

Labels & Labeling

Labelexpo
review edition

Oct/Nov 2004
Issue 5 Volume 26

Labelexpo



The latest innovations in narrow web technologies at Labelexpo Americas

Analysis



Active and intelligent label solutions were examined at Smart Packaging 2004

Case study



John Bankson, president Label Technology and TLMI, inspires new generation

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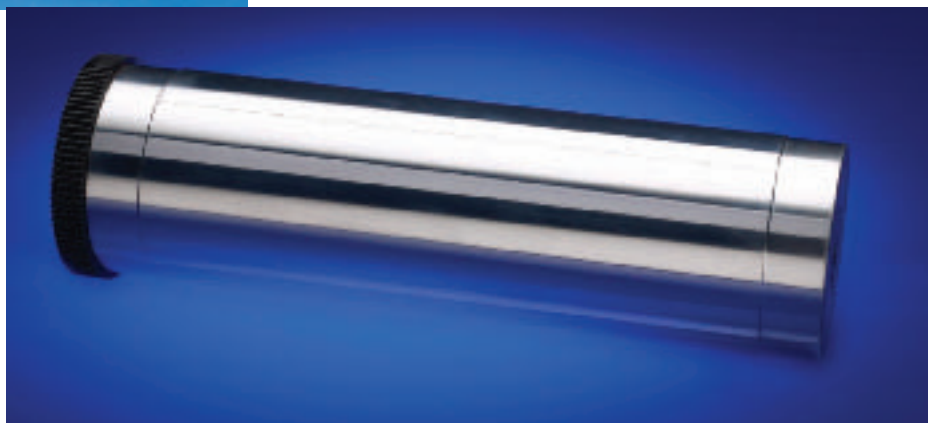
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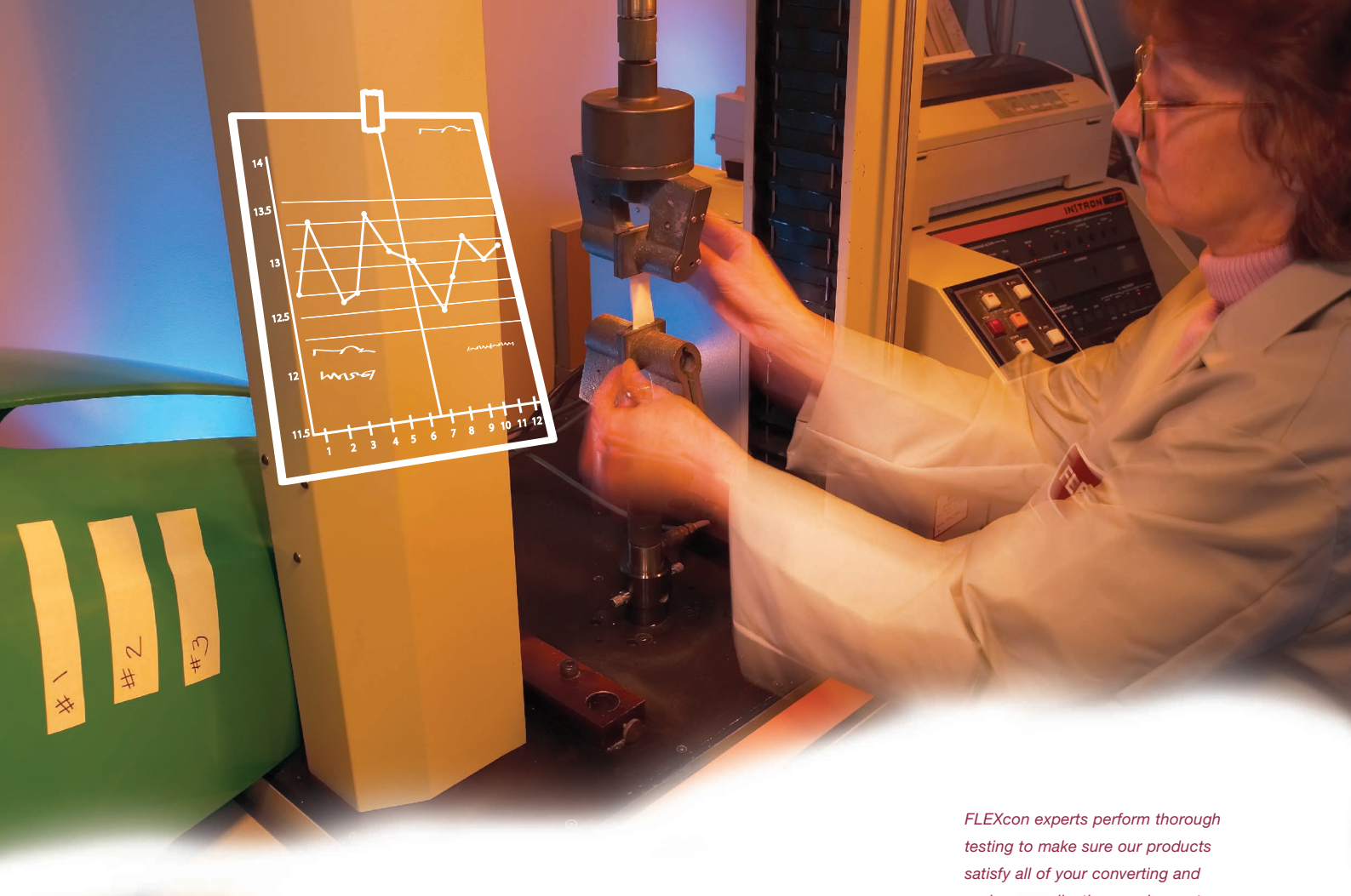
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Leader



Labelexpo Americas 2004 attracted over 12,000 visitors despite the impact of the Hurricane which ravaged the Gulf of Mexico. The show demonstrated the maturity of narrow web press design, with the growing acceptance of servo driven press components instead of shaft driven machines and the ability to change quickly between converting processes on the same line. Sleeve technology too is gaining acceptance, although only Gallus has gone so far as to incorporate anilox sleeves on its 'S' range machines.

A significant statement from PCMC – which straddles the world of wide and now narrow/mid web – was the presence at the show of its wide web converter customers. Narrow web converters were previously 'under the radar' of the wide web film converter - but not any longer. As the run length of flexible packaging and other film label products comes down, narrow web converters with the ability to convert unsupported films are winning more and more business in areas from pouches and sachets to shrink and stretch sleeves.

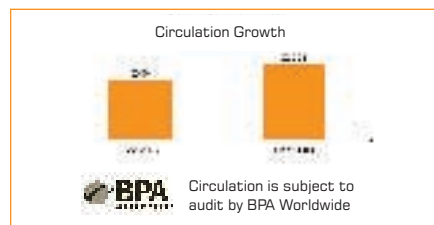
Some wide web houses are responding by forming partnerships with narrow web converters, while investigating the possibility of moving down to mid-width presses. The wide web converters at Labelexpo, long used to gearless presses and sleeves, expressed some astonishment at the apparent resistance to these technologies amongst their narrow web counterparts, although this is clearly starting to change.

“A significant statement from PCMC – which straddles the world of wide and now narrow/mid web – was the presence at the show of its wide web converter customers”

Another interesting trends to emerge from Labelexpo Americas was the 'closed loop' inspection concept pioneered by AVT, which links the on-press inspection system to the digital pre-press file, then stops the rewinder at the points the camera has detected flaws. Print Vision and Nyquist also announced a partnership to push closed loop technology.

Finally, digital printing and converting systems are now demonstrating a maturity and range of applications which seem finally set to fulfill the promises made by the industry pioneers back in the early 1990s. Of particular note was the launch of HP Indigo's ws4050 press, which extends the reach of the digital press into shrink films and flexible packaging.

Andy Thomas
 Group Managing Editor



On a musical note!

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Labelexpo Americas

Andy Thomas, Barry Hunt and Katy Wight present the first of a two part report

This year's Labelexpo Americas attracted almost 13,000 visitors. The show demonstrated the maturity of narrow web press technology, with an increased emphasis on integrating servo drives, on rapid change between print processes and the ability to handle the new generation of unsupported film substrates as well as traditional pressure sensitive laminates.

Showing for first time as a member of the long-established Smithe Group - famous for envelope production machines - Aquaflex introduced its first co-engineered product. This was the new shaftless FPC UV flexo press for flexible packaging, represented at the show by a single servo-driven print unit. The first FPC press has been sold to Control Group, a pharmaceutical packaging printer. It will have eight colour units, a 28-inch web width and sleeve system. Also on show were the more familiar 13-inch wide Instaprep press with eight UV flexo units, and a 20-inch wide LX for converting thin films or cartonboard.

Ko-Pack International introduced the Flexo 400, a 400-mm wide film press based on its familiar central impression drum technology. The flexo print units are arranged around two separate CI drums - both fully chilled - to allow up to six colours printed front and reverse, or twelve colours printed on one side of the film. In keeping with its innovative reputation, the company focused its demonstrations on a patented method of producing wrap-around BOPP labels or shrinkable sleeves printed both sides of the web in short to medium runs. Using a 500ml Pepsi-Cola can label as an example, the twin-ply construction allowed the removal of kiss-cut panel to leave a clear 'window'. The removed full-colour portion could be a collectable item as part of promotional campaign at a sporting event for example.

Although export-led, this was Edale's first showing at an American Labelexpo and marked its intention to take the North

Labelexpo Americas 2004 Show Preview



12,824 visitors attended Labelexpo Americas 2004 held at the Donald E. Stephens Convention Centre in Chicago

American market more seriously. Consequently, the UK-based company has formed a co-operative with a network of representatives headed by Mike Golas of Apium, California. It has already sold a Sigma shaftless press in the USA. At the show it displayed a compact Alpha press intended for start-up firms or larger printers that want to download short-run four or five colour jobs from larger, costlier presses.

Nilpeter sees itself as a unified press manufacturer operating on both sides of the Atlantic. The latest modular F-Line reflects this. It brings together elements of Danish and US press design and engineering in a move that should simplify its respective series of conventional and UV based flexo presses. The eight-unit F-3 on show was one of three web widths (10.75, 13.75 and 16.75 inches). Buyers can specify either conventional mechanical drives or optional servo-driven print units.

Maximum printing and die-cutting speed is 750 feet/minute (228 m/minute). An open construction on a Z-shaped frame, plus Nilpeter's cassette-based system, allow fast interchanges of individual flexo units with drop-in Stork rotary screen modules, or cold/hot-foil units. A film package includes increased capacity hot air dryers, low inertia idler rollers and chill drums.

Also shown was a second-generation 13-inch (330mm) wide MO-3300 platform press, equipped with five offset units, one rotary screen, a hot foil unit and a UV flexo print/varnishing unit. A newly-developed servo driven offset print unit was displayed as a static unit. Nilpeter says servo drives were specified for 90 per cent of MO-3300 orders at the show, which underlines the wider acceptance of this technology among narrow-web press buyers.

Mark Andy's new XP5000 is the next generation press in the 'Productivity Platform' series that began with the LP3000 in 2002 ('XP' is for Xpanded Productivity). Available web widths are: 10 inches (254mm), 13 inches (330mm) and 17 inches

“Using a 500ml Pepsi-Cola can label as an example, the twin-ply construction allowed the removal of kiss-cut panel to leave a clear ‘window’”

(432mm). Servo drives control print and die-cut units and web tension control to give fully electronic job functions based on the company's own program algorithms.

A pre-registration function in both print and die stations is said to substantially reduce set-up waste. Each station offers full electronic register control with touch-screen operator interfaces. First Response is a new development, giving on-line data transmission and troubleshooting to customer support technicians. Mark Andy's Quick Change cassette system allows interchangeability of rotary screen, hot/cold foil and interstation die cutting modules. A new one is Jetrion's 3025 ink jet module for variable data printing (see separate entry). The single-colour cassettes can be retrofitted to any XP5000 or LP3000 platform to maximize press capabilities. This method augments the four-colour ink jet module and SharpX laser die cutting module incorporated within the hybrid DT 2200 flexo press, which was also displayed.

Interestingly, the LP3000 shown at Labelexpo incorporated an RFID tag affixing feeder from Toronto-based Longford International, which integrates with any web-fed press. It affixes roll-fed inlays to the nip roller of the press between the liner and



(Above) Complex film converting on Ko-Pack Flexo 400 press



(Above) Mark Andy introduced the XP5000 press

printed facestock. With top speeds up to 24,000 inlays/hour at accuracy levels of 0.793mm it offers an alternative method to off-line RFID inlay inserting. Mark Andy is currently testing RFID projects, including printing the antennae using special metallized inks.

The Comco division has added servo-driven technology to the MSP ProGlide to enhance register and set-up functions for flexible packaging applications. In a similar vein, it has introduced FLX - 'film label expansion' - modules covering dual-tension unwinds, laminating and automatic registration allowing label converters with MSP ProGlide presses to make a phased move into film printing.

Gallus used the show to introduce significant enhancements to its established EM280 press. Designated the EM 280 -2005, the press features redesigned and upgraded printing units and a new central touch-screen control panel.

The new print unit design features a swivel system which allows the anilox roller to be removed from the printing cylinder while maintaining register and pressure settings. The pressure setting position of the printing cylinder is indicated by an analog scale located in the adjustment handle. There have also been improvements to the inking system which reduce downtime.

The printing cylinder can now be disengaged from the impression cylinder, so longitudinal adjustment of the printing cylinder does not influence web tension in subsequent stations. This also allows faster register recovery when encountering web tension fluctuations in the master roll. The new 360deg longitudinal register control can be operated either from the central panel or on the printing unit itself.

For the first time in the US, Gallus was showing its EM 410 'S'

“Mark Andy is currently testing RFID projects, including printing the antennae using special metallized inks”

press introduced at last year's Labelexpo Europe. The press uses sleeve technology for print and anilox cylinder and the direct servo-driven hybrid-printing unit allows printing both flexo and screen within the same printing unit, and changeover between the two without breaking the web. The 8-color 16in/410mm press was shown changing between a pressure-sensitive label and a shrinksleeve.

For Multi Print Systems (MPS), this was an important show. The company's presses were previously sold in North America by Mark Andy under that company's 7000 series banner. This was the first time MPS had exhibited in the US under its own name. 'It is extraordinary how many American converters already knew about MPS,' said Bert van den Brink, managing director. 'We had a very successful show and sold two presses. MPS is currently setting up a dedicated North American sales and service organisation which will be based out of Cincinnati.'

The company was launching into the Effective Flexo (EF) press range, an 'entry-level' version of its Effective Printer UV flexo press first seen at Labelexpo Europe last year. It shares many key features with the top of the range EP press including



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Labelexpo Americas 2004 Show Preview

Narrow web on the wide web radar

PCMC was showing its innovative Evolution press for the first time at a Labelexpo show, representing a major commitment to the narrow/mid-web in-line market. PCMC's Andy Gillis said the main surprise at the show was the number of wide web converters present: 'We've had a lot of wide web customers at the show. The wide and narrow web worlds were two separate worlds two years ago – they had different cost models and different technology levels. The wide web guys do laminations, work with multiple webs, print on front and back sides and use occasional UV. For food packaging it's solvent inks and water-base. They have had gearless presses with sleeves for the last five years.' So why are they coming to Labelexpo?

'Narrow web was previously under these guys' radar. But now they are starting to lose business to narrow web and they're here to find out what's going on. A lot of food companies are regionalizing their offerings and giving their contracts to more print houses to get to market quicker.'

The trend towards shorter runs of flexible packaging is pushing wide web converters into partnerships with narrow web converters, says Gillis. 'At the same time they are looking at narrower width CI machines. We sold over 80 of our 29in Vision press and the new Vision G CI press competes with the narrow/mid web in-line platform.'

PCMC developed the Evolution press – a hybrid CI and in-line machine – because the key narrow web converters they consulted would never consider buying a CI press. 'But there are advantages to the CI press design in terms of registration, particularly on thin unsupported films, and faster speeds. So on the Evolution we blend this with in-line technology to print at very tight registration at 1,000 ft/min. The registration does not change when we ramp the press speed up and down on 1.8mil BOPP.'



(Top) RFID tag affixing feeder from Longford intergrates with any web press. (Bottom) MPS EF 13" 6-color press

'Crisp Dot' printing and multi-servo drive technology, with the web transported independently of the printing/converting process. Each converting function, including printing, die cutting and foil blocking, is driven by its own servo motor. The press is specified to handle substrates from 25 – 250 micron and can be fitted with Stork RSI Screen units as an option. A chill roller temperature management system is claimed to keep the running temperature at under 30 degC regardless of the heat output from UV or hot air dryers - hot air is extracted via an insulated tube system integrated into the press.

GiDue was promoting its Unipro 730mm wide, in-line, mid-web packaging press to the American label printing and converting industry, although there was no working machine on the stand. Designed as a full packaging press using print cylinder sleeve technology the Unipro is claimed capable of converting virtually any kind of substrate from PE BOPP, PET to paper,



“Narrow web was previously under the wide web radar. But now they are starting to lose business to narrow web”

aluminium and laminates and up to 450gsm carton board without changing configuration.

The UNI-Lock printing head featured on the Unipro is an enhanced version of the Flower flexographic printing head, but with the print cylinder locked from the top. GiDue md Federico d'Annunzio told journalists the Unipro press is currently available, but would not be heavily promoted 'until we feel that flexible packaging is accepting UV flexo. It's not for us to open the door to everybody else.'

GiDue also partnered Ciba Specialty Chemicals in a presentation of Ciba's Prime IT technology. A four colour E-Combat UV flexo press was running live demonstrations with this novel surface modification technology which improves printing and facilitates coating and adhesion on plastics. Ciba Prime IT is designed to ensure maximum bonding of inks, coatings and adhesives on all plastic surfaces, including OPP, PVC, PET, PE and PA for applications that include labels, flexible packaging, smart cards, and commercial printing.

ETI had a good show, selling two of its complete label manufacturing lines to North American converters, while 'many other sales were concluded for deliveries in Europe, South America and East Asia,' said the company. 'The interest for our Cohesio & Labeline label manufacturing lines was remarkable, especially for value added products such as labels printed on both sides for the cosmetic, food & drink, wine and personal care industries. Also, their great flexibility for the production of speciality products such as flexo printed linerless, coupons or RFID insertions was noted.'

A new entrant to the flexo press scene is GraphixOne, based out of Cincinnati. The company launched its ProFlex flexo press aimed at the label, flexible packaging, board packaging and general converting markets. ProFlex is offered in two versions - a chill drum style and a standard hot air dryer style and either line shaft or servo-driven. The press is available in up to 6 colors and widths 10", 13", 16", 18", and 20".

Stork showed its RSI Compact screen retrofit units, available in either 10 or 13-inch widths. With integrated servo drive it is said to be relatively simple to integrate into most narrow-web presses offering repeat sizes ranging from 12 to 18 inches. ■

Digital printing

This Labelexpo saw digital label converting become a mature technology, with a range of techniques on show

HP Indigo showed the ws4050 as a successor to the reel-fed ws4000 digital colour label press introduced two years ago. It comes with a price tag of around \$600,000 and upgrade kits are available for existing ws4000 users. A substrate range of from 12 to 250 microns opens up applications to include conductive and shrink-sleeve films. A reformulated ink set gives finer imaging of up to seven HP IndiChrome colours including white and spot. A new reinsertion facility allows double-sided and coupon-type labels. There are also FDA-compliant features to validate pharmaceutical labels. As before, the ws4050 has a full variable data capability with on-the-fly changes. A software upgrade improves the engine's stability, while there are also pre-press workflow enhancements from the HP partners, Artwork Systems and Esko-Graphics.

The ws4050 ran with an Omega Digicon 330 in-line or off line finishing system from AB Graphic International - along with a Sabre Extreme Mk II laser die cutter - as described below. Slitting, rewinding, die cutting options also include the off-line Vericut system from Rotoflex, as well as the established Nilpeter finishing line with UV flexo, cold foiling and laminating. The entry-level ws2000 six-colour press was shown printing high-value security labels using invisible inks and watermark effects.

ABG International featured the Sabre Extreme Mk II laser label cutting system as part of its servo-driven Omega Digicon HS Converter for off line or in-line digital print finishing of various substrates up to 330mm wide. A similar line was also shown separately with an Indigo print engine on HP's stand. As is widely known, laser cutters eliminate all costs and delivery times associated with traditional dies and cylinders, allowing job changes in seconds. In an area of many false dawns, Michael Davison, the system's designer, claimed the Sabre Extreme offered a far more affordable and compact approach to laser

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Labelexpo Americas 2004 Show Preview



HP Indigo launched its ws4050 digital press with the ability to convert unsupported films including shrink film

cutting than previously offered over the past 14 years.

The two 250w laser beams have a cut-to-print accuracy of +/- 0.05mm and cleanly kiss cut at up to 7 m/second, subject to material and shape. Paper, polyester and polypropylene with kraft or glassine liners offer the sharpest kiss cuts. It is also possible to cut-through and perforate different types of substrates. The SoftPlot software allows users to create and edit cutting profiles off-line - storing up to 16 jobs - and download them directly into the Sabre Extreme for on-demand cutting.

Digitally-controlled contour cutters using micro blades are appearing with several digital printing technologies. The laser picks up registration information and controls the blade - it does not cut the substrate itself. This technology is used to produce variably-sized labels of any complexity from large-format sheets printed by 4 or 6 colour CMYK drop-on demand ink jet printers.

Making its Labelexpo debut, Roland from Irvine, California, demonstrated the roll-fed VersaCMM SP-300, with a media width up to 30 inches, and the Soljet 540EX with a maximum 54-inch width. Both use Epson piezo electric printheads. Roland's PostScript compatible ColorRIP software controls colour management and contour cutting. The printer/cutters produce high-quality short-run decals, tags, membrane switches, garment transfers, industrial warning labels, vehicle and floor graphics and the like - even primary food labels - in any shape, colour or size of label.

Matan Digital Printers, an Israeli developer of wide-format ink jet printers and thermal transfer technologies, uses a similar contour cutting method for its printers. With a new subsidiary, Matan USA Inc, it launched the Spring 12 industrial thermal transfer printer - and the variable data SpringPro version - which print in up to six colours from 300-metre rolls of CMYK, spot or metallic foils. Print width is 12 inches and the resolution is 1,600 x 400 dpi. Labels, tags, decals and tickets are cut to any shape on a Digital Finishing system (DFS) from Allen Datagraph, which is standard on the SpringPro version. The DFS operates in-line or off-line and strips, slits and rewinds. Matan says Spring 12 and SpringPro offer an alternative to roll-fed hot-foil machines for short-run, on-demand labels, or to compliment conventional label presses in most converters' plants.

An Anglo-American approach to digital printing came from Newfoil Machines Ltd, which integrated a VP 8020 colour press from VIPColor Technologies USA into a complete production line. It comprised an unwinder with attached sprocket-hole punch (pin-fed stock is required to aid registration), VP 8020 with 'cool fusion' CMYK micro-toner engine for printing 600 x 1,800 dpi with good tonal depth, and Newfoil's latest 3500 hot-foil machine with embosser, laminator, die cutter and rewinder. A PC based RIP handles variable data, while an MS Windows driver accepts PS3 and PDF files.

A flat web path allows the VP 8020 to process fanfold or reel-

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fed stocks in varying thicknesses in widths from 4 to 11 inches. Besides on-demand labels, output - with or without foil embossing - can include tags, ID cards, forms. Substrates could be converted prior to colour printing or addition of variable data.

Xeikon was making a positive statement about its commitment to the digital labels sector, appearing for the first time at Labelexpo Americas under new owner Punch.

The company was showing its Xeikon 330 press in-line with a RotaCom HTC converting unit. Filip Weymans, Xeikon business development manager, comments: 'our management this year made a big decision to make the labels market a priority. A lot of people at this show are happy we are here and we've had a lot of good leads.'

Xeikon's 330 digital press has been modified with an improved imaging unit. 'The main weakness of the system before was some ghosting,' says Filip Weymans. 'Our new electronics package eliminates these image defects and can be retrofitted to existing Xeikon 330 machines.' In-line densitometers, now standard on the Xeikon 5000 machines, are not retrofittable to the 330 however.

The modular RotaCom finishing system – shown for the first time – is based around removable cassettes which allow easy conversion between rotary and semi-rotary diecutting and a coating head. The anvil roll in the die stations doubles as an impression roll for the coating head, which is slid into place using a track system. In semi-rotary mode there is an option to through-cut and stack finished product.

The 330 press was driven by Xeikon's new X-800 digital front end, which can also generate sequential numbering and barcodes. VIP Inkjet modules, either for mounting on web

“Users can add a variable data capability to a job, either on-line on any web press or fitted to an off-line finishing module”

presses or on off-line converting systems, have reached new levels of sophistication. Jetrion LLC - created by Flint Ink's Digital Division in February 2003 - used Labelexpo to introduce itself and launch Jetrion 3025, a drop-on-demand ink jet system with UV-curable inks. It was beta tested with its partner Mark Andy at Whitlam Label Co, Center Line, Michigan, a key supplier of variable data labels to the automotive industry. Its running costs are claimed to be lower than comparable ink jet systems and far lower than the slower, off-line thermal transfer ribbon-based method. The 2.4-inch printheads each give resolutions of 316 dpi across and 526 dpi in the web direction on virtually any substrate at up to 250 ft/minute (77 m/minute).

Domino Amjet's Commercial Printing Division gave the US debut of Domino ON Demand. The system allows users to add a variable data capability to a job, either on-line on any web press or fitted to an off-line finishing module, and reduce set-up costs by allowing the pre-press operator to design, layout and generate WYSIWYG proofs of the job before final print production. The internal database software supports a network of up to 16 piezo-electric (drop on demand) printheads with integral height adjustment. They allow printing with a variety of optional Pantone matched spot colour inks onto a range of substrates. Both solvent-based or UV cured ink options are available.

Based on Domino's Bitjet 212 binary printer, the enhanced Bitjet+ version was also shown for high-speed printing of the advanced 2D bar code, as well as conventional bar codes. A pioneering use of robust ceramic charge electrodes is said to increase reliability and improved print quality over longer operating periods. Also new was the Editor GT ink jet controller for numbering applications, based on Domino's similar controller for addressing applications. Using Windows NT and XP platforms, the package offers variants of unweighted and weighted modulus numbering of labels, tags and tickets.

A significant trend at the show was the introduction of VIP systems which can programme RFID chips at the same time as printing human-readable data. SATO introduced its CLE RFID printers at the show, which can read, write and print smart labels and tags with embedded transponders. The RFID tags are read,



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Label Industry Global Awards

Close to 600 suppliers, converters, trade associations and media came together at the Label Industry Global Awards Ceremony and Gala Dinner at Labelexpo Americas 2004. The worldwide label industry voted online for individuals and companies to win the awards – and the Judging Panel met in Chicago in July.

