owners as to how to exploit these opportunities for the mutual benefit of both parties.

full price €3,450 or \$3,450

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New products

Accuweb

Brushless, explosion-proof web guide actuator

AccuWeb has introduced a new brushless, explosion-proof actuator, claimed to be the first of its kind for web guiding applications. AccuWeb's new system directs electrical current to the motor windings electronically, rather than using the mechanical brushes found in conventional servo motors. This design creates no sparks and reduces maintenance by never requiring brush replacement. The motor's housing is explosion-proof, an added safety feature for printing, coating and laminating operations where combustible solvents are used. It replaces the costly purged systems that are used with other hazardous duty actuators.

 **No.380**

Infrared array edge detector

AccuWeb has introduced a new patent-pending digital infrared (IR) edge detector designed for use with light nonwovens, mesh and paper. The new IR detector employs an array of infrared sensors that continually monitor lateral web position and ambient conditions. It automatically compensates for passline variations and web flutter, as well as interference from dust and other contaminants.

 **No.381**

AET Films

Mirage holographic label films

AET has introduced the new Mirage holographic label films for can and bottle labels in low shrink and non-shrink roll-fed label applications. They are also suitable for folding cartons and flexible packaging and are available in embossed and embossable base films.

 **No.382**

Acucote Incorporated, NC

BA-702 Benign Adhesive System

Acucote has introduced the BA-702 Benign Adhesive System. This water-based permanent pressure-sensitive adhesive system has been formulated in response to governmental requirements as outlined in Section 702 of Executive Order 13148. This mandates that all US government agencies revise specifications for paper-based self-adhesive products and direct the purchase of products that employ benign pressure-sensitive adhesive systems.


 **No.383**

SATO

M10e direct thermal and thermal transfer printers

M10e can create labels up to a full 300 mm (11.8") wide, at a speed of up to 127 mm (5") per second. The 266 mm (10.5") printhead makes it possible to print large format, compliance labels at top speed without rotating the image and can hold media sizes up to approximately 300 mm (11.8") wide x 423 mm (16.6") long.

The 32-Bit high-speed RISC processor maximizes throughput while the footprint and heavy-duty industrial construction make the M10e the ideal choice to meet the needs

of a range of industries, including shipping and logistics, electronics and general manufacturing and paper.  **No.384**

Banner Engineering Corporation

EZ-SCREEN safety light screen

Banner Engineering Corporation has introduced the EZ-SCREEN safety light screen system, a non-contact, point-of-operation machine guarding system. Banner claim that the screen is the industry's easiest to set up, align and operate due to its optical design, variety of sizes and resolutions, zone indicators, detailed diagnostics, and flexible mounting options. The system has a range up to 18 m (60') and response times ranging from 9-40 ms.

With systems available in two resolutions offering minimum object sensitivity of 14 mm (.55") or 30 mm (1.18"), this package is ideal for finger or hand detection on smaller production machines, yet robust enough for large power presses.

 **No.385**

Ion Industrial

Virtual AC Static Neutralizer

Whether printing or applying labels, the patented technology of the Virtual AC Static Neutralizer from Ion Industrial provides long range control of static charges. With their real-time electronic performance display, these neutralizers can prevent equipment downtime or process interruptions caused by unwanted static. Digital or analog interface is available for integration with machinery controls and displays.

 **No.386**

FRM USA

Metallic inks

A new line of technologically engineered metallic inks is being introduced by FRM USA and will be available directly to US and Canadian printers for the first time. They will be sold under the SMART INKS brand and are said to print better and to be more brilliant because of the special metallic pigment blend used to manufacture them.


 **No.387**

Raflatac

Piggyback labelstock

Raflatac has recently introduced a new range of pressure sensitive piggyback constructions to the North American marketplace. Piggyback label constructions, sometimes referred to as 'a label inside a label', are comprised of a single facestock and two liners.

A piggyback label construction enables the top-layer label to be peeled away and affixed to another surface. These labels are increasingly used in applications such as promotional and coupon labeling, direct mail, medical / laboratory applications, and multi-part continuous forms. Raflatac's piggyback labelstocks are developed for ink-jet, laser and copier applications. The company's range of face materials includes 50# Laser Plus, 50# Data, Transfer Premium Plus, 54# Raflacoat, and Kromekote Extragloss. All piggyback labelstocks use Raflatac's proprietary permanent adhesives.

 **No.388**



KTI Automatic Butt Splicers

Tail grabber

KTI has designed a 'tail grabber' for its automatic butt splicers. The feature is designed to utilize the maximum amount of material on a roll by detecting when the web is released from the core, and then grabbing the tail to make the splice. By holding the tail, control of the web is maintained while the splice is being made. KTI claims that its unique method of detecting when the web is pulled from the core eliminates reliance on sensors that are susceptible to misalignment and paper dust.

 **No.389**

Scalar Technologies Ltd

ScalarGauge I-50

Scalar Technologies Ltd has introduced the first in a family of advanced, in-line measurement systems targeted at process automation and control. The systems are based upon state of the art optical techniques and are used for measuring the thickness of transparent films and coatings.

The first member of the family, ScalarGauge I-50, combines advances in modern optics and electronics to produce an in-line system with performance normally confined to laboratory instruments. The system uses broad-spectrum reflection interferometry in the visible and near infra-red region, specially adapted to suit production line conditions. It operates in conjunction with an integrated scanner, designed to mount on coating/converting machinery and comes complete with a software package that provides comprehensive features including Profile and Trend measurements.