Avery Dennison won the Label Industry Award for Continuous Innovation, sponsored by Labels & Labeling, Label & Narrow Web and NarroWebTech. The judging panel commented that, 'without Avery Dennison, the pressure sensitive industry as we

know it today would not exist. They were the original creators of the pressure sensitive label business – now a global industry - not only with self-adhesive materials but also with the concept of narrow web roll label printing and die cutting.' Both Esko Graphics, which has been instrumental in the development of digital prepress since the early 1980s, and Nilpeter, praised for the introduction and incorporation of all label printing processes and techniques in-line, were highly commended

The Label Industry Award for New Innovation, sponsored by Creo and Hewlett Packard, was scooped by HP for its



(Top left) Diane B Dixon, senior VP worldwide communications at Avery Dennison (l). Andy Thomas, editor L&L.

(Top Right) Mike Fairley, (l) presents Dale Bunnell with the R. Stanton Avery Lifetime Achievement Award.

(Bottom left) Lintec's Kazuo Shiwaku (l) and Gallus' Ferd Ruesch jr (r) made powerful speeches recalling their personal and professional friendship with Dale Bunnell.

(Bottom right) John Bankson, president TLM (l), Bill McGlynn, VP digital publishing solutions, Hewlett Packard, Ron Kukla, US sales manager HP Indigo and Paul Jarvis, CCL

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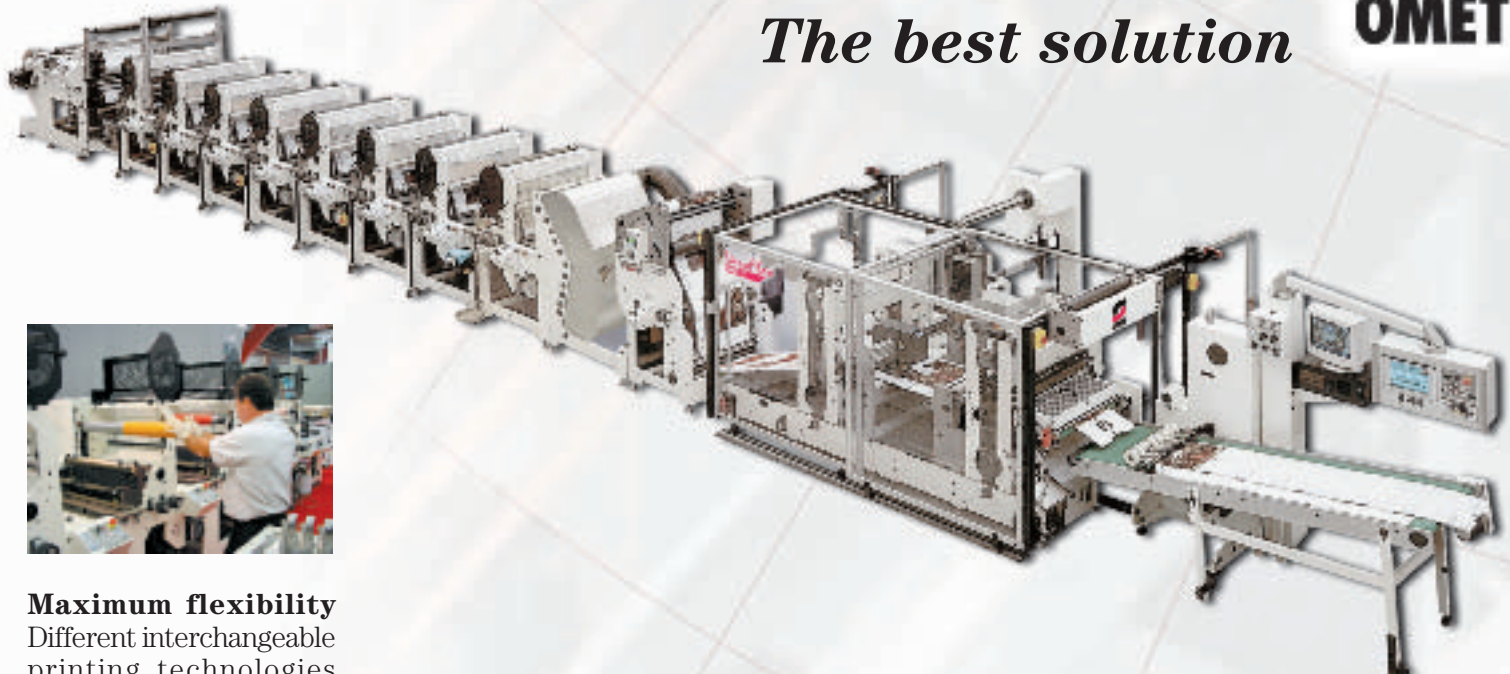
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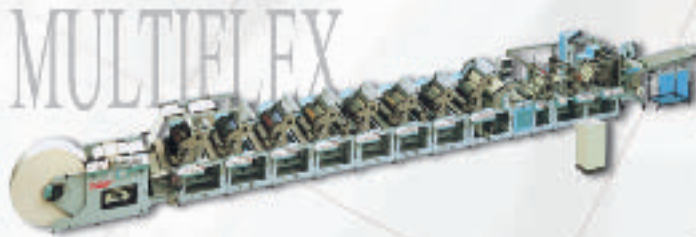
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developments in digital label printing.

‘Indigo has been a pioneer in digital label printing innovation since the mid 1990’s,’ said the judging panel. ‘Now, as part of Hewlett-Packard Company, their latest digital label press technology – the ws 4000 – is rapidly revolutionizing the way that labels are produced and supplied and will undoubtedly have a continuing major impact on the future of the label industry.’ In this category, AVT was highly commended for its sophisticated web inspection technology, along with press manufacturer Gidue who, ‘through the development of the innovative Flower printing head technology has enabled its customers to interchange printing cylinders from other makes of label press and to use them without to reduce tooling costs and inventory.’

The judging panel agreed unanimously that Dale Bunnell, who spent 20 years as vice president sales and marketing at Mark Andy, and a further five years as vice president, business development within the company, should win The R. Stanton Avery Lifetime Achievement Award, sponsored by Avery

Dennison.

Throughout his time at Mark Andy, Bunnell participated in industry associations and was a regular speaker at industry conferences around the world and in key label industry activities. He spent time as a board member of the TLMI, was an active member of the Flexographic Technical Association, and a founding member and past chairman of the World Label Association.

Paul Brauss, President, Mark Andy, said: ‘Mark Andy is very proud to have had a forward-thinking, prominent industry figure as a part of its flexo family for over 25 years. He is an industry leader whose dedication has impacted the success of many industry-wide suppliers. We are honored by his selection for this accolade.’

Honorable recognition was awarded to converters Fort Dearborn Company, North America; Schreiner Label Tech, Europe; and Artes Graficas Modernas, Latin America. ■

“600 suppliers, converters, trade associations and media came together at the Label Industry Global Awards Ceremony and Gala Dinner”





(Above) Stork's Morpheus photopolymer engraving system



(Above) Esko-Graphics CDI Spark XT flexo CTP unit

Pre-press

Pre-press suppliers are pushing label converters to take platemaking and proofing workflows in-house

Creo launched its next generation ThermoFlex Mid digital imager at Labelexpo. The system reduces the time required to image a plate by as much as 28 percent on the V speed model, says the company, while plate loading and unloading processes have been improved and a new TIFF front end provides a simplified user interface. The footprint has also been reduced, taking 24 percent less space than the original design. The ThermoFlex retains the ability to image variable plate sizes and variable plate thicknesses, on a range of qualified digital letterpress and flexographic plates. All ThermoFlex devices come equipped with HyperFlex-ready imaging and the full range of flexo screening features Creo has developed, including Maxtone, DigiCap and Raster Scaling.

Creo is also using Labelexpo Americas to persuade even small and middle size label converters that computer-to-plate (CTP) imaging can be integrated into their existing businesses. The company has bundled its prepress technologies into a turnkey package called Creo Complete to help flexo printers benefit quickly from the move to a CTP environment. Meanwhile the Creo Prinergy Powerpack prepress workflow has been expanded

to meet the needs of small to mid-size label printers. Possible upgrade routes include connectivity to management information systems (MIS), where Synapse Link provides a stand-alone reporting tool to provide job costing and status information. Other optional modules include the Synapse InSite Internet portal which provides customers with web services for remote job submission, remote proofing, and better communication, and the Integrus Desktop proofing solution. This combines the Integrus Qualified EPSON Stylus Pro 4000 printer with the Integrus Proof Controller and Integrus Qualified inks and media for calibrated digital contone 2-up proofs.

Esko-Graphics demonstrated complete label and packaging workflows including its new Scope workflow configured for label applications and the Cyrel Digital Imager (CDI) Spark XT. At the Hewlett Packard booth, the Scope workflow drove an HP Indigo digital press, while at the Pitman booth, a CDI Spark XT and Scope workflow were displayed.

Scope covers a wide range of functions from job and product specification, through graphic and structural design and pre-production operations, to platemaking for printing and

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toolmaking for converting. Scope adds capabilities for project coordination, digital asset management and distributed proofing and approval. Scope incorporates PackEdge to edit packaging designs, Plato to create print-ready sheet layouts, BackStage as the digital workflow server solution and the FlexRip, a multi-purpose RIP. The Scope workflow system driving the HP Indigo ws2000/4000/4050 press series includes Kaleidoscope device-independent color management and IntelliCurvePro press calibration software. These are claimed to result in higher throughput, as well as better predictability and reproducibility on HP Indigo presses.

RIPit Computer Corporation launched the latest version of its OpenRIP Flexo, Adobe Postscript 3 workflow software designed specifically for the flexo prepress environment. RasterView allows you to examine a ripped file at the pixel level, view trapping, check screen angles, frequencies and tint values, calculate ink densities and generate ink key settings for your press either manually or using the CIP3 export feature. RIPit's new TrapZone feature enhances Adobe In-RIP trapping by letting you select separate trap settings for different zones. You can define zones while viewing the rasterized image and immediately re-RIP the file to see the effects of your settings.

Proofing

Latran launched the new Prediction 4600, an automated digital halftone proofing system based on laser ablation transfer (LAT) technology. The 22 x 30 inch format Prediction 4600 is designed with 10 media trays to allow the programmed preloading of combinations of pigmented ink sheets and actual proofing substrates. The 10-tray feature of the Prediction 4600 can be configured with ink sheets for automatic proofing of four-color process and/or four-color process with spot colors that include metallic gold and silver, red, green, blue, orange, opaque white and purple ink sheets. The Prediction 4600 can also accommodate proofing multiple substrates, which are selected automatically during the system's operation.

The Prediction 4600 also features scatter-proofing software. In a large-volume narrow web label application, it enables printers to gang-proof hundreds of labels, flexible packaging or folding carton files in the 22 x 30 format of the system. Both standard and stochastic screening can be handled.

With its 2540 or 2400 dpi resolution, the Prediction 4600 matches the output quality of the leading platemaking system.

“Meanwhile the Creo Prinergy Powerpack prepress workflow has been expanded to meet the needs of small to mid-size label printers”

Latran has been chosen to participate in the new High-definition UV flexo initiative – HDUV – a program sponsored by Dow Industries to link the latest technologies for all-digital workflow.

Kodak Polychrome Graphics (KPG) demonstrated its latest ‘soft’ monitor proofing system. This incorporates the RealTimeProof suite of web-based proofing applications and adds KPG's Matchprint Virtual Proofing System based around a certified LCD monitor to provide ‘accurate and consistent’ viewing of color.

RealTimeProof allows high-resolution files to be viewed even over a dial-up connection using a web browser and plug-in. RealTimeProof technology is now being integrated in workflows from Esko-Graphics and Artwork Systems. Customers can simultaneously view, annotate and mark up proofs online and automatically send e-mail notifications of project progress to team members.

Two other announcements are of great interest to label converters: metallic and opaque white materials are now available for the Matchprint Digital Halftone Proofing System, and the Kodak Approval NX proofing system has now been certified for the Opaltone 7-color printing process.

RK Print introduced to the US its FlexiProof 100 UV system which enables operators to accurately simulate UV printing for all pre-press applications – from computer colour matching to customer presentation samples and from quality control to R&D and printability testing. The FlexiProof 100 UV allows users to conduct pilot runs, freeing up the production press. Proofing and curing inline at high speed highlights problems with inks that would be difficult or impossible using conventional proofing methods. ■

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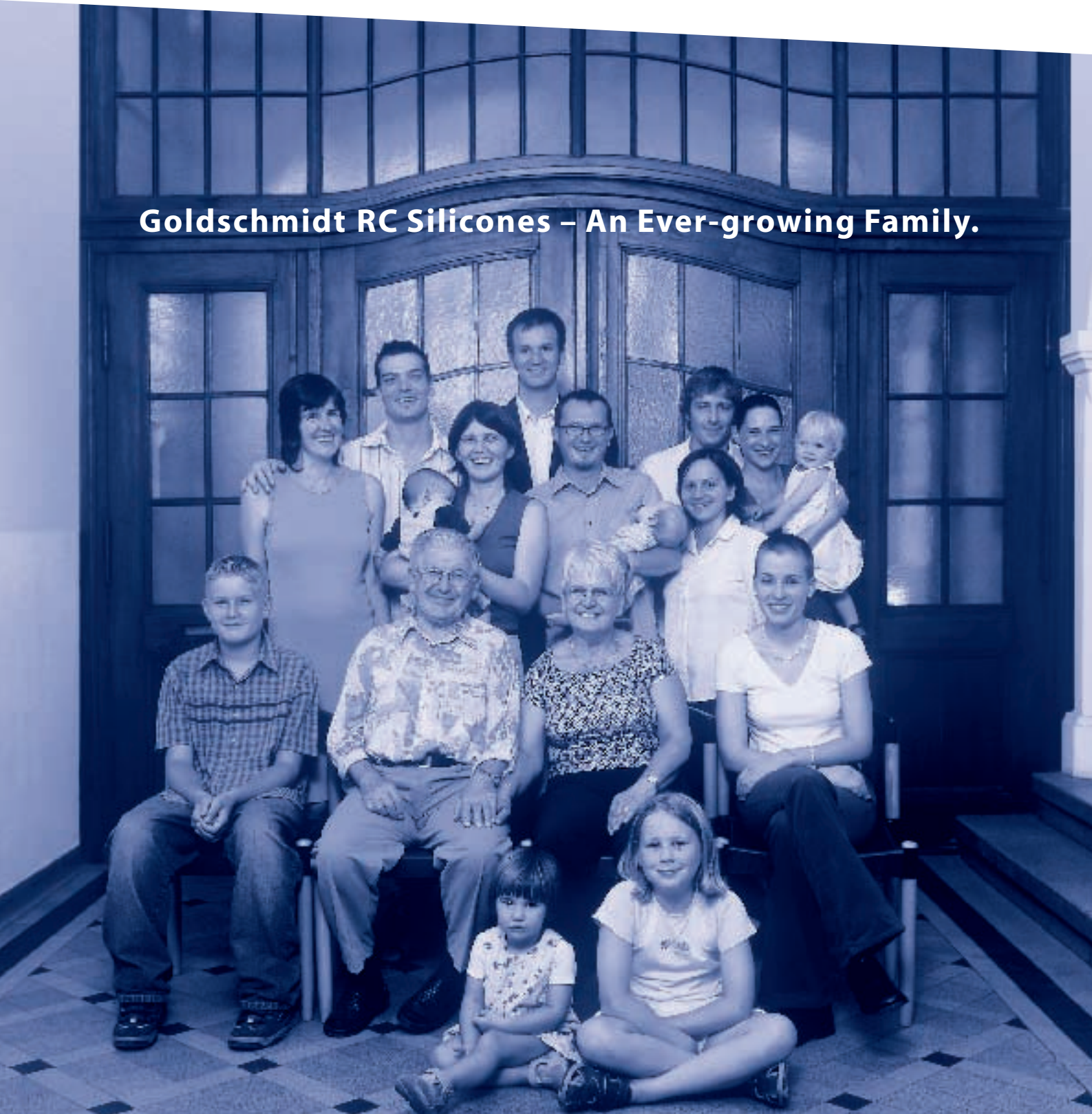
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Narrow web press photo courtesy of Rhode Island Label Works, Inc.

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Hammer time!

Jim Hammer of Hammer Lithograph Corporation is planning to double his sales over the next five years. **Katy Wight** finds out about his management style and how he aims to achieve it

Jim Hammer walks very fast. You have to jog to keep up as he leads a tour through his converting facility. His pace is indicative of the way that he runs his business: fast, focused and consistently gaining ground on the competition.

Jim is the president and CEO of Hammer Lithograph, Rochester, New York, which began as Genesee Valley Lithograph in 1912 and is now the largest cut and stack converter for the bottled water market in the US. This sheetfed business was started by Jim's great grandfather and is one of the few large-scale privately held converters left in the US. Few family businesses can talk of combined sales upwards of \$68 million annually and a company target to double in size over the next five years. Jim Hammer is a dynamo and he's taking his business with him.

Jim joined the company in 1972 after college, beginning in customer service and sales at a time when annual revenues totaled around \$2 million. In 1975 Hammer Litho opened a new facility and then in 1984 Jim became president. With Jim at the helm, the business went through a period of major expansion, beginning in 1987.

'We knew that we would have to invest about \$4 million to expand, so we had to decide whether to borrow the money and invest it in the business or just sell it all. We decided to go ahead and expand, so we extended the previous premises and bought a new press. Five years ago we moved into this 92,000 square feet facility', says Jim. The new facility made way for a new narrow web flexo company in the old building called New Frontier Packaging, with UV capabilities and specializing in PS labels and unsupported film. New Frontier has a 9-color 16" UV press and an 8-color water-based flexo press both manufactured by Comco. The Hammer Family of Companies has a third string to its bow, a company called J. MacKenzie, Ltd, that converts rolls into sheet substrates for clients such as Xerox and Kodak. The business has evolved with the needs of the industry, catering to trends

such as the emergence of shrink sleeves and the use of thinner films, which has made sure that its customers - multi-nationals such as Nestle and Cadbury Schweppes - won't need to look elsewhere for suppliers. 'We have always focused on packaging,' says Jim. 'We wanted to provide the best solution possible for our customers and concentrated on engineering that. Lots of commercial printers have tried to tap into packaging and this is where they have failed. They don't cater specifically to the needs of our market.'

Hammer Litho has two 7-color Mitsubishi 56" presses with coaters, three 8-color 40" and one 6-color 40" offset presses. All the presses use soy inks, which Jim believes is better for the environment, and the company is currently promoting its stochastic screen and hexachrome capabilities. It has also just invested in a state-of-the-art roll-fed Heidelberg CutStar. Hammer Litho uses a large amount of OPP and was looking for a way to lightweight it. Working roll-to-sheet meant that they could feed thinner amounts through the press and thus offer customers a more efficient solution to meet their decorating needs.

'Cost drives everything. If you can offer a cost reduction, then that product will sell in a second,' says Jim. 'We invest an average of 10-12 per cent of all sales in new technology and our biggest challenge is being able to invest in leading edge technology on an ongoing basis. We are always competitive, but we are never the cheapest, because we need to be able to invest back in the business. The challenge is to return enough to the bottom line in order to borrow money for reinvestment.'

Hammer Litho has 80 per cent of its clients under contracts of between three and five years, which provides a certain level of security for reinvestment. Maintaining a cutting-edge facility is also key in the company's strategy as a 'value-added' converter. The term 'value-added' is often bandied around in the industry, but what exactly does it mean to Hammer's customers?



Center: the Heidelberg Cutstar enables Hammer to print on thinner films. Left and right: Hammer Litho's finishing department

'We have promoted ourselves as an on demand supplier and that means that we do what it takes to help meet our customers needs. We still work to the philosophy that you will get it when you want it and that is a big challenge when you are doing work for companies all across Northern America.' Strategically positioning itself as an on demand supplier also means that the company is unaffected by consumer product companies outsourcing offshore.

'It takes time to ship labels,' adds Jim. 'We can provide what you want, when you want.' Hammer Litho offers vendor-managed inventory and ordering through its customized Avanti management information system and has been going direct to plate for five years. It started with a Creo system, but a year ago invested in a Dai Nippon Screen Ultima as it needed the ability to image a 56" plate. The company this year upgraded its three Kodak Polychrome Graphics Approval XP digital halftone proofers to NX machines.

The growing stronghold of pressure sensitive labels and flexo printing has seen competition really heating up with the offset label industry. Differentiating your business has never been so important. With Hammer Litho's sheetfed sales topping more than \$55 million already this year, it must be doing something right. But, despite this success, there is no way Jim and his team are going to just sit back and enjoy it. 'We have an innovation department,' explains Jim, 'and they are expected to introduce two new processes and substrates per year. We make sure that we introduce two products each year because after six months, the competition catches up. We need to be onto something else by the time they are up to speed. It's about doing something different than the competition.'

'Our latest developments are HammerSYN, a cut and stack

Under the hammer

The concept of being 'value-added' has become more poignant for Hammer Litho due to the rise of reverse auctions.

'This business is super competitive,' says Jim. 'Reverse auctions emerged five years ago and it started off as a bloodbath. People were taking the business at below factory cost level. You can't put yourself in a position where you are producing negative profits, but you can't afford not to be in the auction either.'

'Now we have a strategy - we are a value-added supplier, so we have a team concept for reverse auctions. We form a team with suppliers and see how collectively we can drive cost down.'

'We have won a few new contracts, but typically 80 per cent of the contracts go to the incumbent at lower prices. We did have some business taken from us for a short period of time, but we got it back because they couldn't meet the expectation previously set by Hammer. You don't know who you're up against in each auction and often the companies participating aren't always comparable with regard to size, equipment and capabilities.'

'The reverse auction will always be there to a certain degree, but I think it will run its course. You are better off working with suppliers and end users in the long term to reduce cost. Label printing is not a commodity. Every job is different to the one before - it's not like buying coal. A label is what sells a bottle of water, so you had better make sure that it looks the best that it can.'

'Hammer Litho will always be competitive, but we will not be 20 per cent below factory cost.'



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Hammer Hall of Fame

Jim served as president of the Label Printing Industries of America from 1994 to 1996 and in 2004 will be inducted into the LPIA Hall of Fame. He was also named 2004 Sheetfed Executive of the Year by NAPL and GATF/PIA.

- Rochester Top 100 privately held company for 15 years
- Best Workplace in America, Master Printers of America, 2001, 2002 and 2003
- NAPL Management Plus Silver Award 2002, 2003 and 2004
- ISO 9001:2000 Registered Quality System



Bottom right: Jim hammer takes a hands-on approach in the sheetfed finishing department

film label for fast application speeds, which we co-developed with ExxonMobil and HammerICE, which is a high gloss count coated sheet. We developed HammerSYN as packaging started to move towards PET. It makes sense to have a plastic label - it presents better and is easier for recycling. The HammerICE substrate can produce the characteristics of UV cured inks without the additional cost.'

As well as partnering with companies such as ExxonMobil, Hammer has a close relationship with Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT), which is right next door. The school helped with the development of a wraparound film label that could be dropped from 20 feet without damage.

'We got involved in the film market in the mid 1990s after a customer approached me,' explains Jim. "They were supplying beverages to Wal-Mart, who was using a 'drop test' for checking labels. If just one label fell off a bottle, then Wal-Mart would reject the whole case. In the case of the label that we developed, the top of the bottle came off before the label broke.'

Hammer's approach is to be proactive, not reactive, and bring innovation to the marketplace itself - something entirely reliant on its 265 employees.

Every member of staff has to undertake 16 hours of training each year.

'We need to take advantage of opportunities and hire the right people to gain experience in different technologies,' says Jim. 'If you are not changing internally as much as the world is changing externally, you will be out of business. At Hammer, as long as you are continually trained and improve yourself, there will be a place for you. People are our most important asset.'

The company is an open book and all employees are able to see its operating profit and how it is being spent. Jim believes that for company members 'having shared values is critical to change' and the momentum that Hammer Litho has gained is all derived from change. The company's chameleon-like tendency to adapt to the evolving industry climate has probably provided its leading edge. And there's no doubt that Jim Hammer has a lot more up his sleeve. He talks about new products under development and Hammer Litho's involvement with RFID, but he won't give any secrets away - I guess some things will never change. ■

No.310

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Lüscher commits to flexo engraving

With direct engraving of flexo plates a hot topic, **Barry Hunt** reports on the strategy of Lüscher Flexo following its acquisition of ZED and opening of new premises in the UK

Lüscher Flexo formally opened its new premises in Thame, Oxfordshire (65 km west of London) on 5 August before an international audience of customers, distributors and suppliers. Hans Lüscher, proprietor of Lüscher AG, performed the formal opening just four months after the company's acquisition of ZED Instruments, formerly located in Walton-on-Thames, Surrey. The new company forms the major plank in a group strategy to increase its flexo-related business, especially with direct-laser ablation (laser engraving) technologies for relief printing processes, as well as high-quality anilox rolls.

Lüscher AG of Leutwil is a privately-owned Swiss company, founded in 1946, which has around 150 employees. Products have included screen printing stencil making equipment step-and-repeat machines, large-format drum laser scanners and large-format ink jet printers for the textile markets. The latest FlexPose! Series is based on the firm's successful Xpose thermal imaging CTP system for offset plates, as well as computer-to-screen systems. Some 24 per cent of customers are label and packaging converters, 11 per cent are trade houses, while the remainder are commercial printers. They are located in 48 different countries.

The opening was a showcase for FlexPose!direct, a second generation of modular engravers launched at Drupa 2004. They use sealed CO₂ laser engraving technology to produce either plates or sleeves for flexo, letterpress and dry (indirect) offset from a single machine. Increased productivity, reduced set-up time and an easy-change sleeve facility are claimed, plus seamless operation on 1-bit or 8-bit open digital workflows and simplified dot gain calibration. With a maximum ablation length of 120cm and 300 Watt laser power, the FlexPose!direct

301 is best suited to engraving flexo plates and sleeves for narrow or mid-web flexo production of labels and flexible packaging.

Lüscher sees all aspects of flexo production will increase its business opportunities, especially with greater acceptance of not just direct laser imaging (CTP), but also new types of direct laser engraving systems. According to Bruce Knox, managing director of Lüscher Flexo, the latter technology had arrived. He added that, compared with thermal ablative mask imaging methods, this direct-to-plate method requires just simple water-wash and dry processing. Furthermore, it offers negative or positive-working options for both sleeves and plates. 'It's an ideal process, especially for making seamless, plates-in-the-round within open digital workflow systems, which is sure to grow. In quality terms, it is possible to achieve 175 lines/inch (70 l/cm) with a wide tonal range and fine highlight dots.' He added that BASF and DuPont had set the standards for digitally-imaged polymer materials, but they were also taking notice of direct laser ablation, especially using new types of elastomeric materials. While costing slightly more than equivalent polymeric materials, he said the latter offered superior ink/plate characteristics, especially with longer flexible packaging runs. Lüscher Flexo has a technical partnership with Ligm in the Czech Republic for elastomeric sleeve material. Fullflex Flexographic Systems of Greeneville, TN - which represented ZED Industries in the USA - continues this role for Lüscher Flexo, including the supply of Laserflex DDF laser-engravable polymeric materials for plates and seamless sleeves.

 No.300

Above right – Bruce Knox, md of the UK operation on left and Hans Lüscher proprietor of Lüscher AG on right. Above left – Lüscher Flexo highlights direct-laser engraving at new UK-based operation



The TLC approach

When Eric Jones, Richard Florez and Margie Martinez bought TLC The Label Company, their homes were on the line and they were working around the clock. One year later and they have a \$12 million sales target. **Katy Wight** reports

Since TLC The Label Company, Anaheim, California, changed management a year ago, it's undergone an extreme makeover and seen sales soar. When general manager Eric Jones, sales manager Richard Florez and president Margie Martinez joined forces and bought the company, they had an ambitious business plan in mind. After tightening systems and investing in two new Nilpeter presses, TLC has become a force to be reckoned with in the LA-area prime label market.

The original TLC business was started in 1986 by K. Ivan Narragon, who took a second loan out on his house to buy a press. He built up a loyal client base over the next seventeen years and by 2003, annual sales were around \$4 million. The buyout team could see that the business had a lot of untapped potential, but it would require significant investment.

'We have made investing in the company a continuous project,' says Jones. 'You have to stay efficient and on the edge of the capabilities of your equipment. The TLC model has been pure change and since we took over, every piece of equipment has been replaced or upgraded.'

The trio more than doubled sales in their first year and have a \$12 million target for 2004 – three times the sales of the business that they took over. All three partners are well versed in the label converting business, having worked in the label industry with over 40 years of combined experience. Jones had production experience as a plant manager, while Florez worked in sales and Martinez owned another label company. Martinez believes that these different approaches have been beneficial.

'With many family-owned or one-person businesses, you can't afford to focus in specialized areas,' she says, 'and some fall into traps. With our collective experience of sales and production, we can push from both ends.'

Employees have increased from 30 to 50 since the acquisition, working three shifts over 24 hours, five days a week.

"We found that some of the other presses were more difficult to configure. The Nilpeter held very tight tolerances and there are also lots of options in terms of what you can slot into the print stations"



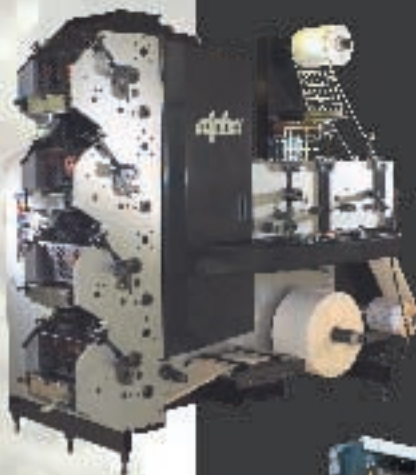
From left: Richard Florez; Eric Vandenberg, regional manager, Nilpeter; Margie Martinez; and Eric Jones

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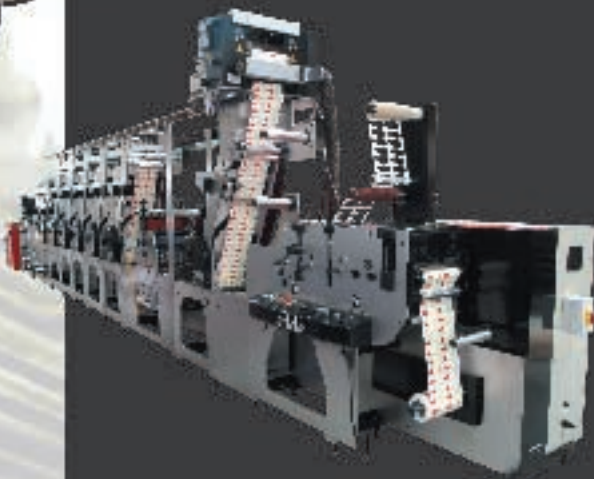
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“We have made a large investment in equipment and we are able to offer our customers superior quality. We are printing very similar quality to litho and offset. This has helped us to gain an edge over other flexographic printers”

The majority of the business is in converting prime labels for the health and beauty, home improvement, nutraceutical and entertainment markets. About ten per cent of the business comes from printing tags, but all of the growth that TLC has seen and expects, is coming from prime label.

The start-up team inherited two 10" Propheteer letterpress UV presses and three Webtron 750 water-based flexo presses and in June 2003 they invested in their first Nilpeter FA3300. Six months later, TLC won its first 4-color process Gold Medal Award from the FTA for a DVD promotional label. The company invested in its second FA3300 in April of this year. Both presses are 8-color UV and one has Stork rotary screen capabilities.

‘We promote ourselves on quality and service. As you can see, we have made a large investment in equipment and we are able to offer our customers superior quality. We are printing very similar quality to litho and offset. This has helped us to gain an edge over other flexographic printers’ says Florez.

‘The markets that we service and their requirements – high line screen, exact registration and so on – requires premium equipment with superior capabilities. Customers want high-end four-color work. Some of the other presses that we looked at were able to print the same quality, but we wanted to be able to add in screen and cold foil capabilities. We also found that some of the other presses were more difficult to configure. The Nilpeter held



Six months after investing in its first FA3300, TLC won an FTA Gold medal Award.

very tight tolerances and there are also lots of options in terms of what you can slot into the print stations.’

Demonstrating the press’ registration capabilities, the day that L&L visited, TLC was easily printing a 2-color promotional label, where the customer had specified no trapping, at speeds over 500fpm.

‘We monitor color with an electronic spectrophotometer and monitor the web with vision inspection,’ adds Jones. ‘Brands are becoming more color conscious and consistent color is no longer an option – it’s a requirement – and some converters are struggling to compete.’

TLC’s customer requirements are the utmost consideration when choosing new equipment. With run lengths varying from anything between 1,000 and 20 million labels and with frequent last minute changes occurring, they needed a press with fast set-up and quick changeover – especially to maintain its reputation as a ‘just-in-time’ supplier.

‘These Fortune 500 companies tend to run just-in-time inventories,’ explains Jones, ‘so you often find that you are furnishing last minute orders very quickly. They also tend to incorporate special offers or change text and graphics, so we have to be flexible. We needed a press that could provide quick changeover. The Nilpeter has quick release aniloxes and doctor rolls – they’re not cassette style, but they’re very easy to handle.’

The presses weren’t the only investment that TLC made to cater to

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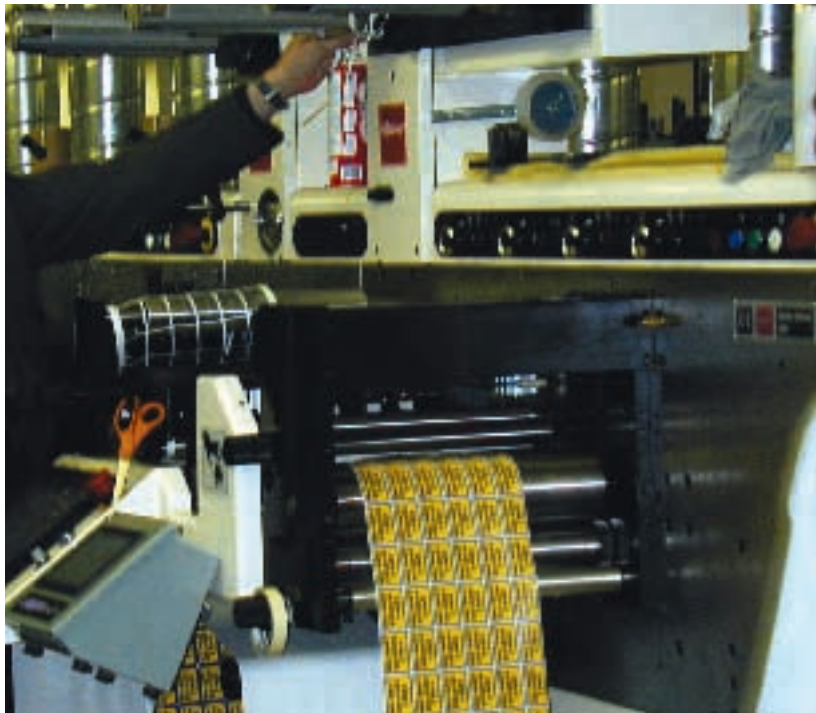
TLC's growth strategy is focused around pressure sensitive labels: 'We have looked into packaging applications,' explains Jones, 'but they wouldn't be adding to our business. For now we are sticking to our strategy of doing what we do best – printing pressure sensitive labels and tags, but who knows what the future will bring!'

high-end clients. They installed a management information system, labeltraxx, where employees and customers can access their job information and status remotely via the world wide web. The system has finely honed the production process, automated scheduling, estimating and accounting. Invoicing, which used to be a day-long task, has now been reduced by more than 50 per cent, freeing up manpower. The system also provides profitability reports on a per job basis.

'We differentiate ourselves from our competitors by understanding our costs,' says Jones. 'By knowing our true cost, we can offer better value.' Could this be how TLC has managed to grow at such a fast pace?

The business is already unrecognizable from its former self, but the next step will be moving the company from its current 17,000 sq ft facility to a new 40,000 sq ft property. The young management team and its willingness to adopt the latest technology to maximize productivity and reduce variables, is producing impressive results. The new TLC approach is working. ■

e No.311



"The company invested in its second FA3300 in April of this year"

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Labelexpo takes off

Labelexpo Singapore 2004

Labelexpo Singapore 2004, which takes place 23-25 November at the Singapore Expo Centre, will provide a regional showcase for suppliers to the narrow web industry in the region.

Andy Thomas previews the show

The market for self-adhesive labels in Asia-Pacific - outside China and Japan - has been growing steadily at around 10 per cent or more per annum for the last ten years, a rate of growth expected to continue over the next five years.

Labelexpo Singapore show organizer Tarsus expects this to be reflected in visitor numbers of over 4,000 from across this key region, which includes Australia, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. As well as show sponsor FINAT, Labelexpo Singapore has this year attracted the support of leading regional trade associations, including the Asian Flexographic Technical Association (AFTA), the Indonesian Packaging Federation (IPF), the Label Manufacturers Association of India (LMAI), the Self Adhesive Label Manufacturer's Association of New Zealand (SALMA) and the Taiwan Packaging Industry Network.

Fritz Beglinger, FINAT president, commented: 'The fact that local manufacturers and their trade associations are now actively involved illustrates that the self-adhesive label industry in Asia and Australasia has proceeded to the next level of industry development. FINAT in turn is looking forward to co-operating with these organisations to promote self-adhesive knowledge and education, international networking as well as the establishment of its global standards, the FINAT Test Methods.'

Ariana Susanti of the Indonesian Packaging Federation, said, 'We are pleased to support Labelexpo Singapore 2004. In this

day and age of worldwide trade liberalization, we earnestly believe that the event will become a good opportunity to develop the packaging market. The event attracts major international suppliers who will exhibit real working machinery - a unique feature in Asia. We do hope that many Indonesian companies will attend to learn about the latest in labeling technologies, to see the latest machinery - and to do real business and network with the global labels industry.'

LMAI president Surender Kapur also stressed the importance of the event for regional networking: 'Labelexpo Singapore 2004 provides an "under one roof" concept for the various interests around the globe dealing with a cross section of materials, machineries and technologies - and thus creates the right platform for understanding the current status of the industry and learning the requirements of the future.'

A two stream conference will run for three days alongside the exhibition. For the complete conference program visit www.labelexpo-singapore.com

Press technology

Labelexpo Singapore will provide the opportunity for the region's label converters to see completely new press technology, as well as machines launched at Labelexpo Chicago in September. Press manufacturers exhibiting will include Mark Andy, Nilpeter, GiDue, Labelmen, Iwasaki, Orthotec, Sanki, Focus Machinery, KDO and, on the digital



23 - 25 November, Singapore

LABELXPO Singapore 2004

www.labelexpo-singapore.com



Singapore Labelexpo provides the focus for regional label converters to catch up on global technology trends

side, HP Indigo.

Focus Machinery will show for the first time its new compact in-line press, the Proflex. With web widths of 250 and 330mm, the Proflex is a fully expandable, in-line modular press. Positioned as an 'inexpensive' press, it has many features normally associated with larger in-line machines, including a line-shaft drive, removable print cassettes and enclosed precision gearboxes for each print head.

The press also incorporates rapid change print cartridges to reduce downtime, automatic plate throw off, constant rotating anilox rolls and a new inter-station drying system for higher press speeds. The Proflex has been designed to print and convert a wide range of substrates, from 20 micron film, to foils, vinyls, plastics, labelstock, tickets and cartonboard.

Focus director, David Lee comments, 'We believe that this press will be well received by the Asian market, as it offers all the very latest technology, without the expense of a large in-line flexo press.' Focus will also show a 10in wide, 6-color Centraflex CI press, L6 Letterflex press and TTC-100 bench top ultrasonic cutting and folding systems. Heat transfer labels - or 'tagless labels' - developed by Focus for the textile industry, will be shown for the first time.

Mark Andy will use the show to introduce its new "QC" Quick Change Cassette System. The system will allow converters to choose from a variety of print processes that

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Labelexpo

takes off



are fully interchangeable in any LP3000 or XP5000 printing platform.

The QC Rotary Screen Cassette unit - manufactured by Stork for use with the company's RotaMesh screens - offers a compact rotary screen head at a more affordable price.

Other QC Quick Change cassettes include hot foil stamping, a cold foil unit and an inter-station diecut module. These interchangeable technologies allow converters with LP3000 and XP5000 presses fast set-up and changeover in any print station.

Nilpeter - exhibiting alongside its agents IPP/MAN Roland - will show for the first time in Asia-Pacific a new generation servo-driven FA3300 UV flexo press, an 8-color machine with two drop-in UV screen heads and a cold foil unit.

GiDue, which has been a strong supporter of the Singapore Labelexpo show series, will exhibit a highly specified 8-color Combat 280 UV flexo press. Designed for speeds up to 150m/min (500ft/min) the 280mm (11") wide press is destined for a customer in Australia following the show.

Drent Goebel will demonstrate its sleeve offset technology (VSOP), delivering high quality web-offset with variable repeat lengths. Hybrid configurations are available including flexo, gravure, silk screen, hot foil stamp and laminating.

AP Maschinen shows a variation of its established inking systems suitable for all letterpress and offset label printing machines. The system can be installed on new presses or retrofitted and is fully upgradeable to the AP- AEIC

computerised Ink Flow Control system. AP Maschinen will also show a pneumatic Ink Agitator which connects to the press' air system.

Materials

The Treofan Group is aiming to become a major player in label applications in the Asia-Pacific region, and its Australian division is currently enlarging its label film portfolio to include in-mould label grades and a wider range of self-adhesive grades.

Sopal Panoval will launch a new easy-peel family of dry peel products and a range of ultra-removable high UV-resistant adhesives on both paper and synthetic face materials. The latest developments in EAS & RFID labeling will also be on show, including a dry peel EAS label solution.

Ritrama will launch new products including a range of engineered thin films for bottle decorations, and labelstock for seal and reseal applications in the wet wipe and packaged food markets - including a range of emulsion and solvent adhesives.

Amongst the new paper-based products will be a range of pharmaceutical papers and films, complementing an extensive catalog of security products.

Sihl will introduce its PicoFilm laser printable films at the show, incorporating special topcoats for better ink anchorage. The top-coated PET films are available in up to 300 µm thickness, coated on one or both sides, and with three different

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— Chris Freddo, VP, New York Label

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top-coats: mat, gloss or transparent. PicoFilm readily accepts thermal transfer and dot matrix printing and performs well when overlaminated for membership cards, staff passes and cards of all descriptions, says the company.

Dow Corning will introduce to Singapore its Syl-Off Advantage Series of platinum-catalyzed, solvent-less silicone release coatings. Advantage Series coatings significantly reduce platinum levels and help control costs in high-volume paper coating operations, and are suitable for use with a wide range of adhesives and applications. The series includes base polymers, crosslinkers, release modifiers and catalysts that enable flexible control of release, cure and cost without compromising release stability, anchorage or line speed.

Avery Dennison and Raflatac will both be present at the show, promoting their latest products backed up by extensive production and distribution networks across the region.

Polyonics, specialist in harsh environmental labels and product marking for industrial identification, will announce that its website, www.polyonics.com, is now available in a number of regional languages, including Chinese, Korean and Japanese, allowing global customers to conduct business in their native language.

Also present at the show is Chemque, which develops and manufactures more than 70 different formulations of doming resins for all applications, including clear, colored, molding, sparkling, and fluorescent. The company also manufactures a

series of doming resin dispenser machines.

Digital printing

Hp Indigo will show for the first time in Asia-Pacific its new generation digital offset press, the ws4050, launched recently at Labelexpo Chicago. As well as a range of quality improvements, the press is fully specified for converting extensible film materials including shrink films. There will be an off-line converting unit from AB Graphics, and workflow solution from Esko-Graphics. Other important developments for label converters include pharma validation for the ws4050 and practical examples of 'clear on clear' label production.

HP Indigo will also have the sheetfed s2000 digital press on the stand along with a GBC sheetfed laminator and MGE i-cut laser sheetfed die-cutter.

Roland DG will demonstrate its new VersaCAMM SP-300 inkjet system which prints and cuts photorealistic graphics for short run and on-demand label production without the need for plates or die-cutters. Labels can be scaled to a wide variety of sizes, and the SP-300 will handle spot colors.

On the Nilpeter stand, Newfoil will be exhibiting the compact 3500 digital press launched at Labelexpo Chicago, which combines a VIPColor VP8020 "cool fusion" digital print engine with flatbed converting and finishing equipment.

German company Cab is looking to push its Variable Information Printing (VIP) systems into the Asia market. The





Labelexpo takes off

“The market for PS labels in Asia-Pacific – outside China and Japan – has been growing steadily at around 10 per cent or more for the last ten years”

Cab range includes software and accessories for transfer printers, applicators and laser marking systems. Cab's 'A Series' comprises solutions from 4" to 8" printing width and 200dpi to 600 dpi printing quality.

Singapore-based company Transam now claims to be the biggest converter of barcode thermal transfer ribbon in the South East Asian region. The company sources its raw materials from manufacturers such as Ricoh, Dai Nippon Printing, Dync Corporation, General, Fujicopian and ITW.

Seagull Scientific is the creator of BarTender, a Windows-based barcode label program. With offices in Europe, Asia-Pacific, and USA, the company claims to be the world's largest developer of Windows drivers for label printers. BarTender makes it easy to design advanced labels, with full control over barcodes, text, symbols, graphics, and more. It offers numerous predefined label stocks, or the option of quickly defining custom sizes.

Encoding of RFID labels is supported on most RFID-capable printers. Features for integration with supply chain, ERP and other software include versatile data access including a SAP-certified IDoc interface, Active X Automation for remote control, and automatic e-mail notifications of label usage.

Ancillary

The Bobst Group Flexible Materials division will use the show for the South East Asian launch of its new Titan SR8 slitter rewinder. The SR8 has been conceived in a modular format, facilitating future machine enhancements and upgrades. "This concept allows the SR8 to be competitively priced while at the same time providing a high level of technology, with

improved web guidance and web handling capabilities for an even broader range of sensitive, flexible materials,' says the company. Cork covered carbon fibre rollers and 'S' wrap centre drives help to provide high quality finished slit reels.

Unilux – which now has service centers throughout Asia and the Pacific Rim - will show its new family of stroboscopic inspection lights. The Scout and Tracker are designed to pinpoint targeted locations on narrow label webs.

Both can be fix-mounted or operated as battery-powered portable units and are claimed capable of delivering 5 to 10 times more light intensity to the target area than standard flood light models. The Guardian and the new Style IV Lit-O-Light fit the footprint of the previous Lith-O-Light and provide double the light output at maximum flash rate. Digital control technology provides finer adjustment to one flash per minute resolution.

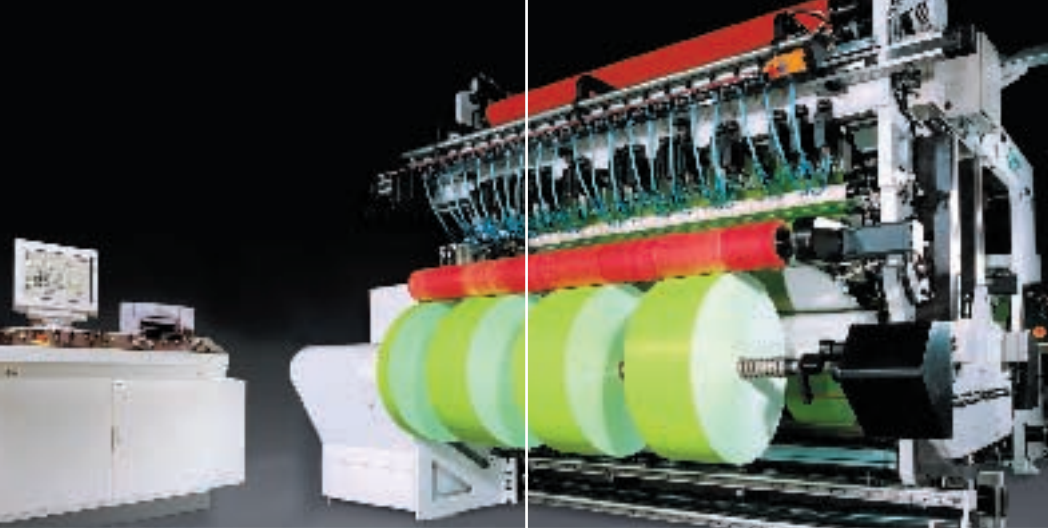
ChemInstruments, Inc. will introduce its 1000 Series force measurement testing system, which now comprises the TT-1000 Tensile Tester, HSR-1000 High Speed Release Tester, BP-1000 Burst - Perforation Tester and the flagship PMA-1000 Probe Material Analyzer.

All of the 1000 Series test instruments are fully compatible with the company's proprietary software management program, EZ LAB, a complete test and data management program that can be used to control all of the 1000 Series test instruments using a PC or laptop.

EZ LAB allows the user to specify and control testing parameters, manage, analyze and graph test data and results, and store or export the data for future use.

RK Print Coat Instruments will show a range of sample preparation systems including the new FlexiProof 100 with integrated UV curing. This bench-top system enables users to accurately simulate UV printing for all flexo pre-press applications – from computer colour matching to customer samples, from quality control to R & D and print feasibility testing. Proofing and curing at high speed enables the FlexiProof to highlight problems with inks that would be difficult or impossible to identify using conventional proofing methods.

Open Data will launch two new products: a lightweight portable labeler designed specifically for the extremely competitive Far Eastern market, and a portable label applicator, the Dynamic. ■



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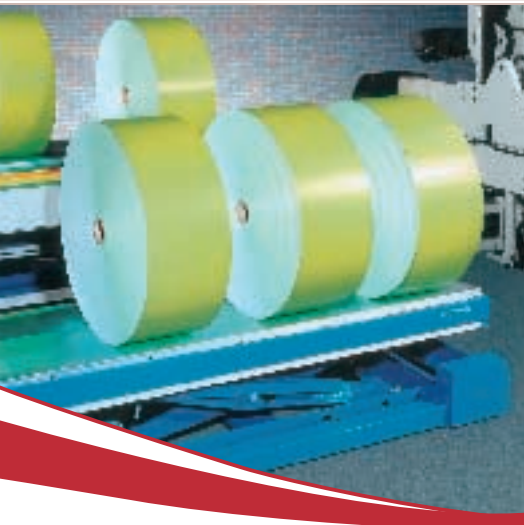


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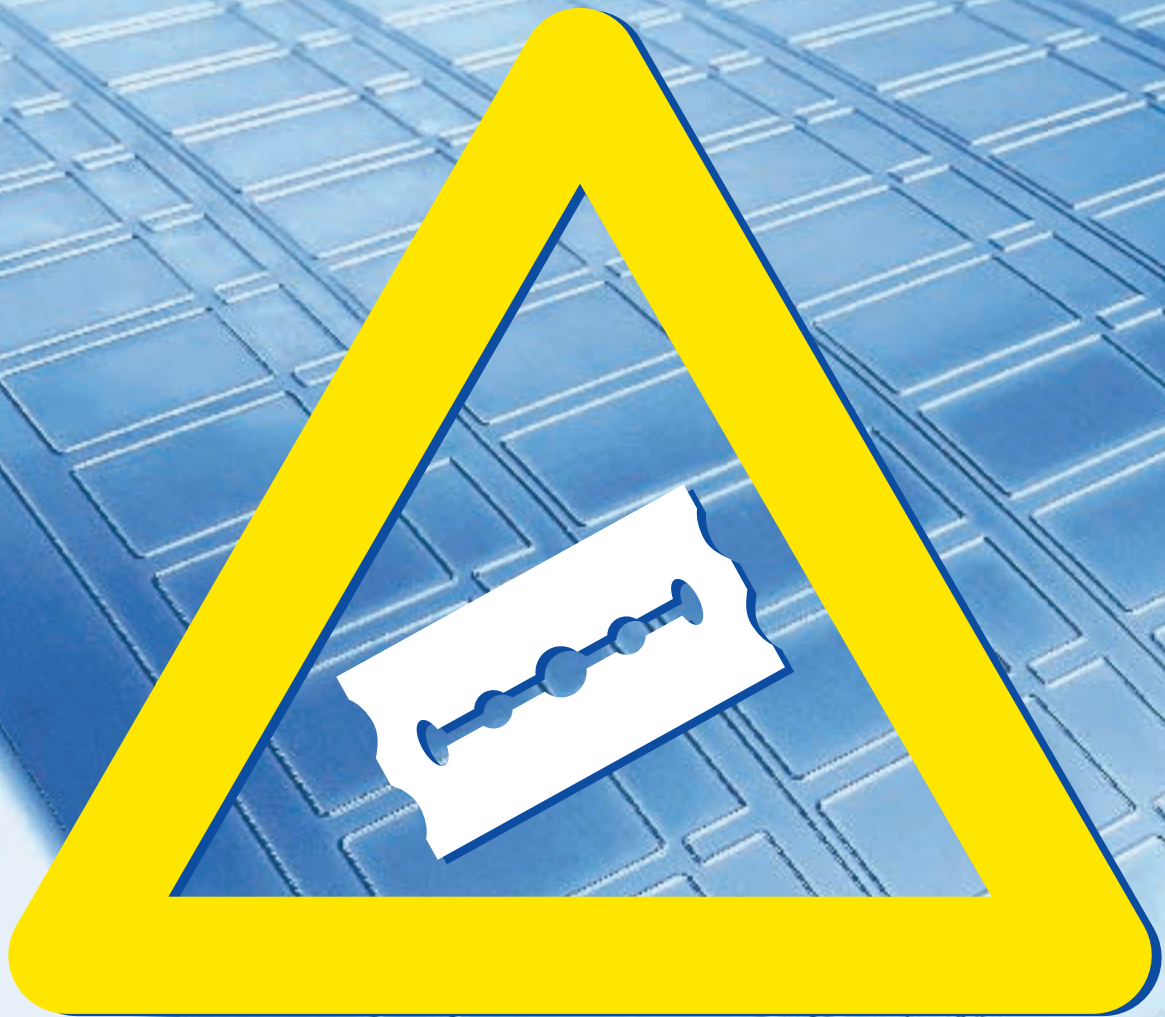
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Finding your feet with flexo

G-3 Enterprises' Label Division has made a name for itself in sheetfed offset printing for the beverage industry. Investment in a new Gallus EM 280 flexo press guarantees to open the doors to new business opportunities within the label printing industry

In California, the Gallo name is synonymous with wine. Thomas Gallo, whose grandfather Julio was half of the duo that started the world-famous global brand, has carved his own niche by targeting the label manufacturing market within the beverage industry. As director and general manager of G-3's Label Division, he is operating a label converting operation expecting annual sales of \$15 million this year.