The basic principle of operation is that of thin film interference. When light strikes a transparent film, some is reflected off the top surface and some will reflect off the bottom surface. These reflected light waves interfere with each other and produce an interference pattern, or interferogram. This pattern derives directly from the optical separation of the two surfaces, which is their physical separation multiplied by the refractive index of the material. By analyzing the interference pattern using a specially developed software algorithm, the film thickness is accurately calculated. Measurement accuracy is sub-micron, more than adequate for most in-line process control requirements.

Data is recorded in a standard file format and available for export and analysis through the Ethernet port. Interfacing using standard Ethernet (TCP/IP) connectivity means that the system can be accessed from anywhere within the corporate enterprise network or even via the Internet for remote monitoring. The process control system also contains an interface to commonly used external signal functions such as Reset, Unwind, Rewind, Tachometer (machine speed) and provides Warning and Alarm level output signals.

There are a number of sensor options available, to optimize performance for a specific application. In general, two sensors cover the majority of applications. One version is capable of measuring layer thickness between $0.5\mu\text{m}$ and $100\mu\text{m}$ and there is a reduced cost sensor, with a limited measuring range of $0.5\mu\text{m}$ to $50\mu\text{m}$.

This system has been developed for the plastic film and converting industry, for in-line measurement of base film thickness, release coatings, adhesives, transparent lacquers and hard coatings.

 **No.390**

Spinnaker Coating

imIJ brand matte ink jet

Spinnaker Coating has added imIJ brand matte ink jet pressure sensitive paper to its product line. imIJ (pronounced image) matte is a photo quality paper with a bright, blue-white shade, 94 per cent brightness, and 94 per cent opacity, that claims to have outstanding contrast for images that 'pop' and limited show-through of substrates. In printing, imIJ displays minimal dot gain and excellent ink holdout for sharper, more vivid results, no fuzziness or blurred edges and outstanding ink coverage in heavy solid areas. The facstock is quick-drying for immediate use without smudging or ink transfer. imIJ has good water fastness and lay flat characteristics.

 **No.391**

FLEXcon

THERMLfilm products

FLEXcon has introduced three new direct thermal printable white polypropylene films. THERMLfilm PP 280 and THERMLfilm PP 320 print well in portable thermal printers at lower energy settings with higher optical density maximising battery and printhead life. The THERMLfilm range is ideal for on-demand variable imaging and barcode labeling and are conventionally printable with special thermal inks.

THERMLfilm PP 280 films are matte topcoated 2.8mil hard white direct thermal printable, available with either a permanent or removable general purpose acrylic pressure-sensitive adhesive, and backed with a 50lb Kraft roll form release liner with low opacity to enhance label sensing in portable printers. The products feature a new direct thermal printable matte topcoat, MTC-817, designed for higher heat resistance.

THERMLfilm PP 320 offers enhanced physical properties for applications where durability and moisture resistance is essential, such as ski ticketing. It is coated with a high-performance, aggressive permanent acrylic pressure-sensitive adhesive and backed with a 50lb Kraft roll form liner. It also features MTC-243, a new direct thermal printable matte topcoat designed for high moisture and chemical resistance.

 **No.392**

Klöckner Pentaplast

Pentaprint OT M276/41

This new shrink-film is engineered to provide a frosty appearance on glass, offering a cost-effective alternative to acid-etched glass containers. Klöckner Pentaplast is the only global supplier to offer this film.

The new frosty matte Pentaprint OT M276/41 film has 52 per cent shrink properties and is available in 60-micron clear matte/gloss film. Pentaprint OT M276/41 film is suitable for use with glass or plastic containers.

 **No.393**

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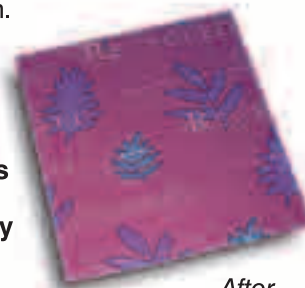


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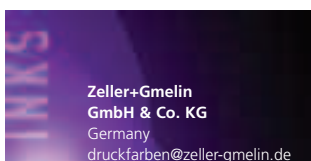
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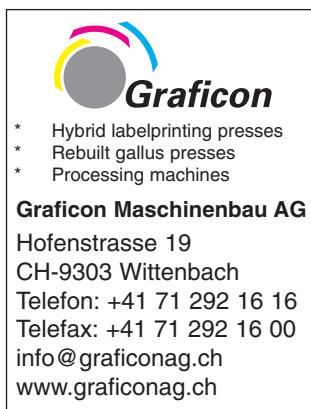
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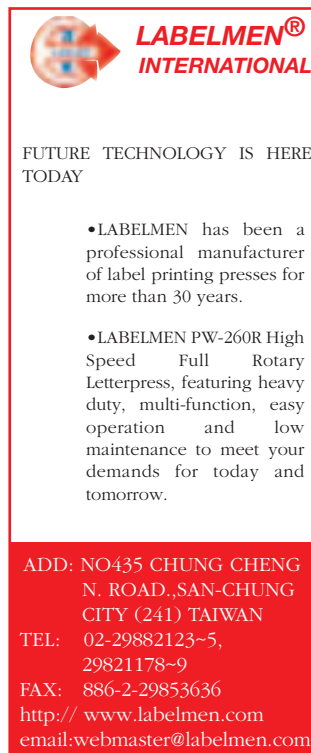
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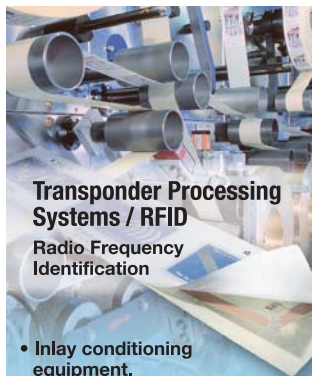
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