The division's growth has been aggressive since the company was established two years ago in Modesto, California. Thomas Gallo's strategy of investment has introduced new capabilities and fueled the opportunity for new business from the beverage industry. Quite the entrepreneur, Thomas started this business in 1993, after graduating from California Polytechnic State University with a degree in graphic communication. He began Grand Street Printing Technologies with a single 4-color Heidelberg offset press and a Polar Guillotine Cutter to service the local wine bottling industry.

Before the inception of G-3 Enterprises, Gallo was one of several shareholders who owned four businesses: A container closure facility, a bottle decorating business, a logistics agency, and a label producing company. In 2002, Gallo decided to incorporate all four companies under one umbrella, leading to the birth of G-3 Enterprises. At the same time, Grand Street Printing Technologies, then with annual sales of \$6 million, relocated to a new and impressive facility located on a large campus in Modesto with room to grow. In its first year, as a division of G-3 Enterprises, the Label Division more than doubled its sales.

Focused on producing value-added labels for the beverage industry, G-3 has one 8-color Heidelberg Speedmaster CD74 with a coater plus UV drying and one 6-color Speedmaster SM72 with an aqueous coater. Adding Narrow Web Flexo to the sheetfed offset capability was just part of Thomas's growth strategy. He explains, 'Within the Label Division we knew that we needed to expand our capabilities. We developed a three

step plan of expansion: The first step was installing two Gietz foil stamping and embossing presses. The next step was introducing a digital workflow tool to the pre-press department. This allows us to go directly from computer to plate for both the sheetfed and the flexo operations. And the final step was introducing Narrow Web Flexo capability.'

Primarily producing sheetfed glue applied labels, G-3 was well equipped to serve the larger wine and beverage manufacturers, such as Gallo Wines. G-3 produces around 70 million labels each month, but Thomas recognized that investing in flexo technology would allow G-3 to exploit growing opportunities in the pressure sensitive applications.

'Over the past 18 months we performed market research for pressure sensitive application and are currently in test mode with 20 different customers,' says Gallo. 'We also have had a lot of interest from existing customers in the new application capabilities. Today, we are printing our first live job on the new press—a wine label—and will be performing a press check with the client,' he adds.

'Our equipment requirements are driven entirely by our customer base,' he says. 'Our customers are the ones driving the label design and we believe our new flexo press will compete quality-wise with labels being printed offset. With the new flexo press, we are closing the gap on offset and we can offer a much more cost-effective solution to our customers.'

Gallo decided to invest in the Gallus EM 280 flexo Press with 11 print stations, foil, rotary screen, and embossing, along with a Rotoflex rewind unit. 'We were looking for a press that would give us quick make-ready, fast changeovers, and with very tight registration control—these were the key drivers for us,' says Gallo. 'We analyzed a great number of presses in the industry and found that the Gallus EM 280 flexo Press covered all our requirements and, in addition, we were very interested in their future product offerings. As a matter of fact, we have already received a proposal for a 13" RCS 330. It has cassette-style



“Issues that typically would have been obstacles in the past, like printing on uncoated stocks, haven't cropped up at all”

stations, flexo, offset and rotary screen capabilities and allows the operator to change plates while the press is still running. I would like to be the first printer in the US to install the RCS 330 with offset capabilities.’

‘As far as setup and operation, we hired two consultants with experience in the narrow web flexo industry to help us with the initial setup. When it came to the physical operation of the new flexo press, our offset operators did not have any experience in this area, so to give us a running start we made the decision to hire skilled operators from outside the company,’ says Gallo. ‘Our aim is to produce a high quality product at the lowest true cost by investing in all the latest and greatest technology and hiring the talented people. The only challenge we face, while continually improving our technology, is finding people with skills that match the new technology.’

As with most converters in California, if not globally, recruiting in order to sustain growth in a high-tech printing environment, is a big problem. The G-3 Label Division employs 65 people, 15 of whom are press operators. High-quality replacements or additional hires in the area are very difficult to find. Even with enticements like a new facility and state-of-the-art equipment, it is still difficult to recruit skilled operators.

‘To counter this problem, G-3 has in place a very aggressive and thorough internal training program,’ says Gallo. ‘We have achieved ISO certification that is the foundation of our training and quality systems. Each individual employee has their own 7-18 month training plan so they can continually grow and gain new skills. The company’s strategy in this area is to invest as much in its people as in new technology,’ he states.

Working with the EM 280

‘The new press has given us immediate quality results and that means we can get out of the gate at the highest possible level,’ says press operator Bruce Harris. ‘Issues that typically would have been obstacles in the past, like printing on uncoated stock, haven’t cropped up at all. We’re happy with the quality now and we know that it is only going to get better.’

Gallo adds, ‘We have found the press to work well on uncoated stocks. It can also keep ink densities and hold dot structures well and we have reproduced some nice vignettes. We’re able to print on embossed and uncoated substrates and uncoated stock, one of flexo’s biggest challenges.’

The flexo startup Team believes that the pre-press facility at G-3 has had a very positive impact on the quality of the labels. The DuPont Cyrel Fast System was installed in May of this year and the team comments on the minimal dot gain and excellent detail achieved with the Fast plates. Gallo estimates that since G-3’s pre-press area became a complete digital operation, they have increased productivity by 10-15 times over.

‘Next year, as well as growing our flexo business, our key focus will be automation in our Finishing Department. We have a five-year plan that is based around the beverage industry. If we run out of opportunities in that area, we will look into other arenas, but at the moment, we believe it is key for us to focus on our niche and not become distracted,’ Gallo notes. ‘As the first live run processes off the new flexo press, you can feel the excitement throughout the company with the realization that G-3 Label Division is embarking on a new era. With the flexo technology, this era should bring aggressive growth for the company over the next five years.’ ■

No.312



Gil DuLong, consultant for G&D Advanced Flexographic Technologies; G-3 Enterprises - Label Division: James Stone, DP/Narrow web team leader; Thomas J Gallo, director and general manager. Front row: Narrow web operators: Bruce Harris; Lugardo Quirarte; and Fernando Garza

a question of personality

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The 9-color Evolution press by PCMC

Growing pains

Being the president of both converter Label Technology and TLMI has been mutually beneficial for John Bankson. **Katy Wight** finds out how TLMI helped shape his business, and how he's influencing the next generation of converters

John Bankson, president of Label Technology, Merced, California, is a famous face in the American label industry. He is the incumbent president of TLMI and devoted to the growth and promotion of the American tag and label industry. Bankson is also the head of a converting operation that he built from the ground up eighteen years ago, and is targeted to bring in \$22 million this year. When he talks to TLMI member converters about achieving enduring success, they listen.

Growing Label Technology to the size it is today hasn't always been a smooth ride and Bankson and his son, vice president of manufacturing, David Bankson, have both put in their fair share of graft. With this varied experience, Bankson has a wealth of skills and knowledge to bring to the TLMI table.

'Being president of TLMI has been the highlight of my career,' he says. 'TLMI has definitely been the key to Label Technology's success – it's invaluable to anyone starting a new business. It gives you the relationships and the statistical data to help grow your business and be a success. As president I have seen that this really is the case.'

'We have always used all of the ratio studies to make sure that we are managing the business as well as, if not better than, our

competitors. In certain areas we may have found that we were under-performing but it gives you a chance to recognize and do something about that. TLMI really helps people and I've talked to many owners of both large and small corporations who feel the same way that I do.'

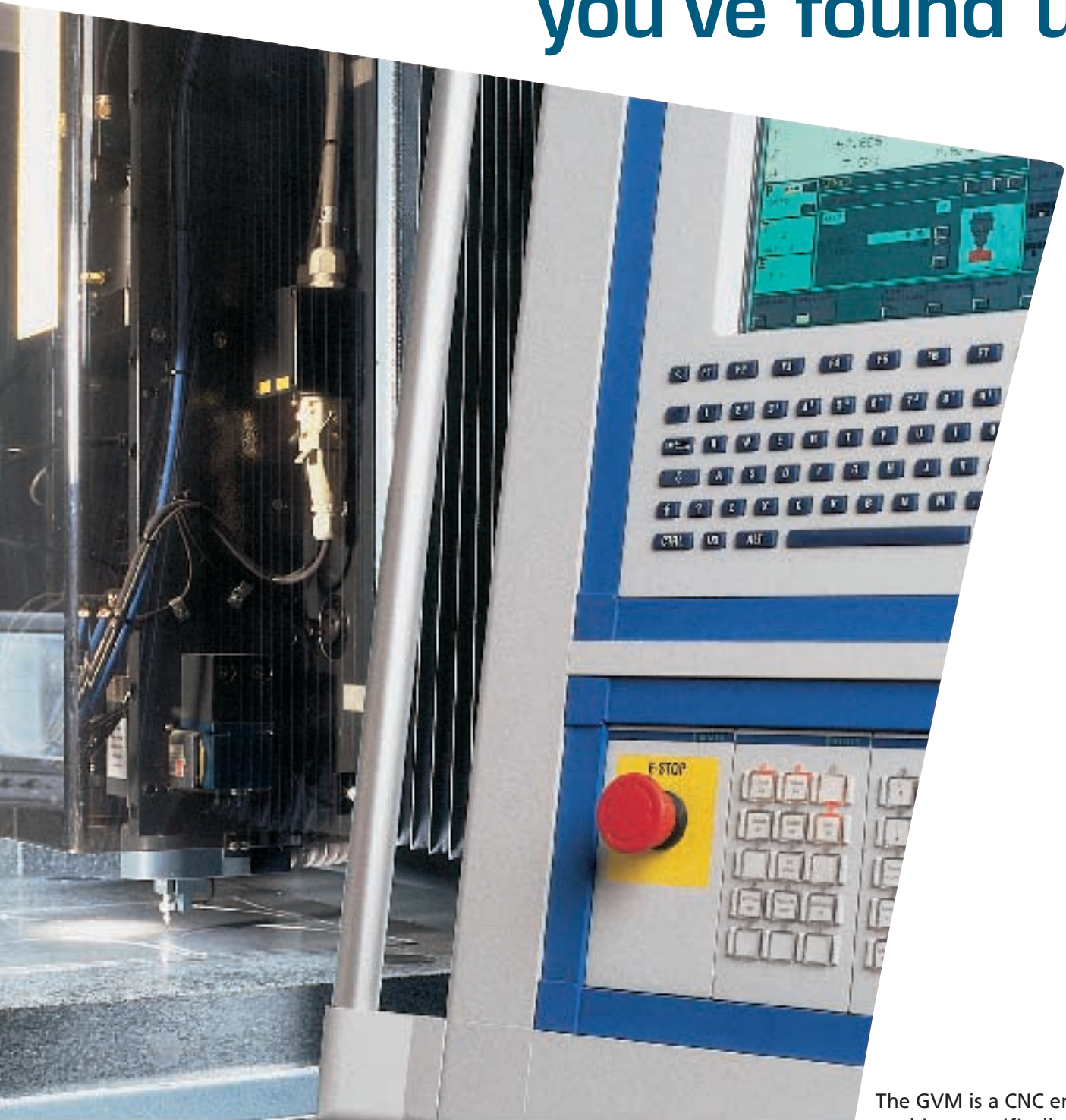
The road to success

Label Technology was born in 1986 in Bankson's 1,000sq ft garage, on a 28-year-old 4" Mark Andy press. Bankson had worked in sales and marketing for the print and paper converting industry since graduation and decided to go it alone with his son David when he turned 18.

'I had no idea about label printing when we started the business and I didn't even understand what a press was,' says son David. 'I had two days training from the guy that we bought the press from and then I was in charge of production. It was a lot of responsibility for an 18-year-old. We made a lot of mistakes in the beginning and we've come a lot further than we ever thought that we would.'

Label Technology has grown markedly over the years and has made it into the Inc. 500, as one of the fastest growing

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companies in the US, twice. The initial team of three (they took on a secretary as well) has swelled to a staff of 87 today. The company currently operates out of a 60,000sq ft facility around the corner from where it started, but even that isn't big enough to cope with recent growth. Plans are afoot for a purpose-built facility on the property next door.

Label Technology produces about 180 million linear feet of labels a year and prints pressure sensitive and unsupported labels for every kind of application imaginable. It specializes in high-end prime labels and has also successfully tapped into the flexible packaging market. The business operates seven presses, the majority of which use water-based inks, in a fully temperature and humidity controlled facility.

The company has a variety of flexographic presses ranging from 10" to 26" up to nine colors. Label Technology is planning to install 17" Mark Andy LP3000 with a screen head, specifically because of the opaque whites that will be achievable. David Bankson is expecting this new capability to make a big impact on the personal care market. The company recently invested in a 26" servo-driven 9-color Evolution press by PCMC which will be devoted to flexible packaging.

'I would say that Label Technology is a high-end printer,' says Bankson. 'We're not restricted to labels these days. We diversified into flexible packaging five years ago as Dennis Deisenroth, our vice president of product development, joined the company and he had a lot of experience in that marketplace. Flexible packaging, for all kinds of products from potato chips to tea, now accounts for 40 to 45 per cent of sales and that figure is growing fast – faster than the labels division. Overall growth stands between 12 and 15 per cent for the whole company.'

'We specialize in 175-200 line screen work,' explains Bankson, 'and the kind of graphics that we are reproducing are very fine, complex and challenging. Not everyone can handle that kind of detail. We print a lot of trial size samples for the health and beauty industry that have intricate images of faces, skin and hair. The end user has much more complex needs these days. Their product needs to get immediate recognition by the consumer through all of these snappy graphics.'

'The printing industry itself has also become more complex. A print run that used to be one million, is now half of that and will require 20 different copy changes,' he adds.

Demands on prepress, scheduling and production have never been so great. That's where investment in people and all of the supporting technology that allows them to do their job quickly and efficiently comes in.

'Over the past five years, technology has allowed us to double our business with less people than we had five years ago,' he says. 'It's state-of-the-art technology, coupled with improved systems and procedures, that has led to increased efficiency. But that's reliant on the people on your team and their ability to handle the internal processes.'

To support its new presses, Label technology installed a customized Primac management information system and Dupont Cyrel for fast, onsite

platemaking. Recruiting experienced and talented employees has however remained a problem.

'Credit must go to the Label Technology team,' says David Bankson. 'We couldn't have grown without them, but because of all the growth, we are constantly looking for new people.' Bankson adds: 'We're fortunate to be growing, but one of the biggest challenges is finding the right people to handle the growth. We've had growing pains for 18 years!'

Catering to the client

The company is driven by its customers' needs and a continuing quest for increased productivity and efficiency. Label Technology has around 400 different customers, with whom it has no contracts, so it's competing on a daily basis for business. The business has had to stay on its toes.

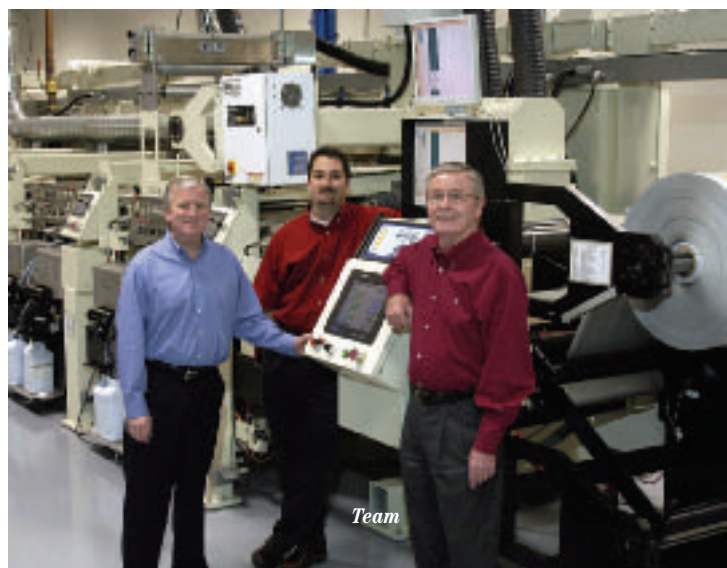
'We stay very connected with the issues in the marketplace,' says David Bankson, 'and we respond to these issues well.' Label Technology established its barcode service bureau in response to customer needs. The bureau sells applicators, print and apply machines and barcode imprinters, and services them. Diversifying and exploiting new markets is a large part of the future plan for the company.

'We intend to continue growing and expand into niche markets. We're looking for different applications and different customers,' says John Bankson.

'Our aim is to grow the labels and flexible packaging sides of the business in equal percentages,' adds David. 'Our goal is to hit \$30 million in sales by the end of 2007.'

This ambition and understanding of the label market is exactly the reason behind John Bankson's appointment as president of TLMI. A new TLMI president takes over in November, but Bankson only intends to take a small step back and will serve as Past President for the next two years.

'I will be past president of the TLMI for the next two years and I will still be involved in the growth of the industry. There's a lot of mergers and acquisitions going on and our role is to strengthen the position of the entrepreneur and the senior managers of the larger label converting corporations.' ■



From left: Dennis Deisenroth, VP product development; David Bankson; and John Bankson



From stickers to sommeliers

As a fledgling label converter, Paragon Label had some obstacles to overcome. Millions of bottles of wine later and its at the top of its game. **Katy Wight** reports

With 100 million labels already printed this year, Paragon Label, based in Petaluma, California, has fast become one of the most prominent flexo wine label printers north of San Francisco. California is now the world's fourth largest wine-producing region behind Italy, France and Spain. Its wine exports have doubled since 1996 and the trade is estimated to be worth around \$650 million annually. Nestled between the Napa and Sonoma Valleys in an impressive facility, Paragon is in a perfect position to exploit the potential of this industry growth.

Being accepted by the vineyards and convincing them about Paragon's capabilities with flexo was the converter's first challenge. Paragon is an offshoot of parent company Mrs. Grossman's Paper Company, which was founded in 1979 by Andrea Grossman. Mrs. Grossman's specializes in stickers for children and scrapbooking and Andrea's son, Jason, joined the business in his teens. Jason is now the president of Paragon.

'In the early 1990s, 50 per cent of Mrs Grossman's business was coming from one customer,' says Jason Grossman. 'For two years they put a ton of work on us and we had to decide whether we were going to buy a new press or outsource. We decided to buy the press and then we had to think about what we would do if they pulled out their business. Would we sell or find other avenues of business? We thought that if a slowdown did occur, we would print wine labels.'

Now Paragon has brands such as Niebaum-Coppola Wines, Don Sebastiani & Sons, Rabbit Ridge and Parducci on its books, but the company made slow progress in its first two years. Grossman had everything in place to print the labels, apart from a wine-oriented sales technique.

'It was very difficult to penetrate the prime label and wine market initially, adds Jason. 'The only samples that we had were stickers – and there's a real stigma in this industry about

stickers – when actually they can be as tough, if not tougher, to print. It took us three years to be respected.'

Full flexo service

Paragon persevered, gaining customers in the wine, gourmet foods and cosmetic markets, and in 2002 the acquisition of a local competitor, McCoy Packaging, marked a turning point for the business. The start-up team at Paragon was joined by a team of seasoned printers – one being British-raised Gary Cane who became general manager for Paragon – and business really began to pick up. Combined, the company services around 400 different customers, about 85 per cent of which are wineries.

Now Paragon and Mrs. Grossman's share eight Mark Andy flexo presses, ranging from seven to 13" web widths in six to ten colors. All of the presses have inline photopolymer embossing capabilities and Rotoflex rewinders with mounted vision inspection systems, and three of them have inline hot foil-stamping capabilities.

General manager Cane explains that 2003 was a steep learning curve for

Paragon and that it was still finding its feet, but things really took off in 2004. The wine industry is steeped in tradition and the Paragon sales team worked hard to convince the vineyards of flexo's capabilities.



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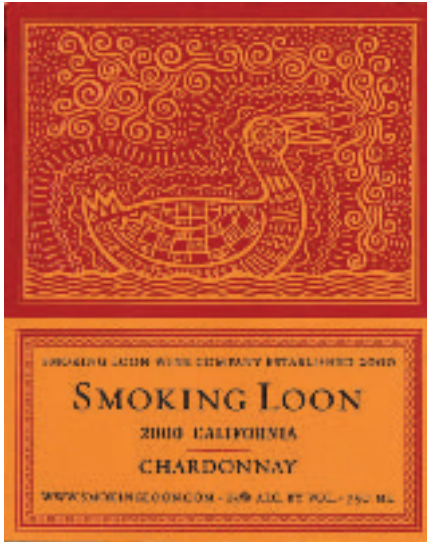


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Inline photopolymer embossing capabilities on each press produces texture at a lower cost

'We have a constant battle against the offset mindset,' explains Cane. 'We specialize in high-end prime label and the level of flexo these days means that we are banging on the door of the offset guys. Our offset competitors are often saying that flexo can't print certain applications, but we just prove them wrong.'

'Most of the artwork that we receive is designed for offset and we also receive offset samples and proofs. But, we're happy to take any artwork and put it on press and show the client what



President Jason Grossman and company mascot Angus

The kit list:

7" Mark Andy 10-color, embossing
 7" Mark Andy 10-color, embossing
 10" Mark Andy 10-color, embossing, sheeter/stacker unit
 7" Mark Andy 8-color, inline foil, embossing
 13" Mark Andy 8-color, inline foil, embossing
 10" Mark Andy 9-color, embossing, sheeter/stacker unit
 10" Mark Andy 10-color, embossing, inline foil, sheeter/stacker unit
 10" Mark Andy Scout 6-color, embossing, sheeter/stacker unit

we can do. Nine times out of ten it is exactly what they want and when they look at the price difference compared to offset, the deal is done.'

The wine market

The Wine Trends 2004 report found that recent growth in California wine was led in part by hundreds of small to mid-size wineries which gained market share at the expense of large wineries (over one million cases). These are the companies that are moving away from offset and into flexo for more economic shorter runs. They are also the companies that can afford to move into pressure sensitive labeling.

'About 50 per cent of companies outsource their application,' explains Cane. 'There is even a mobile wine line, where a van travels from vineyard to vineyard, bottling, corking and labeling the wines. Of the companies that have their own application capabilities, only a small percentage switches to pressure sensitive each year because of the costs of installing new machinery. The wineries are moving across to pressure sensitive labels because of the application speeds. They can apply a front and back label – in fact as many labels as they want – in one pass.'

Wine bottles are seeing an increasing number of labels being applied. Cane explains that the back label came about in the US because of the enforced government warning about the dangers of alcohol – not something the wineries want to feature on the front of the bottle. The Tax and Trade Bureau (TTB) also has stringent specifications about the information listed and the size and number of characters. 'Bikini' labels are also increasing in popularity – smaller labels that appear on the neck or below the front label. This increasing number of labels gives wineries the opportunity to exploit the potential of the main front label with enticing graphics that reinforce the brand image.

'The California wine labels are being driven by marketing,' says Cane. 'The latest trend is for vivid graphics, more colors and much brighter colors. I have friends in Bordeaux and the Old

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Did you know...

Wine has been grown in California since 1769 when missionaries from Mexico moved to the San Diego area. Father Serra planted the first vines for sacramental purposes later that decade and the California wine industry was established. The Gold Rush of 1848 really kick started the California wine trade and the number of wineries grew steadily until Prohibition in 1919. Wine growing took off again in the 1970s when California was hailed as one of the world's great wine regions.

World wine labels are plain, simple and classic. They run 6-color labels on flatbed letterpress with much thinner papers. The Californian wine is bright and elegant, but definitely not classic. The French label wouldn't work over here. It's all market-driven so that consumers will go into the grocery stores and pick out the nice looking wine.'

The Old World wines rely on the drinker's knowledge of vintage and appellation, whereas the Californian wines are targeting the new wine drinker, who wouldn't necessarily know which bottle to buy. The California wines are also building up strong brands, assuring the consumer that they know what they are getting.

The Wine Trends 2004 report also says that California wine prices declined last year, as increased competition from an oversupply of grapes and wine prompted widespread discounting to move inventory – particularly for wines under \$6 per bottle.

'The Californian wine trade is increasingly selling on volume,' says Grossman, 'which is producing very tight profit margins on bottle sales. That's good news for us because the wineries are unwilling to pay offset printing prices. We are a premier flexo printer and people are taking us seriously.'

Cane adds: 'Some of the wine labels that we print can be very challenging. A label could have seven colors on the front label, seven on the back, complex graphics and a tricky die-cut, so it is an expensive label for the customer to print. When the actual bottle of wine only retails for about \$4.99, they need to sell as many as possible to make a margin. To market the wine they have made the label very bright and appealing to get them off the shelf.'

Cane says that the wineries are also becoming more creative in the kinds of stocks that they are trying to use. Although Paragon prints most of its runs on seven or eight substrates, it is also undertaking custom runs more frequently.

Customer service and competition

Custom substrates are only part of the package that has made Paragon such a success.

'We can't compete with the big Midwest and East Coast



“The Californian wine trade is increasingly selling on volume, which is producing very tight profit margins on bottle sales. That's good news for us because the wineries are unwilling to pay offset printing prices”

Not only are employees' dogs allowed in the Paragon Label offices – they frequently attend meetings – but busloads of children also arrive for plant tours of Mrs Grossman's each day and are herded around the Paragon label presses.

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'We had one customer who probably only buys about 12,000 labels from us every year,' says Cane, 'but he was a gold medal winner at a Napa Valley wine contest, so I printed up some small gold labels with his award printed on them as a gift. Those gold labels helped him to get into Safeway.

converters that have industrial and food capabilities,' says Grossman. 'The cost of living and running a manufacturing business is almost inhibiting to growth in California. We're not cheap, but we're higher quality and we provide a great service'

'East coast and Midwest printers have tried to break into the market because they have experience of other beverage labeling,' explains Cane, 'but the wineries perceive a wine label and a beer label as a completely different class. There is a real wine mentality and culture out here. And location is important. You don't really want to be out of the area. These companies can't offer the service that our customers expect and on top of that, freight is so much more expensive.'

Grossman believes that Paragon's reputation is growing because the employees really go beyond the call of duty. Cane actually drove 14 hours one weekend to deliver some labels to a customer because when the wineries are booked into the mobile wine line they need the labels or they can lose their slot.

'One of our customers, Rabbit Ridge, was sourcing labels from Nebraska because they were offering the winery a very cheap deal,' says Cane, 'but when they were being shipped, the printer kept on forgetting the back labels. They didn't know the wine industry and they certainly didn't know the kinds of deadlines that the vineyards have to work to. We're not threatened by the East Coast. Customers might be tempted to try them for price, but I guarantee that after a year, they'll come back.'

New markets

Growth has been fast since the McCoy acquisition and Cane has worked hard to streamline the business, increase efficiency and keep that growth in check. With a formidable reputation and a steady increase in sales in the wine sector, Paragon is confident it can target other markets that match its prime label capabilities.

'We're trying to diversify our marketshare at the moment mainly because the wine industry has downtime. From now until November is harvest time so the wineries don't need labels right now. Things will pick up again in February, but we have a little capacity right now,' says Cane.

'Our run lengths are dependent on the harvest. Last year was a good crop and this year is looking like its going to be pretty good too. If it's not a good crop we start to get pretty nervous

and that's why we need to change our market structure,' he adds.

Paragon has made an inroad into the health and beauty market but the sales team is so tuned-in to selling wine labels that the transition into new markets has been a challenge.

Sales training has been implemented as the margins available in the health and beauty industry are worth fighting for, explains Cane. He thinks that more and more flexo printers are realizing that they can cater to the winery business, increasing competition and narrowing the margins.

One personal care company that Paragon did secure was Hawaii-based Island Bath and Body. Initially it had been sourcing five offset jobs from a company in China, but Island was unhappy with the consistency of the product that it was receiving. Paragon trialed the labels on flexo-printed pressure-sensitive film and the customer was extremely happy with the result.

Managing growth

Emerging in new markets and securing new customers has been a success for Paragon and Cane says that its biggest challenge is keeping up with its growth in terms of recruitment and equipment. Its great customer service is reliant on the people that it employs.

'We have grown really quickly,' he says, 'and I have taken on three people in the past month.'

At the moment our strategy involves investing in the right personnel in order to secure our future. Finding the right person with the right experience is a major issue for us. We just recruited an operator all the way from Denver.'

Paragon is lucky that as the orders have increased, it has been able to borrow capacity from Mrs. Grossman's presses. 'At the moment we are working on streamlining production on what we have got. We are planning to swap technicians with a label printer in Harlow, UK, for a couple of weeks next year. The owner used to work for me and he runs a company that prints food labels for major UK supermarkets such as Tesco. I would like to bring some of his pressmen over here and send some of mine to Harlow to swap ideas and techniques.' ■

 No.320

Paragon Label shares a twin-track Laserweb die cut system with Mrs Grossman. It was custom-made by California-based Lasercraft and uses PC Industries' web-handling. It's predominantly used for a particular line of finely die-cut stickers, but Paragon uses it for a handful of wine labels.

A roll of printed labels is first delaminated. The web is then laser die cut via a copper template at speeds of up to 15fpm. The laser vaporizes the area to be removed at 10,000°F and the label is re-laminated to the liner and rewound.



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Smart start

Over 300 people attended the Smart Packaging 2004 conference and exhibition in Chicago to learn about active, intelligent and smart packaging solutions. **Katy Wight** reports

Smart Packaging 2004, held in association with the Institute of Packaging Professionals (IoPP), saw the packaging business' best brains come together to discuss the very latest in overt, covert and forensic security solutions for brand protection and authentication, RFID and issues in the supply chain, and intelligent packaging to benefit consumers and CPG companies alike.

RFID – meeting the mandate

AFE Industries, based in Santa Fe Springs California converts tags, labels and plastic cards in its five plants across North America. It currently specializes in ion deposition bar coding for the courier, airline and trucking markets, but one look at its homepage tells you the direction it is moving in. AFE President Fred Elhami realized the potential from RFID technology after seeing a European smart card six years ago. Since then, he has joined six related trade associations, formed links with Texas Instruments Team Tag-it, Matrics and Philips, employed an RFID specialist and undertaken thousands of pilots for customers. AFE offers programming, printing, chip insertion, delivery, and electronic order tracking worldwide. Its website clearly advertises Wal-Mart compliant labels and with the RFID mandate just around the corner you'd think that AFE's order book would be running out of pages. But, for AFE, the testing continues without the contracts. There is a handful of large-scale converters already dominating the RFID landscape, so

will some of these smaller companies be able to get their slice of the pie?

'I don't think it's happening for anyone yet,' says Elhami. 'I think that it's ready to rip, but just hasn't. Everyone is waiting and seeing if we can get those chips down to under five cents. Plus there are still problems in practice and everyone's still testing.'

'I also don't think that all the suppliers have the means to integrate RFID yet. It's not just a case of buying printed RFID labels, they need to integrate the whole framework and invest in programmers and equipment – and that costs money. It will happen, but by the end of this year? I just don't see it.'

RFID was naturally a hot topic at the Smart Packaging Conference. Many of the speakers discussed the potential benefits of the technology – Paul Reiger of Procter and Gamble explained how 16 of P&G's brands had exceeded the \$1 billion mark in 2003, and how it could use RFID to protect its intellectual property and brand standing, whilst John Hayward, manager Packaging Engineering at Hewlett Packard outlined how RFID labeling could reduce time, money and risk expended throughout the IT assembly and supply chain. Management consultant Accenture predicts that improved stock replenishment and on-shelf availability will result in 1-5 per cent higher sales, that RFID will lower inventory levels by between 5-30 per cent, 2-13 per cent of transportation costs and 10-50 per cent of lead times. It has the potential to make a big difference to



Mike Fairley welcomes delegates to Smart Packaging 2004

a CPG company's bottom line. So where's all the business?

Contrary to the positive progress reports being generated by Wal-Mart's PR department, the pilots at its Texas Supercenter have hit several bumps in the road. Gillette, Hewlett-Packard, Johnson & Johnson, Kimberly-Clark, Kraft Foods, Nestle Purina PetCare, P&G and Unilever are the eight key suppliers working with Wal-Mart to meet the mandate. The pilots have found that the 100 per cent read rates achieved in the lab have proved to be no guarantee of success in the warehouse. Previous debate on whether the high cost of RFID chips is inhibiting progress, has been overturned by the issue of poor performance in the existing technology.

'The success of an EPC/RFID solution is highly dependent on the product/packaging and the tag that you select,' says Kevin Donahue of Checkpoint Systems, a provider of product ID and shrink management solutions to CPG companies, 'Metal objects will reflect the radio waves, whereas liquids and Styrofoam absorb them, necessitating varying solutions, EPC compliance testing where appropriate tag selection and positioning are determined is the first step in any EPC/RFID project. Tags and readers also have to be compatible and one vendor's product might work better than another under the same circumstances.'

A general lack of standards could be holding back implementation as different solution providers battle against one another to produce the winning technology.

'My vision is that EPC will become the universal tagging system,' says Paul Reiger of Procter & Gamble. 'EPC-based RFID has over 160 applications worldwide and there needs to be a standard. At the moment we have an EPC Class 0+ and a Class 1 – two versions does not constitute a standard.'

The lack of standards has no doubt led to the 'slap and ship' mentality of many suppliers. They are focused on meeting the Wal-Mart mandate, but haven't integrated an RFID infrastructure in to their own systems. This constitutes a large investment for any supplier.

All is not doom and gloom though. Reiger compares RFID implementation to the very costly and painful introduction of the UPC bar code.

'RFID is not new, but low cost passive chips for the consumer industry are still in their infancy. The cost is too high and the performance is low.' He adds: 'We are in the trough of disillusionment now, but we are making our way to the slope of enlightenment and the plateau of productivity.'

To reach this slope, Kevin Donahue of Checkpoint Systems suggests that suppliers to Wal-Mart engage with an experienced systems integrator and an EPC Compliance center to put together a pilot. He suggests a number of criteria that Wal-Mart suppliers should look out for.

'Be careful as there are a lot of companies jumping on the bandwagon; lots of companies will tell you that they have a center of excellence which is really hard to define. Look for a company that can offer interoperability testing and has established relationships with multiple vendors. They should have skilled RF engineers onsite and have the tools available to perform a thorough test in actual operating environments (e.g. warehouse). Current mandates require that the tags must achieve a 100 per cent read-rate from three meters at 600fpm, but it is not safe to assume that if it works at 600fpm, it will also work at 400 or 200fpm.

'These are the simple issues that you need to know about, like being aware of electronic equipment in your environment that may generate electromagnetic interference (EMI) and interfere with your RFID systems. At this point Wal-Mart wants to know that it is going to work when it arrives, so you should make sure that you get a detailed EPC-compliant test report that shows you that you made all the effort that you could to meet their mandate.'

So what does all this mean to converters like AFE Industries



Label Printers!



in California? These are the criteria that suppliers will be using to choose converters to work with. Converters need to stay close to the developments in the technology, look to EPC Global for the direction of standards and partner with key customers.

Vince Reese, business development manager technology at Appleton believes that there will be opportunities for the mid-size and smaller converters.

'There are only a few qualified converters right now, such as Plitek, Topflight, CCL, the Kennedy Group and RSI ID Technologies, and they're not even at the optimum level yet,' he says. 'There is such a demand and so few qualified suppliers that companies like NCR – who already

Failure rates

Reese of Appleton believes there can be up to 50 per cent failure throughout the entire process. There are a number of areas where a tag can fail, but it is typically in the conversion and application phase that problems occur. Jason Brewer of Precisia, a conductive inks specialist, explains that the weakest point is the link between the chip and the antenna.





manages data and bar coding for Wal-Mart – and Avery will probably win in the long term, but I believe that there will be business for a number of converters who are proficient.

‘Converters should look for niches they can cater to for existing customers. The Wal-Mart mandate will drive costs down and I believe will make it a viable solution within three to five years.’ RFID opportunities will be out there for clued-up converters who keep up with all of the advancements.

Smart Labels: key drivers and opportunities in the food sector:

- Extended shelf life
- Improved safety
- Can improve sensory qualities
- Information on quality of product throughout transport
- Convenience to customers
- Improved availability
- Reduced cost and increased perceived value

Getting active

Smart active labels (SAL) and intelligent packaging solutions are already in use to indicate freshness and react to issues of quality and safety. An active solution responds to a trigger event such as the release of pressure or gases, or exposure to UV or moisture, whilst an intelligent solution is able to switch on and/or off in response to certain conditions.

Dr Paul Butler, a consultant in packaging materials and technologies highlighted several of the latest developments in the food sector. A ripeness sensor with a color indicator is now in use by some fruit producers who are packaging their fruit in plastic clamshells and other packs. Cox Technologies in the UK has developed a ‘fresh tag’ which detects amines from decaying fish and changes color over time, and the University of Strathclyde in Scotland has a packaging solution for the visual detection of oxygen. Other solutions include a visual indicator which indicates whether the seal integrity of a package has been tarnished and a barcode which changes when a product has been subject to temperature abuse throughout the supply chain.

The technology is sophisticated and applications are available, but the challenge is justifying their total cost versus the value for

the user, explains Panos Kinigakis of Kraft Foods Inc.

‘Modified atmosphere processing can enhance the shelf-life of a product, but causes a reduction in the manufacturing speed,’ Kinigakis says. ‘There is also the cost of capital and the need for variable operations and in the end, only limited package styles are available. Moisture management, which controls the absorption and desorption in a package also has an incremental material cost. Anti-microbial packaging material, to help prolong the shelf-life of a product is still in the early developmental stages. All of these different customized applications are currently limited to certain volumes and product offerings.’

But there are companies that have seized the opportunities presented by the technology. Gail Barnes of TetraPak Carton Chilled in the US, talked about Skåne Dairy in Sweden, which has installed a time/temperature biosensor system on its products at the request of a customer. At present the only system to assure the quality of a product is its ‘use-by’ date, but that is an estimate reliant on the fact that the product is kept at the correct chilled temperature throughout its life in transit from production to retailer.

‘In the US, this is an even more critical issue,’ says Barnes. ‘In the EU the cold chain is 8° C and dairy products are expected to last around 11–30 days if we are really pushing it. However, in the US, retailers are demanding lifecycles of 90-100 days, which means knowledge of temperature abuse in the cold chain is critical.’

Companies are adopting the technology and suppliers should be aware of the applications and the opportunities that it presents for them. Gail Barnes points towards printed organic semi-conductors for RFID antenna in food packaging in the future.

Kill the counterfeits

A great number of statistics outlining the full horror of counterfeiting in global trade were presented at the Smart Packaging conference. A Pfizer survey found that 50 per cent of repackaged drugs in Europe were faulty or suspect in some way, FDA counterfeit investigations have quadrupled since the year 2000, 10 per cent of spare parts in the automotive aftermarket are inferior imitations – and many of the speakers came armed with different solutions to combat the problem. End users are becoming more and more aware of the need for security solutions, not only to protect brand values and sales, but to



Jason Brewer, Precisia LLC discusses technology choices at Smart Packaging 2004

ensure customer safety and reduce company liability.

All parties acknowledged the security benefits of RFID in anti-counterfeiting and brand protection, but many other overt and covert solutions were presented. Craig Curran of Truscoply USA introduced its optical watermarks, which are visible through a specialized lens key. These can be static or dynamic and up to twenty layers deep. Even though these watermarks cannot be replicated, Curran stresses that the watermarks are a complimentary solution that should be part of a multi-layered strategy.

Denis Picard of DuPont Authentication Systems presented Izon technology, which is a deep 3D full parallax image, currently used in passports and driving licenses around the world. He says that they also like to build in flashing microtext that needs magnification to be read. Tiny words are printed in the shadows of images and letters.

'If you don't know what you're looking for you're never going to find it,' he says. Picard thinks that the next generation of Izon technology will use biometric data to print 3D portraits.

Rob Schellekens of Drent Goebel discussed the benefits of its variable sleeve offset press (VSOP) for anti-counterfeiting and security solutions, in comparison to other types of printing. He said that several printed security methods, such as guilloches and microprinting, can be printed on an offset press, but couldn't be achieved with flexo or gravure. Schellekens explained that the VSOP press was creating great interest in China where apparently 80 per cent of cigarettes are counterfeit.

Dan Gelbart of Creo introduced its new Traceless security technology. Creo has introduced a taggant that is forensically undetectable and can go down to one part per billion.

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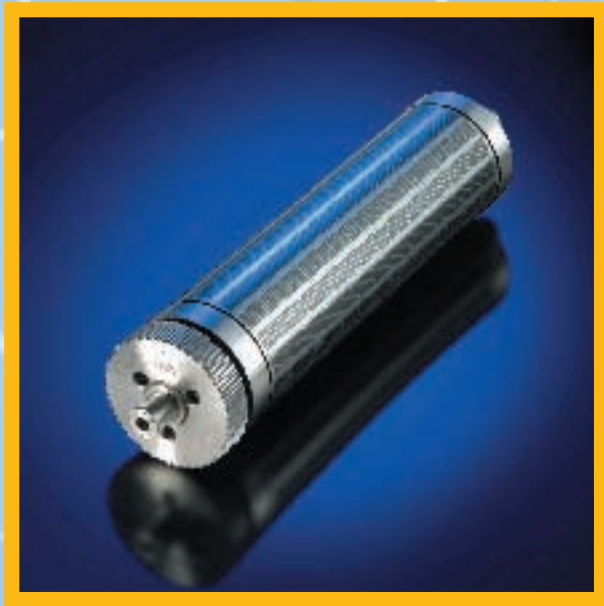
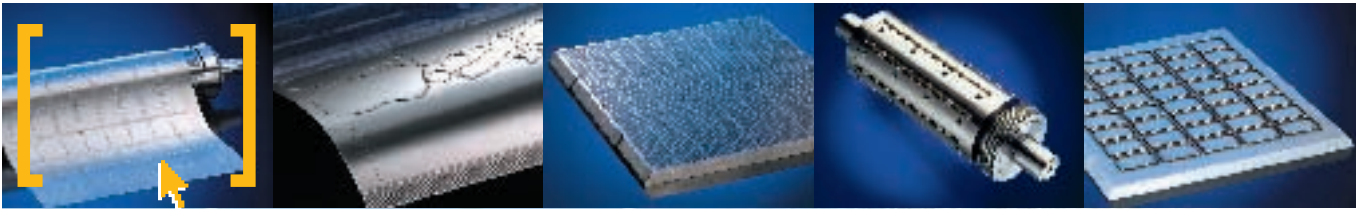
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John Hayward, Hewlett Packard addresses delegates to Smart Packaging 2004

'We thought about what the ideal solution would be,' he says. 'A traceless security taggant needs to be forensically undetectable, cost below one cent, and indestructible by water, fire, UV or pressure. This will protect things that need to be tagged for litigation, such as airplane parts. You should also be able to track a product at an individual level and there should be an unlimited number of codes. It should be simple to implement, but immune to security breach and have a high-speed, automated and low cost reader.'

The taggant that Creo has developed has a forensically-sensitive reader in a hand held unit, that will flash green if it finds traces of the taggant. It is undetectable by any other means and indestructible.'

Gelbart set fire to a sample and the reader was still able to detect traces of the taggant. Each particle is about two microns and can be incorporated into the packaging, label substrate, ink or coating. Each sample is uniquely identifiable due to the random dispersal of particles in a fluid. You measure the location of each particle and that creates a signature or fingerprint for the item. The only downside to the unique readings is that you would need a database and register to manage the data - and that raises the cost of the solution.

'The taggant is used in such small quantities,' says Gelbart, 'that even if it was made from gold, it would be a very cheap solution.'

Dr Michael Natan of Nanoplex Technologies introduced silica-encapsulated nanoparticles for product authentication that can be read from 100 meters, while Mark Oosterlinck of CCL Label outlined the overt, covert and forensic solutions that it offers as a label converter:

- OVD, from the makers of SecureShift, consists of ultra-thin, multi-layered micro flakes that provide a color shift appearance when viewed from different angles.
- MicroWire is a metal wire that has a magnetic signature that is readable by a handheld portable device.
- MicroTrack has microscopic particles made of pre-defined colored layers dispersed in a clear varnish or ink and printed on to a label.
- Anti-counterfeit thread is a polyester thread that uses a complex demetallization manufacturing process. It can also have fluorescent or forensic coatings and can be machine readable.
- Encapsulated ink is a temperature sensitive ink that is invisible until a pre-defined temperature is reached.
- Ink Tracker 1 is an ink that is readable on the surface of the label and Ink Tracker 2 can be detected on the surface and inside the package. Ink Tracker infrared is also available.
- RFID Flying Null creates a pattern of magnetic elements equivalent to a bar code. Magnetic elements are passed through the 'null' between two like magnetic fields.

Bill Duffy from the Imaging Supplies Coalition, an association that was created in response to brand protection needs, had a relative success story to report. ISC represents OEMs of consumable imaging supplies and equipment, such as Epson, Lexmark, Brother, Panasonic, Canon and Xerox.

'We knew that there was a problem when manufactured parts would be returned to us, and they were counterfeit,' he says. 'Counterfeit product identification was difficult and no one had a brand protection strategy when we started back in 1994. All of our members now use overt and covert solutions and we can work with customs to get remarkable results. We have had over 500 raids and cases since 2002. We're making progress, but you need co-operation from all industry stakeholders and there's still much to do.' ■



Managing flexo color

Design continues to be the missing element when dealing with color management. **Alex James** at Harper Corporation offers some advice for making an easier transition into the press room

The increase of Four Color process printing has highlighted the ongoing challenges of color management within our industry. It almost goes without saying that getting a handle on the diverse variables leads to job repeatability, consistency, waste reduction and ultimately, greater profitability. Factors which affect these variables encompass the press room, aniloxes, the ink room, and pre-press. But, what about design? Design continues to be a missing ingredient when dealing with color management. As designers continue to push the graphic envelope and customers demand complicated photo quality images, more printers are facing numerous issues when dealing with process printing.

Of major importance is the ability to communicate to designers and agencies how color is quantified within your environment. Is it done densitometrically, or spectrophotometrically, via $L^*a^*b^*$, or $L^*c^*h^*$ color values, or are parameters for ICC established? ICC profiling is another tool for managing color. This defines output color parameters for a given environment but alone does not guarantee color consistency. Regardless of the established profile, if you start with a poor quality original image, it's only going to go downhill from there. What ever method you use, communicating these parameters with those submitting graphic designs to your company will help to get everyone on the same page and enable greater predictability for production of a successful product.

Designing for Flexo is not the same as designing for Offset. Designers typically do not comprehend that Flexography is a different animal. Effective designing for Flexo requires clear communication and education between the designer, the pre-press department and the printer. Without understanding design parameters for Flexo, designs are submitted and the burden of making a producible product lands on the pre-press department. This transition can be very costly and gets hidden by a desire to maintain good working relationships with customers. Companies need to place value on bringing designers (agencies) into their facility and conducting a walk-

through educational session.

Another suggestion is to put together an informational packet containing design specific parameters, any special options available such as metallics, varnishes, embossing, foiling, information regarding print tolerances, ink options, trap percentages, color targets, print contrast, press gain, and ICC color information, if available. The value of understanding the process is immense and should result in submitted designs that are specific for your conditions. This, in turn, should result in a smoother and less costly transition to the press room.

Choice of stock is a major factor influencing color, and too often color gets chased on the press by trying to match an inkjet proof submitted from a customer in another town, city or state, that doesn't reflect choice of substrate used for the actual run. For example, the odds of a design output on an inkjet proof with glossy stock ever matching the same design when printed on a matt stock are slim to none. Many designers and agencies are savvy enough to grasp the real world transition from design to print, and by establishing communication with customers, the struggles of color management can be minimized. Believe it or not, ink jets can generate proofs on a variety of stocks, quite possibly on the very stock required for the given job. Take the time to send paper samples that will be used for their job to the designer or agency. If nothing else, it will be a reality check as to the choice stock of their submitted design.

Another issue which is important to comprehend is that the color viewed on the monitor is inherently different than what is printed on paper; additive R,G,B color (monitor) verses subtractive C,M,Y,K color (ink on paper). What you see is not what you will get. The use of color guides when designing can greatly increase consistency of expected results. This is important not only for spot (Pantone) color selection, but more so for process printing and especially for Hi-Fidelity printing such as Opaltone. Designers utilizing color guides in conjunction with printer specific parameters will be assured of greater predictability and consistent results.

In Flexography, perhaps the biggest issue affecting color

Every day printers and converters throw away **valuable time and materials** during roll changes. Even if you're not worried about substrate waste, you should be concerned about lost production time and unproductive labor costs that directly affect **your bottom line.**



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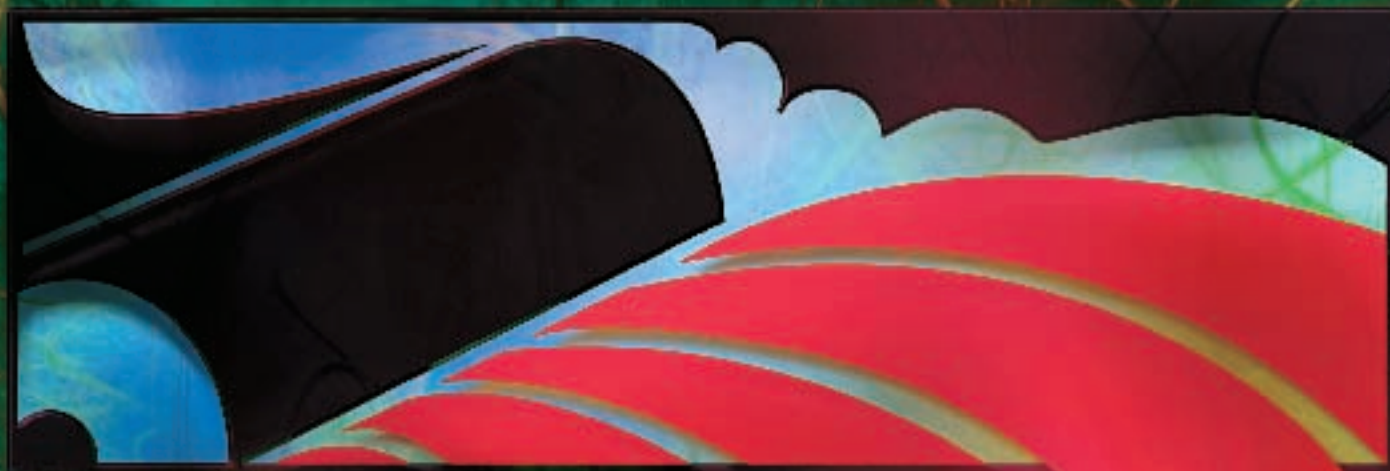
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Pictured is Contract Converting Sales Rep, Jason Bernke, with the 2004 Harley-Davidson Giveaway Winner

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management is press gain. Press gain is a given and is unique to each environment, and it is therefore critical for designers and agencies to understand press gain and adjust their designs accordingly. Typically, the task of compensating for press gain through the use of dot gain compensation curves falls on the pre-press department, as it should. By understanding press gain, however, designers will know to minimize C, M, Y, K mixtures in order to have clean colors in their design. This is especially critical when attempting to match process printing designs in a Flexographic environment to one that has been printed in an Offset environment; any subtle, pastel and saturated colors, can easily be off spec with minimal variance of any color during a press run and result in a product that is not acceptable to the customer.

Another ongoing challenge is the various source of graphic elements included in submitted designs. In today's fast-paced environment, images are downloaded from the Web, originate from digital photographs of varying quality, and go across platforms from PC to Macintosh and Macintosh to PC. Such graphic elements typically have specified color parameters applied to them at a variety of resolutions. A good ratio to keep in mind is 2:1, that is image resolution to plate. For example, 300 ppi image to a 150 lpi plate.

When using photographic images it is critical to start with the best quality original because by the time the graphic images reach the end product on paper or film, it is four or more generations away from the original. For example, 1. start with a scan or digital photograph and input into your graphic layout; 2. submit it to your prepress or art department for output where a proof is generated; 3. Output film; 4. Expose plates; 5. Print the design. Obviously, accounting for variables along the way is crucial for accuracy and successful production, and it is therefore vital to start with good high-resolution originals when using photographic images. Remember the old adage, "garbage in, garbage out".

In the press-room, the value of establishing standard operating procedures and conditions are the keys to producing quality four-color process jobs every day. When working with your ink and anilox vendors, you should define specific conditions for a given press which will then enable your press operator to manage color in the press-room. Standardization of Aniloxes, Inks, Sticky Back and press conditions is critical for consistency and repeatability. Establishing running targets with each job enables the quantification of color in an objective manner. See Figure 1.2 After all, a densitometer or spectrodensitometer, unlike us humans, is never in a bad mood or too tired from staying out late the night before, and the utilization of such tools enables the achievement of a consistent color target. This is also true for the pre-press and plating department; establishing quantifiable standards in the

plate and imaging department enables consistent repeatability.

Within every company establishing an ongoing dialogue among all related departments will foster an appreciation for the diverse contributions required for the successful processing of each job and will enable easier adjustments to be made whenever a variable is changed, i.e., change to new plate, inks, sticky back, film, or press conditions.

Communication between departments in many instances is conducted in an adversarial "us against them" manner, and lost



along the way is the understanding of parameters within the various departments that contribute to successful reproduction of the submitted design. For example, while conducting a Banded Roll Trial at a customer's plant, I had a break and went in to visit with their prepress department to discuss the process of the trial and the value of the anticipated results. I explained the value of each graphical element in the Banded Roll layout and the relevant data that would be gathered from those elements. Sensing their curiosity had been piqued, I decided to show them press side and the data gathered with the use of a spectrodensitometer. The reactions from the press-room employees when they saw the pre-press staff on the press-room floor were, unfortunately, all too typical. Questions like, "What are you guys doing out here?" and "Aren't you guys supposed to be in the pre-press room?" was heard as we made our way onto the production room floor. This is a prevalent attitude found throughout every company and is by no means unique to Flexography. Regardless of the size of your company, the value of cross-departmental training cannot be stressed enough. It fosters a greater understanding and appreciation of the work required of each individual which, in turn, will determine the success of the company.

Having covered numerous variables let's get back to the original question. Where does color management for Flexography start and end? Obviously it starts in design, and continues to the prepress department, the ink room, the anilox and ultimately is reflected by what comes off the press. Establishing quantifiable processes and standards, and communicating those variables not only to your customer but also within your company will greatly contribute to success in managing color. With effective dialogue between all parties, the odds increase for greater color consistency and repeatability of printed jobs, day in and day out. The end result is higher efficiency, happy customers and ultimately greater profitability.



Driving change

What lessons can be learned by narrow web converters from a highly automated car production plant? **Andy Thomas** reports on a recent Gallus-sponsored visit to BMW's vast car and engine production plant in Munich

As part of its two day automation and industrialisation seminar, Gallus hosted a visit to BMW's Munich production plant for a selected group of key label converters. But what can the average narrow web converter learn from a company which employs 11,000 people to produce 800 vehicles and 1,200 engines a day?

For this writer, the key lesson is how BMW has implemented 'mass customisation' - the ability to produce short runs of customized cars within a highly automated production workflow. Label converters today are faced with a similar challenge: how to shift to an industrialized workflow and handle short runs without disrupting their operations and losing profitability.

We begin this review by looking at the BMW operation in more detail, then drawing out possible lessons for narrow web converters.

At the Munich plant, the key enabler of mass customization is the use of standard component groups up to the last minute in the production process. Car bodies are only assigned to a customer order at the assembly stage, with barcode scanners at each production station reading off the personalised information. This late allocation allows the manufacturing process to react flexibly to changes in customer demand without disrupting the line and delaying delivery.

The workflow is truly end user driven – a complete reversal of the Fordist emphasis on production as the key workflow driver. It begins with the customer working through an on-line ordering system which shows the desired car onscreen and confirms the delivery date on the spot. This immediately reserves a place in the production process and informs both the manufacturing logistics department and BMW's global network of parts suppliers. The system handles up to 120,000 customer changes each month, and on the latest BMW 7 Series, customer changes in engine capacity, color, upholstery and optional fittings can be made up to 10 days before the start of production without affecting the delivery date.

Components are made into finished sub-assemblies which are delivered to the line at the point where they are mounted into vehicles – so-called 'just in sequence' production. Parts still in the supply chain can be remotely checked at any time. There is no warehousing and only small stocks are kept as a buffer.

The logistics system ensures all necessary tools and components are delivered to the operator as they are required, with on-screen information from the production control system informing operators of all the specifications of the individual frame they are working on. Great thought has been put into avoiding heavy lifting and physical strain. As an example, car bodies are mounted on swivelling assemblies avoid the necessity for overhead work.

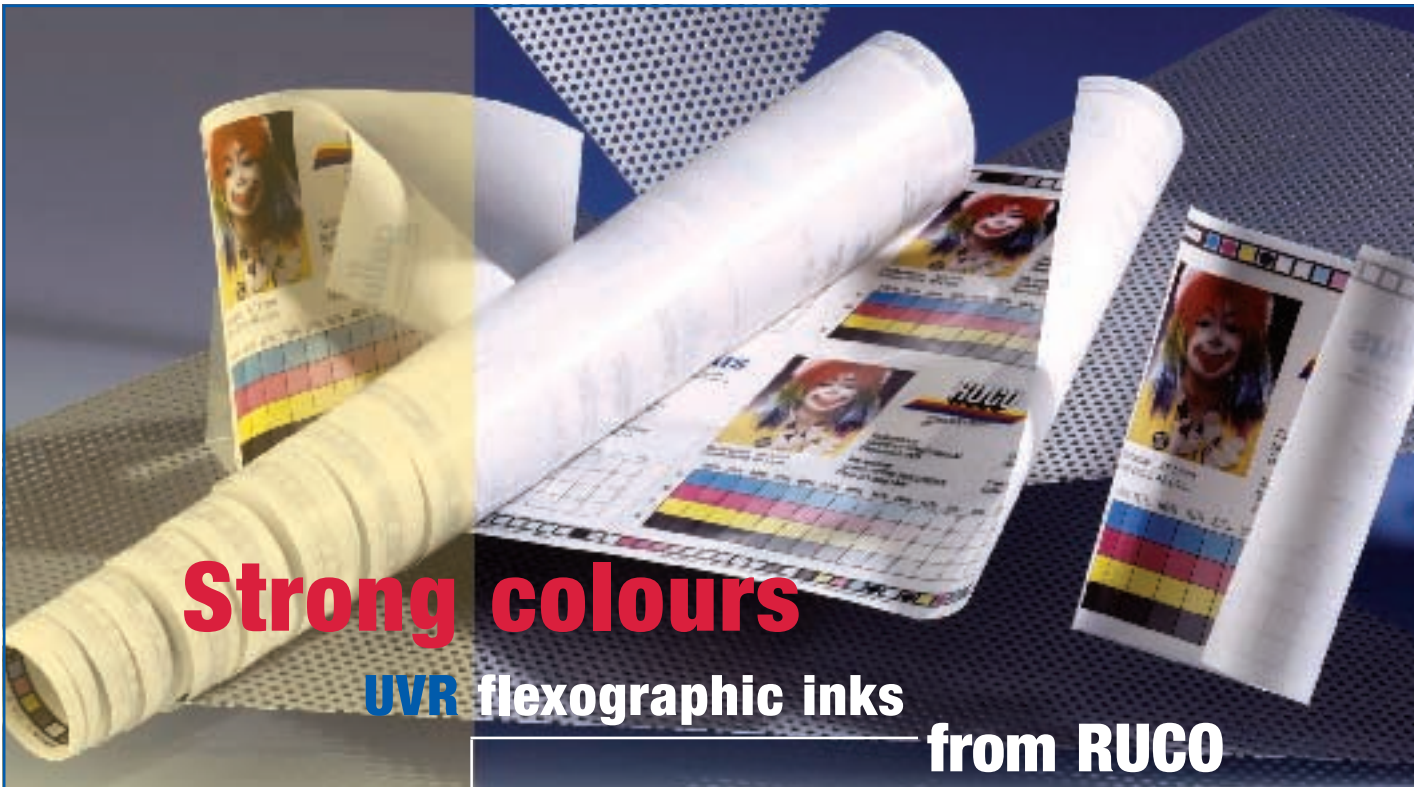
Despite a growing diversity of models, a highly modular and flexible production system means any model can be produced at any plant in the world, allowing BMW to react quickly to fluctuations in the market and in customer demand. Just two plants, both in the UK, specialise in a single model – the Mini is built at Oxford and the Rolls Royce is still hand built at Goodwood.

As well as streamlining the manufacturing process chain, BMW is working to reduce the cycle time for bringing new products to market. Its Product Evolution Process (PEP) integrates all specialty departments involved in the development process, networking an international and interdisciplinary network of 'think factories' headquartered in the research and innovations centre in Munich. Each plant in addition has its centre of excellence.

Operators - 'associates' in BMW terminology- work in self-contained cells on their own authority and have collective responsibility for quality and process control.

Agreements with trade unions allow a high level of cross-training in different disciplines, allowing transmission of knowledge across plant boundaries and between plants, avoiding the tendency to 'guard' knowledge.

There is a great deal of labor flexibility, with 300 working time



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models within the group. This allows BMW to react flexibly to market fluctuation, making optimum use of machinery and capital. In one plant, the introduction of a 4-day working week and six day running time for the machine system saw the plant increase productivity by 30 per cent along with an expansion of the workforce. The BMW 'Formula for Work' agreement at the new Leipzig plant is even more radical, allowing infinitely variable adjustment of operating time between 60-140 hours per week depending on the order situation.

At the BMW motorcycle plant in Berlin, seasonal demand is met by increasing production capacity with extended shifts, weekly working hours and a four shift scheme. In the second half of the year, shorter shifts and a four day week balance out the overtime over the year. Employees can have minus or plus 200 hours in their work 'account'. At the Munich plant employees work a 'rolling' four day week and the machinery operates on a five day cycle, reinforcing the 'de-coupling' of machine and operator.

At the engine assembly line in Munich, 'virtual' simulations of new lines are constructed before serial production starts. This allows testing of different scenarios before committing to the fixed costs of production. Assembly sequences with thousands of components and work stages can be simulated and optimised in advance and many problems can be avoided before the lines are built. During development of the 7 series, more than 80 per cent of the assembly process was modelled virtually.

Finally, the company has implemented a far reaching environmental program, which includes introduction of water-soluble paints; reduction of CO2 emissions by 15 per cent per vehicle produced; cutting process waste water by 16 per cent - 80 per cent of process water is recycled; cutting the use of solvents by 29 per cent and energy consumption by 20 per cent. The company also takes its responsibility to the local community seriously, establishing a neighborhood forum and supporting a number of cultural, sporting and social projects. The plant recruits 200 apprentices a year, many from local colleges.

Lessons?

We can learn a lot of general principles from observing industries which long ago moved from 'handcraft' to industrialized processes. And the narrow web industry needs to make just such a move if it is to survive in the longer term. Here are some points to consider:

- deliver finished assemblies of inking systems, pre-mounted plates and dies to the press at the point they are required for a job change, creating a 'Just in Sequence' production process
- The latest generation of management information systems

(MIS) allow remotely taken customer orders to trigger a series of cascading processes including search of the die, materials and ink databases and automatic re-ordering where necessary.

- Use MIS systems to set up flexible workflows which can accommodate late changes and short runs without disrupting overall plant efficiencies
- Web-enabled MIS systems allows customer requirements to drive converter's business without adding overheads to estimating and purchasing departments. Examples include stock call-off, making remote amendments to job files (eg price flashes).
- See the servo-driven press as a programmable machine tool, utilizing the ability to save and restore a wide range of production information. Speed of changeover between processes is the critical factor
- Promote labor flexibility based around cell working. Base work groups around self-contained quality 'cells', in which operators are multi-skilled. This will require dramatic changes of attitude among both trade unions and management – but BMW's example proves it can be done. Employee satisfaction is increased while the worker is 'de-coupled' from a specific machine or work process, increasing flexibility.
- Standardizing production processes within the plant and between plant allows jobs to be flexibly allocated to the most efficient route
- Set up the equivalent of BMW's Product Evolution Process (PEP) units to work on developing new products, integrating all specialty departments involved in the development process.
- Install information monitors at all production points displaying the job now being worked on and its place in the production sequence to replace or augment the manual job bag. All this information should be available through the MIS system.
- Eliminate heavy lifting and work on ergonomics – as an example consider replacing cylinders with sleeves and the installation of hoists.
- Consider different working time models to introduce greater production flexibility
- Use MIS systems to 'virtually' test new production workflows and alternative models. Model new machinery before it is purchased – as an example model where a digital press might fit into various production scenarios to optimize longer run machines
- Implement an environmental audit and include relationships with the local community. This has multiple benefits, as the BMW case shows, in promoting better relationships with the locality and in saving money and resources.
- Establish apprenticeship /training/awareness schemes with local schools and colleges

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Industrial print in practice

Delegates to Gallus' industrialization seminar were invited to see theory put into practice at the Steinbeis Packaging Group in Germany. **Andy Thomas** reports

The Steinbeis Packaging Group, located in Holzkirchen, just outside Munich, purchased a Gallus RCS330 press one year ago, and has worked hard on automating its workflow both on and around the press.

Explaining Steinbeis' decision to invest in the RCS330, Wolfgang Zollner, production site manager at Holzkirchen, explained the company's criteria for choosing new machinery:

- Is it future orientated and modular?
- Does it offer simple and efficient operation?
- Price – related to the capabilities of the equipment

The RCS330 press is the most fully automated on the narrow web market, with each axis directly driven, and it is this capability, says Zollner, which justifies the higher cost of the machine. 'The press has very short set-up times because of its direct driven automated processes, particularly for repeat orders, combined with low materials waste during set-up. 'It takes 15-20 minutes set-up time for jobs involving a complete change in process and materials. The press is also fast - we achieve an average of 120 metres/minute if there is no screen or hot stamping.'

The mix of jobs running on the RCS330 have changed from long run easy jobs to more complex work. 'Today we have learned to put our short run, high value jobs on this press, mainly between 1,000 and 1,500 metres. Speed is not important here, but setup time is. We are particularly impressed with jobs run through the press a second time with a tolerance of 0.2-0.3mm, which is very good. Independence of format size is also important.'

Longer runs are put onto the Nilpeter MO3300 press – a combination offset/flexo/screen machine. The Steinbeis RCS330 is specified with a Teknek double-sided web cleaner mounted on an E-L web guide, and an Arcotec corona treater.

On the day L&L visited Holzkirchen, the RCS330 press crew was changing between two jobs. The first was a Goesser Ice beer label printed on clear-on-clear OPP. The printing order was UV screen, followed by four flexo units, hot foil, then a flexo black

and gloss varnish, enhanced by 'ironing' with a re-usable laminate roll before die cutting.

The second job involved a change of substrate to a metallic, then printing a flexo gold varnish on unit 4, flexo on unit 6 and demounting the hot foil unit. The changeover produced just 80 metres of waste and was completed in 12 minutes. 'This same job change would take around an hour on our MO3300 press, as we would have needed to exchange units,' comments Zollner.

Wolfgang Zollner's only real frustration with the RCS330 press is its single unwind. 'We print at 120metres/minute so it's crazy to have to stop the press and change rolls, which creates more waste and takes more time. We need a double unwind for shorter runs.' Zollner is also looking for a camera system which will give him a statistical analysis of good and bad print in a roll. ■

The Steinbeis Group

The Steinbeis Group has an annual turnover of €100M and 500 employees. It was founded as Zweckform in 1946, entering the pressure sensitive business by becoming an Avery licensee in 1958. In 1999 a joint venture was concluded with Avery, and the group was renamed Steinbeis. Steinbeis today produces labels for a wide range of blue chip clients in the beverages, toiletries/cosmetics and food sectors. Around 98 per cent of all jobs are now on filmic laminates. The company remains family-owned and maintains a strong commitment to R&D, with ten dedicated employees.

Wolfgang Zollner is an example of the group's ability to leverage the expertise of its individual business units. Before joining the Holzkirchen operation in January this year, he was in charge of the Group's battery label plant in Saxony.

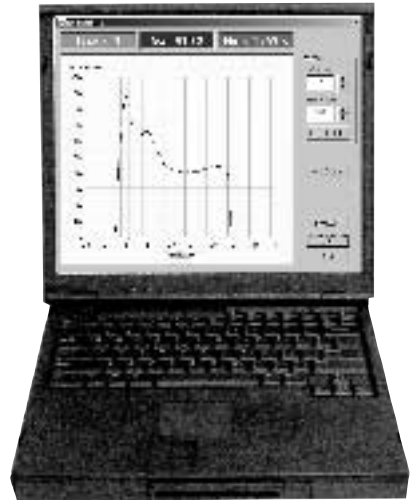
The Steinbeis group runs a wide range of label converting processes including rotogravure, combination offset and flexo and letterpress. It has five operations worldwide, including an IML specialized operation in France, a rotogravure plant for the beverage market in Philadelphia, and most recently a plant in China. Setting up the Chinese operation was facilitated by bringing Chinese printers to train in Germany.

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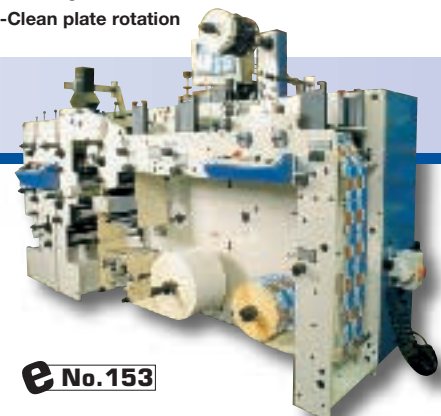
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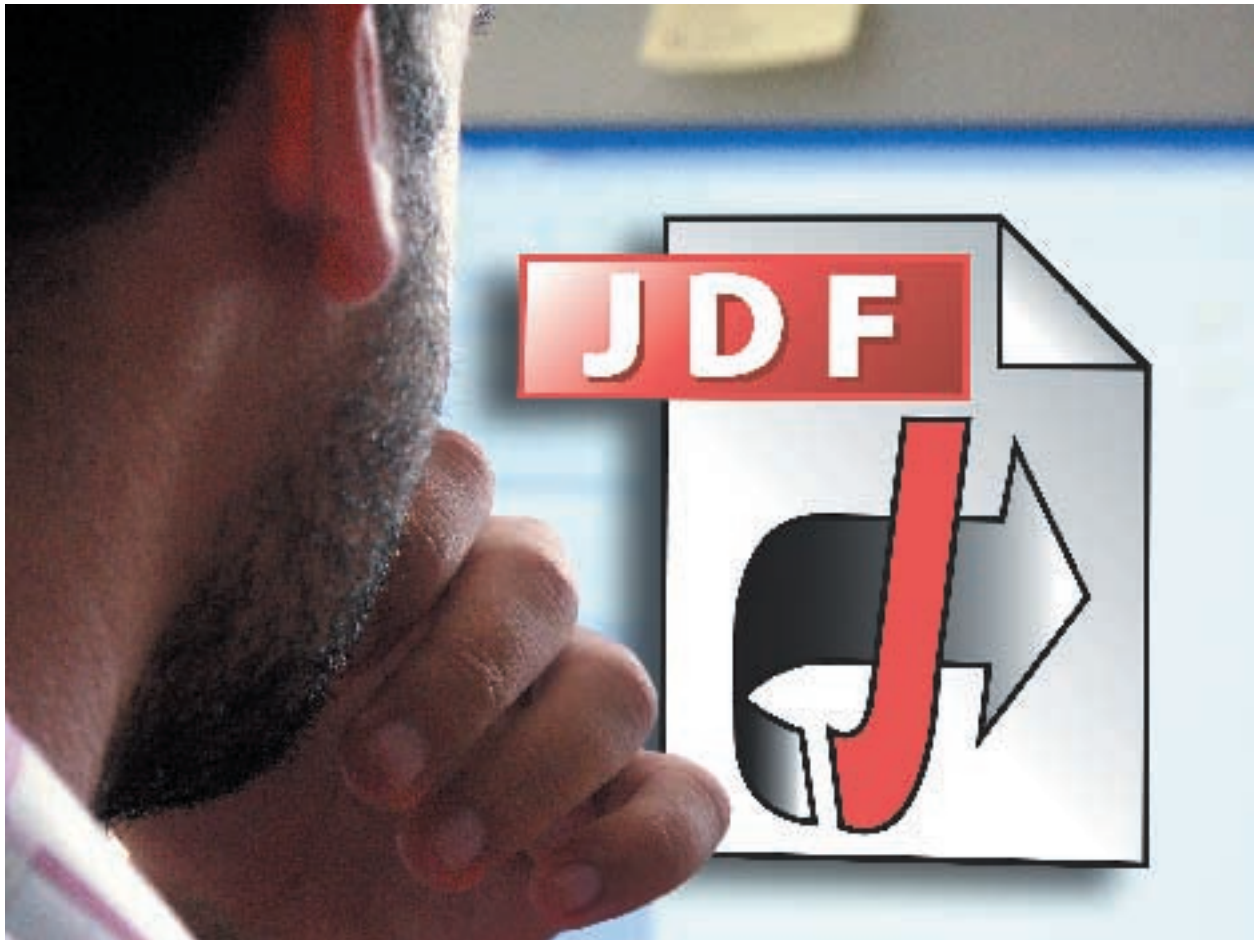
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JDF for Narrow Web

Job Definition Format (JDF) will enable narrow web converters to realize huge productivity gains by integrating their businesses. But we have a long way to go before it is truly a ‘plug and play’ open standard, as Creo CEO **Amos Michelson** explains.

The modern label and narrow web printer or converter can be compared to a collection of islands in a stream. Each of the various departments—estimating, planning, prepress, press, and finishing—are disconnected islands in the current of daily work. Each department uses sophisticated technology and equipment dedicated to a specific role. And while these departments are increasingly able to optimize and automate internal tasks, coordination and automation across departments remains elusive.

The sole connection between these islands is often a paper job ticket. These job tickets are written up using an estimating system, then printed out and stuck in a job docket that follows the job all the way to final delivery. When the flow of jobs ebbs, the staff can wade through the shallow waters from island to island and hammer out in person the crucial details of a given job. When the flow of jobs surges, informal communication is strained, and much rides on the accuracy and quality of that tenuous job ticket.

CIP4 has proposed Job Definition Format (JDF) as the

solution to this ‘islands in the stream’ dilemma. But JDF is still in the early stages of development. What do all these acronyms mean and how will they impact the label and narrow web industry?

CIP4

CIP4 stands for the International Cooperation for the Integration of Processes in Prepress, Press, and Post Press. CIP4 is responsible for the creation and management of the JDF specification, and ensures that it is truly open and available as an industry standard. JDF version 1.2 was released at drupa, and version 1.3 is under development by over 200 CIP4 members.

JDF

JDF is an XML-based, industry-standard file format that is designed to streamline information exchange between different

applications and systems. This file format helps to unify creative, prepress, postpress, production systems and management information systems (MIS) by providing the first step towards open integration. In other words, JDF will replace those fragile paper job tickets and connect the islands in the stream. Information is entered once, and that information controls, reports, and operates everything automatically.

NGP

Networked Graphic Production (NGP) is the industry-wide commitment by developers, manufacturers and vendors to deliver the value of JDF. It is about resolving the confusion surrounding data formats and communication from system to system. JDF isn't enough: two companies can be JDF-compatible, but their systems may not be able to communicate. NGP Partners are working to define the specification, so that when vendors say they are NGP-compatible, it actually means that their products speak to each other.

Cooperation is Necessary for Integration

Specifications do not result in integration. In the case of JDF, a specification is a suggested method of communication between each of the functional areas of the graphic arts supply chain. It is broad and flexible. Broad and flexible is good because it ensures that the specification can be used throughout the supply chain and can handle all types of data flow through the process. On the other hand, broad and flexible is bad because implementers of JDF have many options for achieving the same end. Unfortunately, this means that many vendors will not be able to communicate with each other out of the gate.

To achieve a networked graphic production environment where data seamlessly flows from one functional area to the next requires a specification and cooperation amongst vendors. The specification for communicating job information and instructions is JDF. However, JDF is not plug and play. Unless vendors are working together to specify, test, and support their integrations, they will most likely fail upon implementation.

There are two main approaches to vendor cooperation. One approach is for individual vendors to partner with each other to create one-off integrations. The second approach is for a group of vendors to create a partnership to create a one-to-many integration model. The Networked Graphic Production

Partnership was formed using the latter model. This partnership of graphic arts vendors from around the globe was formed to identify and deliver integration that solves specific business and production issues while delivering a measurable return on investment to the printer. This collaborative approach has resulted in over 90 integration pairs and many customer success stories which can be read about here:

http://www.ngppartners.org/case_studies.htm.
For more information about NGP, please visit the official website - www.ngppartners.org.

Implications of JDF

As is the case with most specifications, the bits and bytes of JDF are not as important to the end user as the integration that it enables. Yes, a JDF job ticket is an XML file that can be opened up in your browser. And sure, one can actually read this file and see recognizable data such as run length and customer name. But the real benefit is the networking of traditionally separate functional areas in graphic production—connecting the creative process with prepress, networking production equipment with MIS, or automatically setting up guillotines based on production planning data from prepress. In a nutshell, printers and converters will be able to shorten cycle times, increase quality and accuracy, and reduce costs by eliminating inefficiencies between functional areas.

Preparing for JDF

CIP4 reactivated the packaging working group at its meeting in Vancouver, British Columbia this past July. This signals its commitment to incorporating packaging-specific requirements into future versions of JDF. This working group will be responsible for reviewing JDF 1.3 for applicability to packaging workflows, adding additional specifications as necessary, and defining "Interoperability Conformance Specifications" (ICS) for packaging. What are ICS's? JDF is like a dictionary of words. The many ICS's are like the grammar for using those words. Without an ICS, vendors may use the JDF dictionary in widely different ways. JDF does not become practically useable by vendors without an ICS to work from.

The packaging working group of CIP4 represents a great opportunity for vendors, consultants, printers, and designers alike to influence the development of JDF. Consultants, designers, and printers can become members of CIP4 for only \$150 per year which gives them access to the working group meetings which typically occur through conference calls and on-line meetings. More information on CIP4 membership can be found at www.cip4.org.

Beyond JDF

JDF is not a plug and play specification at this time and any application can indicate that it is JDF compliant, JDF enabled, or using JDF. True networked applications however rely on the cooperation of individual vendors or vendor partnerships (see sidebar). Without these partnerships, the value of JDF will never be realized. Fortunately, vendors are working together to provide integrated solutions for the graphic production supply chain. Input from end-users is critical to this process. Input can be accomplished in a number of ways.

1. Through direct conversations with individual vendors offering JDF solutions.
2. Through membership in CIP4.
3. Through participation in the advisory boards of vendor partnerships.

At least one partnership, Networked Graphic Production, consults with an advisory board of end users when developing new interfaces. The success of JDF integration depends on end-user input and participation, and vendor cooperation.



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e No.164

Bopack focuses on 'clever' labels

A concentration on complex, paper-based label structures, has enabled Bopack Lorient in Brittany, France, to move its customers into new applications and to invest in new press capacity



Director of Operations at Bopack Lorient, Frédéric Boehlen, and Head of Production, Jean Amorim, flank Mark Andy AG's Ernst Meyer in front of the new 4150 press

Bopack, one of Europe's leading label converters, has installed a 10" Mark Andy 4150 flexo line at its production facility in Lorient, Brittany. The new 10-colour press, which is fitted with Honle cold mirror UV, joins four other multi colour Mark Andys at Bopack Lorient, all bar one with 10" web width, and all with full UV curing.

Currently, the Lorient plant produces 95 per cent of its labels for the food industry, notably the dairy and meat products from Brittany, north to Bordeaux and south to Normandy. Working almost exclusively with paper based substrates, the company is looking to develop and improve double and triple layer work.

Comments Bopack Lorient director of operations Frédéric Boehlen, 'We are working closely with our customers on new concepts in multi layer products that have good eye appeal as well as offering either promotional opportunities, like book or duo labels, or re-usable hygienic packaging for re-sealing food products. We offer 'scratch off' panels and work with or without lamination on paper and filmic materials, so the options are many!'

Known for its skill with UV curing, Bopack Lorient was one of the first converters in France to commit fully to the technique. It also pioneered the use of digital platemaking, which Boehlen

believes is essential in maintaining a market lead.

Producing labels more for manufacturers than retailers has given Bopack Lorient an insight into the broader scope of packaging. Re-sealable food packs, booklets, and coupons stretch the concept of a label into new areas of the market. By selling the creative capacity of his presses, Boehlen has been successful in persuading customers to develop new applications. In particular, he is impressed by the creative possibilities opened up by the Mark Andy presses' auto register system for reverse side printing.

While Boehlen predicts that paper based substrates will continue to dominate food industry requirements, varnish or laminating is commonly used to enhance the multi colours now being demanded. Typically, he says, sandwiches are now packaged using eight or nine colours, where three or four would previously have sufficed.

The high level of customer loyalty at the Lorient plant (70 per cent + repeat business), is testimony to the service element of the company. ISO 9001 (version 2000) was achieved last year, and is seen as a comfort factor for customers as well as a useful performance yardstick. The cumulative know-how within the Bopack Group, and the close cooperation between its production plants throughout France and the Benelux is a valuable sales tool, according to Boehlen.

'We have a variety of equipment and techniques across the Group that is probably second to none. In addition to acting as a source of expertise, it creates an environment of friendly but keen competition, which, I believe, benefits our customers and us. We have a young and highly motivated workforce in the Group, and because each plant has its own culture, Bopack is able to stay healthy and vibrant.'

The Bopack Group was founded in Antwerp in 1969 to print labels and manufacture semi- and fully automatic labelling systems. The Group, which still has two divisions, employs over 700 people and enjoys an annual turnover in excess of 120m. Label production is effected at six plants, which together use 70 presses, and techniques from flexo (UV and w/b) to letteamaider spread across various industry sectors. ■

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LP3000 christens Field's greenfield site

Field First-Label Access in the UK has opened a purpose-built label plant specializing in multiple substrates and short order delivery via internet ordering.

As part of an investment programme valued in excess of £500,000, Field First-Label Access has installed a Mark Andy LP3000 at its new 18,000 ft² purpose-built production unit in the St Philips district of Bristol, UK. The LP3000, a 10-colour 13" press with full UV curing, joins four Mark Andy 2200 machines, but marks a departure from the company's existing 10" web width capacity.

Explaining his company's choice of press, general manager, Andy Walter said:

'Although we have been a Mark Andy house for many years, we went to Labelexpo last year with an open mind, particularly as we were looking to change web widths. After careful evaluation of the presses available we decided that the LP3000 was the best fit for our type of work. It has all the Mark Andy features that have served us so well on the 2200s, and raises the benchmark for ease of operation and productivity.'

Originally established in 1973, the company became part of the Field Group in 1997, one year after Walter took over as managing director. Inheriting a mix of equipment that included two Mark Andy 2200s, he set about modernising the business and focusing its attention on value-added labels for the food industry, to which promotional labels and work for the industrial sector have since been added.

The move into UV cured flexo came with the assistance of Field Group Technical, which according to Andy Walter is a key advantage of the



Andy Walter, general manager

group umbrella, and gave the company a lead on its competitors. Today, the press configuration is a mix of 4 and 8-colour machines, supported by the new 10-colour LP3000, all of which are equipped with GEW UV system curing, described by Walter as 'good and reliable'.

Working with a philosophy of 'lean manufacture', Field First

"It has allowed us to lay out an ideal workflow on the shopfloor, encompass all repro and platemaking, and provide good facilities for staff too"



outgrew its Yatton plant last year, and the move to its new site in Bristol was achieved with minimal personnel change. While numbers have crept to 30 (from 23), Walter is delighted with his new factory. 'We had a clean sheet here, with only the outer walls fixed. It has allowed us to lay out an ideal workflow on the shopfloor, encompass all repro and platemaking, and provide good facilities for staff too. The extra production capacity of the new LP3000 is a perfect complement.'

What Field First has to offer is flexible capacity, according to Walter, and a history of innovation. Two products in particular, Trayfix and self-adhesive card labels, have offered packaging buyers of leading food suppliers to the retail chains a cost effective alternative to carton board sleeves. The card labels have found favour for their greater resistance to tampering than conventional carton board sleeves, now popular in the frozen food cabinet, and can be machine applied, which reduces expensive handling.

Field First-Label Access has also demonstrated its creativity through the development of

"Trayfix and self-adhesive card labels, have offered packaging buyers of leading food suppliers to the retail chains a cost effective alternative to carton board sleeves"

promotional labels using Internet based software. This has allowed customers to order and take delivery of small quantities of labels in a very short time timescale. By reducing inventory effectively to zero, but still providing rapid call-off could be seen as a 'win-win' situation for all but the customary warehouses in the middle. It allows Field First to respond to the dynamics of the market.

Fully certified for quality with ISO 9000, environmental standards with ISO 14001, and hygiene with BRCIOP, Field First is also an accredited to IIP, which was fundamental to its successful recent relocation and is part of a good working relationship from shopfloor to management. According to Andy Walter, the company is now perfectly set up to achieve its ongoing target of 20 per cent growth year on year.

'I am very optimistic about the label market. Modern technology allows us to develop new products that really add value to customers' products and help to improve sales.' ■

 No.305

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 No.139

Verifying variable print

With sequential bar codes on the increase, converters need to look to new verification technology. **Katy Wight** reports

Returning to business school in 1998, Ted Schultze, president of Inspection Systems Inc (ISI), a specialist in the design and manufacture of high speed bar code inspection equipment, learned about the growing influence of mass customization. This teaching couldn't have been more prophetic for Schultze. The increasing influence of serialization has impacted the production and verification of the barcode, entirely transforming the nature of ISI's business.

Since incorporation in 1990, ISI has introduced numerous innovative bar code inspection systems to meet different demands, from simple data match to complex sequence management with automated shipping/packaging control. The company also supplies parts and equipment to companies like BST International, who use ISI components in its inspection systems. Traditionally ISI has worked with OEMs and hasn't targeted converters themselves. The company has been a regular exhibitor at Labelexpo Americas and Schultze saw a huge shift in interest at the 2004 show.

'Eighty per cent of the inquiries that we received were from converters looking for barcode quality and sequence management systems,' says Schultze. 'This is a big shift from the show two years ago, where it was all about static barcodes. Barcode printers' customers are now demanding that their converter cater to this specialization.'

Schultze has strong beliefs surrounding the growing influence of sequential numbering in the US since the last Labelexpo show.

'Sequential numbers are used wherever something needs to be identified discretely and is perceived to be of a high value. This is not necessarily tied to monetary worth. It is something that has to be uniquely identifiable and has a high value associated with it, for example a blood sample,' he says. 'From a global perspective, the US is a high cost country, where we manufacture and buy more and more high value items, because all of our commodities are now being produced offshore. It is significant that we have seen these changes take place in the last two years and there is no doubt in my mind

“Eighty per cent of the inquiries that we received were from converters looking for barcode quality and sequence management systems. This is a big shift from the show two years ago, where it was all about static barcodes”

that we will see increasing serialization.'

Sequential data may be an arising phenomenon for barcode label printers, but it's nothing new for ISI, who has offered management systems for a number of years. Originally, these systems were highly customized and used by a handful of specialty customers, such as the sophisticated Compliance Pro HSV Custom installed at the US Postal Service in Topeka, Kansas.

The Compliance Pro HSV Custom is an on-line full ISO/ANSI bar code verifier (linear symbologies) that can be integrated with existing digital printing systems, networked and linked to a job information database. It is expandable from one to four scan heads per system, can produce real-time trend charts, has auto-discrimination between symbologies, two operation modes (free scan and sync pulse) and a modem for remote diagnostics.

Schultze describes the original Compliance Pro HSV Custom model as, 'a Lamborghini, when people now want a Toyota.' At Labelexpo Americas 2004 ISI introduced two new models – Compliance Pro Inspect and Compliance Pro Report – which

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Both models can be installed on any rewind system, printing press, production line or print/apply machine. They can inspect to ISO 15416 and ANSI X3.182 standards, reaching speeds up to 1000fpm. They have a single button for verification and a three bulb light stack to flash when the system drops below an acceptable level. Both systems can archive data for reports or quality system logs, and can interface or share data with existing software systems if necessary. The more economical Inspect system inspects the barcode but does not offer analysis to determine the cause of the ISO/ANSI results.

'These new lower priced models are opening up the world of accurate, high-speed bar code inspection to a whole new market. In the past this has been more of a custom solution for us, but it is becoming far more mainstream. It can be self-installed, it's easy to run and helps you to improve the quality of what you are printing.

The diagnostic nature of the Report model not only says when your barcodes are below the acceptable level, but notes which parameters are being exceeded, and indicates how to change your operations to reach and maintain higher quality for the longer term.

'Your customers don't want to know how something is printed,' says Schultze. 'They want to know that when it is delivered, there won't be any non-conforming labels that will need to be pulled out. It's how you manage that process that's critical to the end user and that's exactly what led to the birth of the sequence management system.

'You can take out the labels that aren't conforming and monitor what's on the finished rolls, so that the system knows any missing numbers and where the breaks occur. It is then possible to generate a label to state what's on the roll and the customer is given advanced shipping notice.'

The barcode industry is not only experiencing a move to sequential data, but the people requiring the technology is also shifting. Converters want and see the need to have the capabilities themselves. The movement toward RFID and eventually individual product marking reiterates the growth in interest towards mass customization and the need for sequence management. So how will it interact with RFID?

'I suspect that our next version will be RFID-based,' speculates Schultze. 'The barcode will be the visible back-up to the chip, just like the printed code human readable is the visible back-up to the barcode right now. Sequential management will be even more important then.' ■

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Packaging pacesetter puts something back

Allan Willett, the force behind the growth of Willett International to a major global player, now wants to provide venture capital to new entrepreneurs in the labels sector. L&L examines his track record and what is now on offer

When Allan Willett eventually accepted one of the myriad of offers that had been made over the years for his company, Willett International, it was not the end of his involvement in the packaging field but the beginning of a new chapter in the remarkable story of someone who has been a major force in the industry for several decades.

Now Willett is approaching the industry from a different angle. Having built his own company from a minnow in the market place to the fourth largest coding company in the world, controlling 14 per cent of the world market for electronic coding equipment, he now intends to use part of the proceeds of the sale, plus the experience of the former Willett team, to help others start out on the road to success.

Allan Willett Associates (AWA) has been established to provide venture capital for entrepreneurs and while there is no intention of competing with the huge venture capital funds or major banks, AWA will provide finance for start-up companies or first round finance programmes. Where necessary it will also be prepared to fund pre-incorporation analysis, investigation and other expenses in return for future investment rights.

If anyone is able to offer help to those entering the packaging industry it is Allan Willett. From the very start back in 1962, when Willett established a small company selling packaging and plastics machinery, his flair for spotting opportunities in the market and his entrepreneurial approach, led to his companies stealing a march on many larger rivals. For example, companies within the Willett group were responsible for developing the world's first microprocessor controlled labeller and the first large character ink jet printer for outer case coding.

'What I did not realise at the time,' Willett says, 'is that along with six other manufacturers in the world, we were actually creating a new global industry in electronic coding.'

Willett was also one of the first companies to develop print/apply labellers capable of taking variable information such as times, dates, batch codes, bar codes and sequential

numbers and printing and applying labels to a whole range of products and packages.

'Once again this was tremendously useful technology,' Willett says. 'For the first time companies could print and apply labels carrying all types of information, in-house. Overnight it reduced the need to carry stocks of pre-printed labels or cartons, which represented massive savings to many manufacturers.'

A major milestone in the Willett story came in 1983, by which time the Willett group consisted of a variety of labelling and coding businesses with a combined turnover of £14 million. In Willett's opinion the group lacked direction, so he took the bold step of selling off various parts of the group and trimming it back to a core business with a turnover of just £2 million but concentrating on the hi-tech end of the coding, labelling and electronic printing markets. This was a turning point and thanks to a well funded R&D programme, the newly formed Willett International rapidly built a reputation as a leader in the field.

Shortly afterwards another event was to propel Willett onto the international stage in a big way and no one could have choreographed the moves. With exports increasing, Willett had entered into an agreement with a major US manufacturer with an extensive European distribution network through which it was selling the Willett range in Europe. The US partner suddenly decided it wanted to buy Willett and as part of the negotiations used the unusual ploy of simply tearing up the existing agreement.



"Where necessary it will fund pre-incorporation analysis, investigation and other expenses in return for future investment rights"



The loss of distribution in Europe was a serious blow but Willett is not a person to shy away from a battle and instead of giving in, he used the ending of the agreement as an opportunity to establish his own network of sales offices. Within the next few months Willett International had not only established ten European subsidiaries selling Willett products direct but had actually persuaded a number of key personnel, formerly with the US company, to join Willett.

From this European base Willett International then began to expand rapidly on a global basis, setting up companies all over the world. Willett led the way when it came to opening up the coding, labelling and electronic printing markets in many parts of the world. 'We broke into China, Russia and Eastern Europe, India, and Brazil. Although we did not enjoy the funds available to a public company, during this expansion period we did not pledge one pound of collateral, it was all done on trust between us and our bankers,' Willett says. 'Eventually we had subsidiaries in 30 countries and sold to another 80 via distributors.'

In recognition of Willett International's success in overseas markets the group won The Queen's Award for Export Achievement on two occasions, won the Financial Times Exporter of the Year Award and was the first UK business to win the Arthur Anderson Global Award for Going International.

The marked difference between AWA and the large financial institutions is the team behind the investments. Allan Willett would never claim to have achieved everything by himself. Like all true entrepreneurs, his skill lay not just in spotting opportunities but also in attracting the right people to exploit

those opportunities.

'Our Research & Development was always in the forefront of the industry and we attracted many of the leading figures in the field to Willett,' he says. 'We also attracted senior personnel from rival companies who were skilled in sales, marketing and human resources, helping build Willett International into a true World Class company.'

The core team at AWA is made up of some of the key people that were largely responsible for building UK based Willett International Limited into a global coding and labelling business with a turnover of £80 million and employing more than 1,000 people in 30 countries.

In addition to Allan Willett himself there is David Lewin, former Finance Director of Willett International, who is the Chief Executive of AWA. There is Chris May, initially Finance Director then Commercial Director of Willett International, plus former Willett Group Legal Services Director, Simon Allfree.

Over the past decade Willett began to hand over the day-to-day running of Willett International first to Alan Barrell and then to his son Robert and became closely involved in a series of advisory roles. These have included working with banks to re-organise companies in the packaging, plastics and printing industries, and promoting the economic development of the South East of England.

He has always been of the opinion that SMEs (Small and Medium sized Enterprises) are the backbone of any successful economy and now he feels he is in a position to actually help and encourage like minded people in the packaging industry. ■

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Die cutting beyond PS

Should label printers be encouraged to convert cartons where it makes commercial and technical sense? German die manufacturer Spilker certainly believes so, and has developed a cut/crease/embossing system on a single die which it believes is well suited for narrow web presses. **Andy Thomas** reports

Spilker has entered what it sees as a growing market for the production of in-line, rotary cartons on label presses with the release of its Boxit-TL single die cut/crease system.

Explains Michael Rempe, new product manager at Spilker GmbH, 'we see cartons as a possibility for label printers to expand their business and create new market chances. We want to get normal label printers to expand their range. There are opportunities for producing small quantities in the range of 10,000 pieces up to millions of folding boxes.'

Spilker already has a two-cylinder rotary cut-crease solution with a synchronously running pair of male-female cylinders available as hardened solid rotary cutters, as a pair of magnetic cylinders with exchangeable pairs of flexible dies and as a combination of both systems.

But the Boxit-TL system uses a single flexible die mounted on a magnetic cylinder and a counter pressure cylinder. It works against the reverse side of the carton, so the cutting and creasing lines do not come into direct contact with the ink and coating film on the substrate surface. 'Not only does this avoid damage to ink and coating but die life is extended,' says Michael Rempe. Three raised crease lines are used on the TL die to make the fold more precise.

Converters working with the standard Boxit System have been cut/creasing up to 1.3 million cartons at speeds up to 150 metres/minute with one flexible die. 'We have actually run up to

170 metres/minute on demonstrations. The main speed limitation is at the outfeed of the machine the printer is using,' says Rempe.

Embossing is carried out on the same die plate with the Spilker Boxit System 'Braille will be more important in the future,' says Rempe. 'It is already compulsory in several European countries for medical applications for example.'

Rempe says the Spilker Boxit system and the Boxit TL system can be applied to just about any suitably specified label press. Die width is up to 520mm and repeat length up to 700mm. Finishing is nickel, although chrome and laser hardening are possible.

Rempe says that carton printers used to flatbed creasing quality have been happy with Spilker's samples. 'The depth and the precision of the crease line is very important if you are going to compete with flatbed, and we have achieved that.'

Signline

The Boxit-TL die system can also be used in Spilker's new stand-alone converting system, the Signline. This is a motor-



Spilker expands

Founded more than 40 years ago in Germany, Spilker recently moved into newly expanded production facilities - a sure sign of growing commercial confidence. The company has 150 employees and manufacturers flexible dies (rotary and flat), rotary cutters, printing cylinders, hot stamping and magnetic cylinders and many other tools. It has subsidiaries in France, Italy and China, and is now looking to expand its presence in North America.



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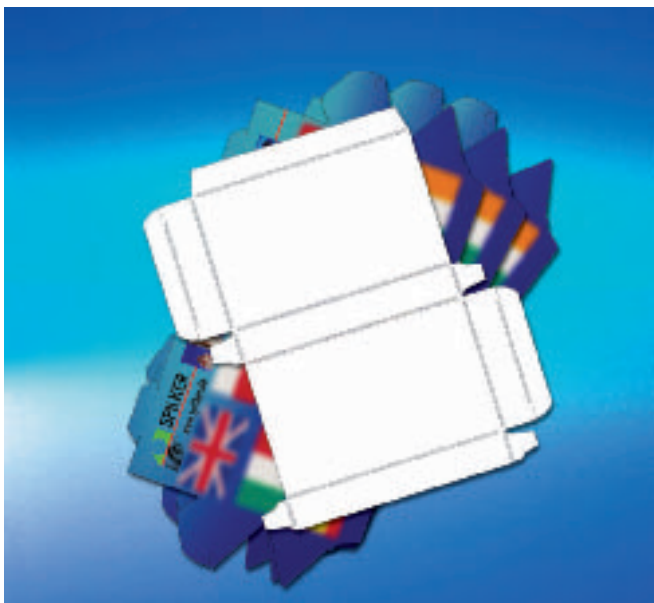
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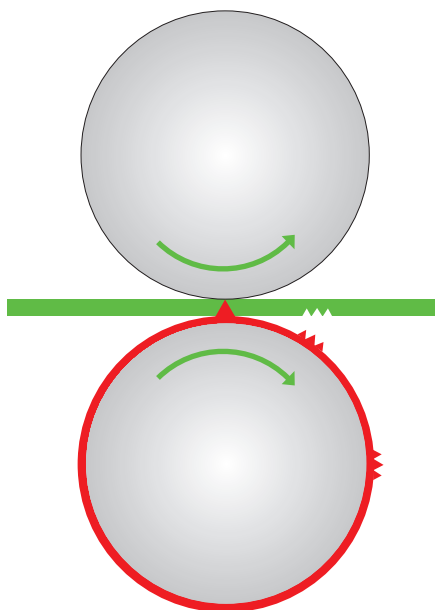
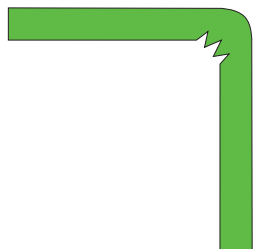
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e No.161



The Boxit-TL system uses a single flexible die mounted on a magnetic cylinder and a counter pressure cylinder. It works against the reverse side of the carton



Other new products

- The second generation of Spilker's Plateflex flexo and letterpress plate mounting system has been released. The first version had a vacuum system to hold the plate in place and this has now been supplemented by a glass sheet for holding in position plates which have been distorted due to frequent use. The system will optionally handle magnetic letterpress plates. The printing plates are aligned on the flat surface and then wound onto the printing cylinder.
 - The PowerCheck cutting force sensor provides a digital readout of the applied pressure on the die - including separate readouts for left and right pressure. These are stored for repeat jobs. It can be used in combination with Spilker's manually operated Rotary Cutting Unit for QA purposes when assessing cutting depth and imprint on the carrier.
 - Spilker is now manufacturing sleeves for three applications: coating; for 'endless' direct exposure photopolymer flexo; and as a replacement for standard printing cylinders.
- *Since last June, the company has been operating a machine-sharpening system which is replacing hand sharpening of dies. Spilker has also produced its own ground gears since last year. Under- and over-pitch gears for all reputable press machine manufactures can be produced in around 6-10 days to compensate for different thickness materials.

powered cutting machine which allows label converters to produce short runs of labels and folding cartons from pre-printed sheets. Prototyping is one obvious application, where the system could be used in conjunction with a sheetfed digital press such as HP Indigo's ws2000.

Signline allows any shape to be kiss-cut or cut through and can use either flexible dies or replaceable solid cutters. The use of solid cutters is recommended for larger quantities and difficult materials such as extremely compact cardboards, PP or PE. The driven rotary cutter is positioned on top of a hardened and ground counter pressure cylinder, with the cutting pressure transferred via the bearers and cylinders. The unit runs off a 230V power supply and can produce formats from A3 to A2. Spilker will be able to supply automated handling components such as auto feeder and stacker. ■

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e No.184



Raflatac expands terminal network in Eastern Europe

New facility opened to service the growing markets of East and South East Europe. **Mike Fairley** reports from Tatabánya

With ten new countries joining the European Union in May 2004 – predominantly from Eastern Europe – the enlarged market community is looking to a long period of sustained and rapid pressure-sensitive labelstock growth. Already growing at 17% overall, Eastern Europe is experiencing almost unprecedented demand for both paper and non-paper in rolls.

Little wonder then, that pressure-sensitive global labelstock giant, Raflatac, has constructed a modern production facility in the region to service the market for labelstock growth in Central, Eastern and South-East Europe.

Officially opened on the 1st October in the presence of some 250 label converters and officials, the brand new near €5 million distribution terminal and sales office in Tatabánya, Hungary, is Raflatac's answer to the changes taking place in the European market place. "We have anticipated the opportunities brought by changes in the European Union" says Thomas Röhwerder, Senior Vice President for Raflatac Europe, at the opening ceremony "and provided for the needs of an entire region experiencing rapid economic growth".

Also speaking at the opening ceremony, Pekka Kujasalo, Ambassador of Finland in Hungary, said that "Finnish companies already employ 28,000 people in Hungary, with trade between the two countries growing steadily every year. Economic policy in Hungary is stable and predictable, and the

workforce is skilled and well educated – all factors that have made Finnish companies come to, and stay, in Hungary. It is a good place to work in"

Situated in the middle of Europe, 80 kilometres from Budapest and 180 kilometres from Vienna, the Tatabánya terminal is an essential link in Raflatac's growing terminal network. Customers can now be served with increasing speed and efficiency in the home market, Hungary, as well as in Austria, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Greece, Macedonia, Romania, Serbia Montenegro, Slovakia and Slovenia.

Now fully operational and ready to respond to continued

"We have anticipated the opportunities brought by changes in the European Union and provided for the needs of an entire region experiencing rapid economic growth"





Terez Szaloki operates the slitter systems at the Tatabánya terminal

market growth, the 5,500 sq. metre terminal currently employs 30 people and operates with two x 2 metre wide Atlas slitters, one 1.5 metre wide Titan slitter, an automated packaging line with a computer-controlled carriage wagon, pallet pattern optimization, pallet and lid in-feed automation, vertical palletizing and strapping automation. It serves around 200 converter customers in the region.

Although construction only started in August 2003, the first machines were already being installed in February 2004. By the end of April 2004 training had been completed and one-shift operation had commenced. Today, it is already into two-shift operation – yet has the space to see even further sizeable growth in the future.

An extremely modern production facility built close to a new motorway, Raflatac Kft, Tatabánya, provides advanced slitting facilities for filmic and paper labelstocks in one and two metre widths, with the automated packaging line representing the latest in pre-distribution technology. Customers can also raise their productivity and cost-efficiency with the net-width, joint-free products, that are supplied.

“We’re proud to have such a landmark terminal. Our customers in the region now have a clearly improved service and a wider product range that corresponds well to their

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Left: Erno Tokes md, right: Thomas Rohweder senior vice president Raflatac Europe

needs," says Ernő Tökes, Managing Director of Raflatac Kft, Tatabánya.

With some 170 Finnish companies already in Hungary – including Nokia and Elcoteq - and many other international companies located in Tatabánya and the surrounding district, Raflatac saw a good foundation for business development, utilising the high level of education in Hungary,

the strong culture and the positive attitude of the people – highlighting the human aspects behind the choice of location.

According to Tökes, the team at Tatabánya is highly motivated and very professional and continuously generate new ideas. "About half of the production staff are women, which is far from typical in the region, so making the new facility something of a pioneer in Hungary.

An important link in Raflatac's expanding terminal network, which already includes Russia and Poland in

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"The entire region served by the Tatabánya terminal is characterized by rapid economic growth with the label market significantly more dynamic when compared to those in the Western parts of Europe"

Eastern Europe, it answers the market expectations for shorter delivery times and service support in this fast-expanding region.

"The entire region served by the Tatabánya terminal is characterized by rapid economic growth" according to Paddy Bailey, Business Director, Standard Business at Raflatac "with the label market significantly more dynamic when compared to those in the Western parts of Europe.

In a country in which the private sector accounts for over 80% of the country's GDP – almost 29% of which is provided by the industrial sector - and where global brand owner, consumer goods and retail groups are expanding rapidly, Raflatac look set to reap long-term benefits from this key Eastern European investment which enables them to service not only Hungary, but also the many surrounding and fast-growing countries in the enlarged European Union. ■

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Chemistry free CTP

For web offset label converters, computer-to-plate technology has acknowledged advantages in terms of increasing productivity by eliminating film. The next move will be towards systems which dispense with chemical processing for the plate itself

One of the key advantages for owners of offset narrow web presses is that advances made in computer-to-plate for the commercial printing industry rapidly become available for narrow web applications.

An important trend in offset CTP is towards processless plate systems, a development which opens possibilities to lower environmental costs as well as reducing lead times. Presstek has been a pioneer of this technology, and its new chemistry-free CTP system has now been adopted by pressure sensitive label specialist The Label Makers, in Bradford, UK.

The Label Makers is based in a 40,000sq ft production facility and has built its success by offering end users high levels of technical advice on design, inks and substrates as well as

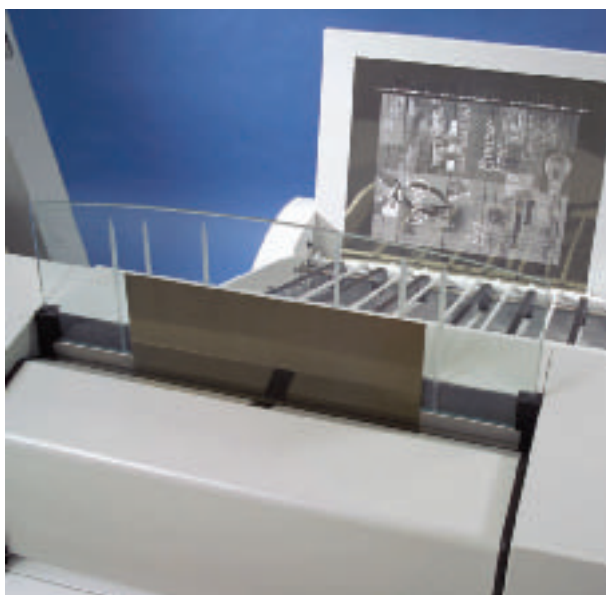
recommending the innovative use of print processes and special features or finishes.

John O'Brian, production director at The Label Makers says, 'Most recently we have ventured into digital imaging and processless printing systems using Presstek's Applause plate technology. We can identify clusters of work that will certainly benefit from using processless plate technology as it will save us time and money. Here at The Label Makers, because we use a variety of printing processes, we can envisage savings on film and processing as a definite benefit. In the near future we can see ourselves imaging digitally 20 per cent of jobs as it becomes a greater part of our day-to-day activity.'

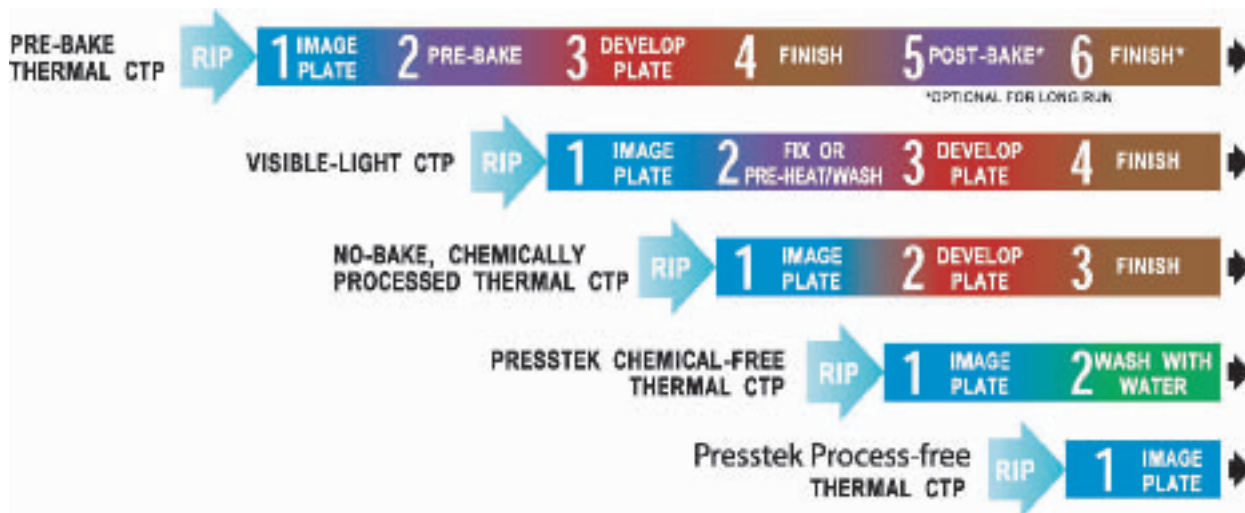
Applause is a negative working plate whose printable parts are ablated from the plate surface – a process that results in an etched relief image on the plate with a higher ink acceptance than the non-exposed areas. Applause plates require no post-processing at all.

O'Brian continues, 'We have one of the largest dedicated design studios in the country creating labels from the simplest single color through to complex, multi-process and award winning designs. We have a comprehensive collection of pre-press, press and finishing hardware enabling us to print labels with enormous creative potential. With Presstek's chemistry free Applause plate we are achieving greater dot clarity. A sharper dot means higher quality print. We adhere to ISO standards for labels for the healthcare and food markets. The Presstek system fits in with our strategy for quality labeling solutions.'

At the Label Makers, plate production feeds a battery of printing presses including a Gallus T250 as well as three Nilpeter M3300 combination presses. The company has the equipment and capability to print using UV litho, UV silk screen and UV flexo in any combination with foil blocking, embossing and over laminating. Other facilities include a UV rotary



Processless platemaking offers environmental benefits



letterpress with in-line foiling and reverse printing, sprocket-hole punching, perforating, sheeting and consecutive numbering. The Label Makers also manufacture multi-ply peel and reseal labels.

Another pressure-sensitive label converter which has adopted the process-free Applause system is German converter Digikett. The company's primary business is the production of printed materials for use with office laser printers. Digikett's product portfolio includes a variety of printed materials, many of which feature integrated labels and customer service cards, as well as self-adhesive labels in all sizes and formats and laser forms integrated with labels (Digiketten). Digikett simultaneously produces the label and the form on a web offset system. Subsequent die cutting and lamination results in a label with exceptional adhesion properties.

Digikett has customized its production operation to meet the unique needs of its customer base. 'We customize our production equipment based on customer requirements,' explains technical manager Mark-S. Bracht. 'Quite often these unique customer requirements generate ideas for new products that can be used to address a wider market.' While Digikett sells its products to printing companies and advertising agencies from all over Europe, the majority of its clients are in Germany.

The company has now adopted Presstek's Anthem chemistry-free printing plates and the Dimension200 Computer-to-Plate system. The Anthem plates require a simple water wash after imaging.

Digikett technical manager Hans W. Bracht was particularly impressed that Presstek's Anthem printing plates could guarantee run length consistency without the need for chemistry, pre- or post-baking or gumming. 'We have been very pleased with the results offered by Anthem plates and the Dimension 200 platesetter. They have far exceeded our expectations.' As an added benefit, Digikett was able to acquire

financing for 40 per cent of the total purchase price of the Dimension 200 system from the investment bank that oversees the promotion of ecological measures in Kiel due to the positive environmental impact of the system.

Digikett has recently begun using Presstek's Applause plate, and was able to implement both Anthem plates and the testing of Applause with little modification to existing press workflow. The company soon benefited from reduced platemaking time, a significant reduction of paper waste and a less complicated press make ready process. This proved to be a significant economic advantage in view of the expensive consumables used in the UV printing that is a key part of the company's production process. With the Presstek CTP system new plates with different screening parameters can be prepared within as little as five minutes.

Looking toward the future, Digikett is planning an ambitious expansion of its product portfolio, a move that, according to Hans W. Bracht, is made possible by the improved operational efficiencies the Presstek system has delivered. He says, 'Digikett is capable of experiencing robust growth now that the company can effectively handle even the smallest of orders with ease, and the environmental friendliness of the Presstek solution is an added bonus. The Presstek Dimension200 with Anthem plates has enabled us to grow our company by handling small orders in an even more efficient and ecological manner than we were able to achieve in the past with the added benefit of reduced costs, chemistry-free processing and excellent print quality.'

Also critical to Digikett's formula for success is knowing when to invest in the latest technology. In partnership with Presstek's dealer Behrends + Spranger, GmbH, Digikett continues to monitor industry developments. Hans W. Bracht says, 'Smart advice from trusted technical resources and superior printed products — that's how a printer stays competitive in a rapidly changing world.' ■

 No.309



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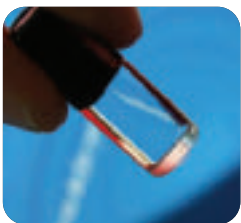
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PISEC 05

Going digital

As this year's Labelexpo Americas proved, digital label printing and finishing is becoming an established, mainstream technology, with converters well aware of its potential to create new business opportunities. **Andy Thomas** reports

Digital label printing is a growing market and is attracting suppliers of digital printing equipment who up to now have sold only, or mainly, into the commercial printing sector.

One such company is Japanese company Roland DG, which specializes in selling inkjet systems into the top end of the sign-making industry for applications like point-of-sale promotions. Last year the company exhibited at its first Labelexpo in Brussels, and one of the first label converters to buy a system was Gustav Freytag, based in Brunsbek, Germany.

A 25 years old, family owned business, Gustav Freytag runs a battery of conventional presses: a Shiki UV waterless offset press, Nilpeter and Gallus flexo presses and Ko-Pack and Gallus letterpress machines.

Andreas Treichel, technical director at Gustav Freytag, said the decision to buy the Roland DG VersaCMM SP-300 was taken after considering the whole range of digital printing options. 'We decided the cost model for digital offset was not right. The Roland is a smaller investment, quicker to make ready, and it's easy to make new shapes and cut them. We can change colors, shapes etc as we need to.'

The roll-fed VersaCMM SP-300 both prints and cuts in the same machine pass. The cutting section uses micro blades mounted on digitally-controlled contour cutters. A sensor picks up registration information and controls the blade. This technology can be used to produce variably-sized labels of any complexity from large-format rolls. Cutting speed is between 10-300mm/minute depending on complexity across a media width of up to 30 inches and to a top resolution of 1440 x 720dpi. The SP-300 also incorporates an automatic sheet cutter.

The VersaCMM SP-300's piezo electric printheads use Roland's 'environmentally friendly' solvent-based Eco-Sol ink inks. Odor is claimed much less than with 'hard' solvent inks and the machine requires no special ventilation or environmental



Roland DG VersaCMM SP-300 at Gustav Freytag

equipment. Ink is available in CMYK 220 ml cartridges with a low ink alert sensor. An integrated pre- and post-heating system allows the Eco-Sol inks to key on a wide variety of media.

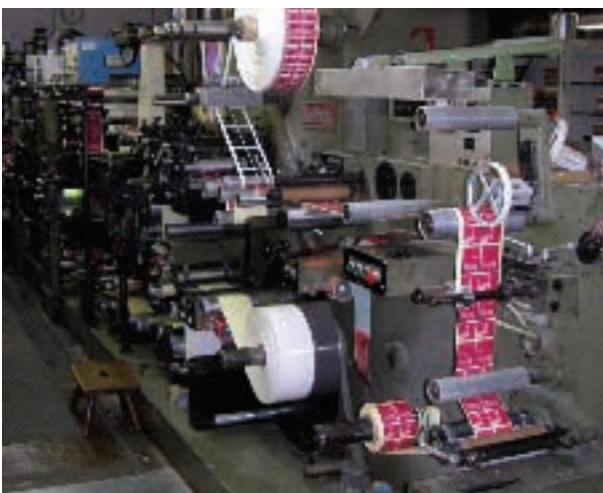
Typical end use products suggested by Roland DG's Kevin Shigenoya include high-quality short-run decals, tags, membrane switches, garment transfers, industrial warning labels, vehicle and floor graphics and the like - even primary food labels.

Andreas Treichel confirms that the VersaCMM is used at Gustav Freytag for jobs involving small runs of promotional labels and for product prototyping, with the longer run jobs then going onto the offset press. On the day L&L visited, the company was producing a sheet of promotional PS labels for a driving



Laser die cutting

Gustav Freytag runs an off-line 200W Cartes 350-series laser die cutter (see below). The intermittent-feed system is used primarily for short runs of blank labels for price marking applications, but also for the occasional small run of cartons. The Cartes laser can optionally be connected in-line to an FIT inspection/slitting/cutting line. This has an inseting capability as well as lam/delamination. Freytag's finishing section runs Rotoflex inspection rewinders



Multiple print processes include Ko-Pack letterpress

school and 150 jam labels in three different layouts.

'The Roland also gives us great flexibility to turn jobs around quickly,' says Andreas Treichel. 'One customer needed 500 labels to cover some missing information, and they had to be color-matched identically to a job on an offset press.'

Roland's ColoRIP software controls color management, allowing extensive fine tuning and density adjustment. Andreas Treichel reckons that around 60 per cent of Pantone colors can be simulated using these tools.

The same ColoRIP also controls contour cutting, and includes the option to cut individual lines of labels as they are printed. This avoids problems created when the material heats up and stretches, so the cut does not match the print. Another useful software feature is auto-nesting, which steps a one-up master image intelligently across the maximum media width.

Following its positive experiences in opening up new label markets, Gustav Freytag now plans to expand its digital printing division with a mono thermal transfer printer for serial numbering applications.

In this context, Andreas Treichel does have a 'wish list' of capabilities he would like to see Roland and X-Film develop for the VersaCAMM system:

- True CMYK process colors to make color matching with offset easier
- High gloss papers which match offset grades for more accurate proofing of offset jobs. 'With all the high gloss paper we have tested we have had problems with debris and dust because the gloss coating is abrasive. So we need a paper with good printability and a non-abrasive coating.'
- Serial numbering capability to avoid the need for a separate Thermal Transfer print step
- Outline and perforation cutting options
- Option to cut through label and release liner
- Roll-to-roll capability. The difficulty here is that a protective liquid has to be applied to protect the print surface. This is currently applied by hand and takes some time to dry.
- Rolls smaller than the current 50metres minimum. ■

No.325

X-Files

Materials for the VersaCAMM are supplied to Gustav Freytag by German company X-Film. Like Roland DG, X-Film specializes in the commercial print sector, particularly signage, and is approaching the labels market in partnership with Roland. 'The requirements of the sign and PS labels market come together with the Roland VersaCAMM SP-300,' says Wim Gosselink, managing director at X-Film. 'We want to be positioned at the value-added end of these markets where we can leverage our existing strengths to develop new products. In the sign market we are used to supplying small quantities of high value materials for end uses where branding and variable information printing are critical.'

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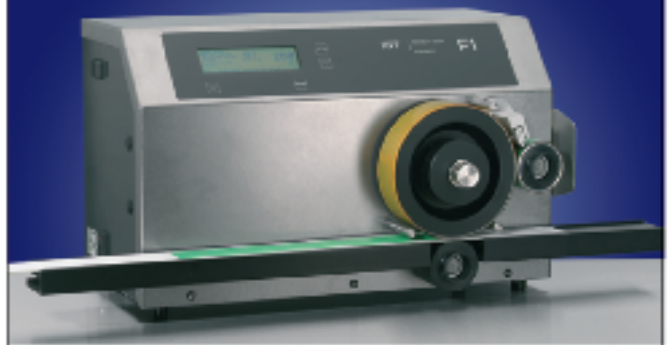


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Label Manufacturers
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e No. 176

Labeling News

Labels & Labeling

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BASF and ANI merge inks and plates business

BASF Printing Systems and ANI Printing Inks – formerly Akzo Nobel Inks – are to merge following their acquisition by CVC Capital Partners (CVC), a leading European private equity firm.

The sale covers all the BASF printing system facilities and activities, including pigment production at the BASF Colorants & Chemicals Co. Ltd. in Shanghai as well as the production of alkali blue at the BASF Corporation's plant in Huntington, West Virginia.

The merged business will be headquartered in Stuttgart, Germany. The takeover of ANI as well as the subsequent merger of the two corporations are subject to regulatory approval.

BASF Printing Systems was founded in 1997 and has always been largely stand-alone within the BASF Group. In the course of recent years, in particular, printing plate technology has increasingly diverged from the chemicals business.

Dr. Christian Wildmoser, managing director of CVC, commented: 'We are making a decisive contribution to consolidation in a fragmented industry by merging BASF Printing Systems and ANI. As a result of the acquisition, BASF Printing Systems will become a core business and the merger with ANI will ensure that in the future a leading

printing systems business will not only be able to maintain its market position, but expand it further.'

Dr. Wolfgang Büchele, director of BASF's Performance Chemicals division, and also in charge of the BASF Printing Systems business states: 'The entire European industry is currently in a state of upheaval, making it necessary to give the business a more strongly global thrust. By spinning the printing business off, we are endeavoring to give it new prospects to further expand its activities world-wide.'

Dr. Michael Stumpp, head of BASF Printing Systems, commented: 'Our position will be strengthened in a highly competitive market and we will be better able to exploit the opportunities that arise in an increasingly globalised market.'

For ANI Printing Inks, the merger is in line with the consolidation plan it announced at the end of 2001 in the context of the management buyout from the Akzo Nobel group. Peter Koivula, CEO of ANI, comments: 'Through this combination of two well known ink suppliers we not only create a leading European company that can service the demanding expectations of our customers, but also a global supplier of complete printing system solutions.'

No. 500

Innovia names chief executive

David Beeby, 52, has been appointed chief executive of Innovia Films, formerly the films business of the UCB Group. Previously vice president of marketing & international sales for Alcan Packaging, Beeby has worked in the packaging industry for 28 years.

Innovia Films was established on 1st October following the acquisition of the UCB films business by a consortium led by chairman Dennis Matthewman and Candover Partners Ltd. The company is a leading global producer of speciality

Biaxially Oriented Polypropylene (BOPP) and Cellulose films with production sites in the UK, USA, Belgium and Australia.

Comments Beeby: 'I am very excited and honored to have been invited to join Innovia Films and I'm looking forward to being part of such a strongly focused business. I am delighted to announce that, at the invitation of Dennis Matthewman, William Lowther, the former head of UCB Films, has agreed to take up the role of Deputy Chairman of Innovia Films.'

No. 501

Karlville/Martin alliance announced at Labelexpo

Karlville Development Group and Martin Automatic have joined forces to create a 'non-stop' series of high-volume seamers for shrink sleeve manufacture. The 300D High Speed, Non-Stop series featuring a Martin Automatic roll changing system was shown for the first time at Labelexpo 2004 in Chicago.

Raul F. Matos, executive vice president for Karlville said, 'The new 300D with automatic roll change reduces production waste by 3 per cent and increases throughput by up to 30 per cent to create a higher quality product for less cost. This increased productivity equates to a very fast payback for the converter. Key to the new system is the Martin MBEC Automatic Butt Splicer and STR rewind that provide reliable, non-stop product production.'

Matos continued, 'We chose Martin Automatic because of their advanced

technology and worldwide service program. We are an international company serving converters all over the world. We needed to be aligned with a company that could provide fast and reliable global service—Martin was our first and only choice. The integration process was very professional and was completed remarkably fast.'

Martin Automatic and Karlville engineers worked together to integrate the 300D Seamer with the new Martin MBEC automatic butt splicer and the STR rewind, creating a flexible upgrade path for the 300D series. 'We added a number of new features to the STR to accommodate this specialized application and provide the performance that Karlville required,' said David Wright, vice president of Martin Automatic Inc.

 No. 502

Marabu and Paragon agree ink partnership

Screen ink specialist Marabu, based near Stuttgart, Germany, has entered into a global ink partnership with UV flexo-letterpress ink specialist Paragon Inks in Edinburgh, UK. To meet the increasing demands for compatible ink systems in combination presses, the two companies have combined efforts to offer an ink package with tested and proven compatibility.

Although growing at a rapid rate, UV flexo in combination with rotary screen printing has remained a challenge for the industry to ensure optimum compatibility during overprinting. This agreement allows each company to focus on its strength yet in a combined package.

In addition to proven compatibility, the package includes a global supply network. On the back of Marabu's global distribution network, the aligned ink

technologies are available in over 50 countries world-wide. The growing importance of globalization among label printers was also a key factor in creating the partnership.

Specifically, the partnership fine-tuned the development of a new silicone-free rotary screen white from Marabu, the UltraRotaScreen UVRS 172, to the established Uvdry flexo series 7000 range from Paragon. 'The screen white not only optimally accepts the flexo overprint; an excellent surface flow can be achieved even at speeds of up to 65 mpm (200 fpm),' says the company. 'The flexo inks display excellent lay and gloss as if printed straight onto a synthetic substrate.'

The companies will offer a combined technical support package and plan to extend the scope of their partnership in the future.

 No. 503

Nibs

Security alliance formed

Trustcopy USA, manufacturer of patented optical watermarking solutions, and Stratus Group have formed a security alliance.

Trustcopy USA incorporates invisible optical watermarks into labels, cartons, and other types of packaging. The proprietary technology consists of up to 20 layers of encrypted information or graphics, making it very difficult or impossible to duplicate. Stratus will be focusing its efforts in the security area in the cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, spirits and spare parts markets.

 No. 504

Videojet expands into thermal transfer


Videojet Technologies Inc. has acquired Zipher Ltd, a UK-based manufacturer of thermal transfer and large character inkjet printers. Videojet is a provider of product identification equipment, including large and small character inkjet printers, thermal transfer printers and laser markers, as well as print & apply and labeling systems. The acquisition of Zipher solidifies the company's position as a major player in the rapidly growing thermal transfer printing market. The partnership also enhances Videojet's range of high-resolution inkjet printers. For the past three years, Videojet has been selling Zipher's thermal transfer printers, marketed under the DataFlex brand, and large character, high-resolution ink jet printers, marketed under the Willett 610 brand..

 No. 505



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 No.129



multi print systems

Labeling News

Industry pioneer dies

Robert J. Dunsirn, a pioneer in the tag and label industry, has passed away at the age of 84 in his hometown of Appleton Wisconsin. Bob Dunsirn began his career at Atlas Tag Company in 1946 after returning from World War II combat. Having spent many years working with Young Engineering and New Era flat bed printing presses, Bob traveled the country helping others to get their presses to run. It was this experience that gave him the reputation for getting any type of job, no matter how complex, to run on those old machines. Working his way up to plant superintendent, he decided to leave in 1967 to start his own business.

Along with partner Donald Buchta, Bob pursued a new direction with Mid America Tag & Label Company located in Neenah, Wisconsin. From a start up

business in 1967, to a major force in the tag and label business, Mid America grew to over 200 employees with an industry-wide reputation for innovation and quality. Bob, along with his son Duane, were the first to invent and produce multi-ply promotional coupons and game pieces. They were granted several United States patents for their innovative constructions.

In his autobiography, Bob recalls the challenges of running a new product, called "pressure sensitive" on letterpress tag machines built in the nineteen fifties. He also tells of the challenges encountered when starting a business from scratch. After Mid America was sold to Menasha Corporation in 1985, Bob continued to influence industry direction by consulting for his sons' newly created business, Dunsirn Industries.

Inspection specialists join forces to close loop

Two world leaders in automated inspection technology, Lewiston, New York-headquartered Print Vision Systems Inc. and Mississauga Ontario-headquartered Nyquist Systems Inc., launched a partnership at LabelExpo Americas 2004 geared to close the loop in inspection technology—from pre-press to press to post-press—for label manufacturers and other narrow web printers. As part of this collaboration, Print Vision Systems will become the exclusive distributor of Nyquist equipment in North America. Ignatius

Manning, president of Print Vision Systems, comments: 'The Nyquist additions to the Print Vision Systems product line are making it newly possible to generate savings by using inspection technology at all stages of production—from pre-press to press to post-press. Label manufacturers and other narrow web printers need to get up to speed on these new developments in inspection technology in order to maintain competitive positions in the industry.'

 No. 507

UPM Rafsec submits new tags

RFID tag supplier UPM Rafsec has announced its participation in the EPCglobal Hardware Interoperability testing system. The testing is part of an effort by EPCglobal Inc to improve Electronic Product Code (EPC) and Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) hardware interoperability within the EPCglobal community.

The testing evaluated the

interoperability of UPM Rafsec's newly released 96-bit Class 1 RFID tags with readers supplied by major RFID reader manufacturers.

According to UPM Rafsec president Timo Lindström, 'this signals that pilots associated with the various US mandates can begin in earnest with data structures intended to be long lasting.'

 No. 508

Nibs

GRE forms UK operation

GRE Engineering AG, Steinebrun, Switzerland has partnered with Lakeside Engineering Ltd. to form Boston, UK based facility, GRE International Ltd.

The UK operation will concentrate its activities on rebuilding pre-owned presses with special emphasis on Ko-Pack machines, and manufacturing spare parts with on-going press service at customer locations.  No. 504

Fuji Seal commits to UK expansion programme

Fuji Seal Europe, a world leader in film and shrink wrap packaging solutions, is doubling its manufacturing, printing and warehousing facilities in the UK. 70 new jobs will be created over the next three years, adding to the 220 existing employees.

 No. 504

Adapack acquisition to expand WS labels capacity

Adapack, backed by Atria Capital Partenaires, has acquired Papeteries du Souche from International Paper. Adapack is a newly-formed French company aiming to become one of the world leaders in the field of one-side coated label papers for the beverage industry. It is managed by two industry specialists benefiting each from 20 years of experience in speciality papers: Jean-Pierre Brice was previously managing director of the Fine Papers division of Arjo Wiggins and Philippe Lavaud was previously chairman of the Label and Packaging division of Ahlstrom.  No. 504



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Labeling News

Edale expands production and appoints CEO

Edale has increased its production capacity with the opening of additional factory space just a few meters down the road from their current Romsey, UK site. The new floor space will be home to the Alpha and Beta flexo presses while the Sigmas will remain in the present plant.

The company has also announced the elevation of James Boughton to chief executive officer. Boughton comments:

'The opening of our second factory in Romsey marks exciting times here at Edale as more and more label and packaging printers choose Edale as their flexopress partner. I am looking forward to spearheading Edale's ascent as it undoubtedly remains at the forefront of flexo technology and becomes a key player in the industry.'

 No.509

Sicpa to market DataLase color-change chemistry

Sicpa is to market a range of inks produced from Sherwood Technology's patent specified color-change chemistry, DataLase, via a non-exclusive supply licence agreement. DataLase combines chemistry, substrate conversion and laser energy, using very low power laser light for the high speed printing of images.

'We have had a successful working relationship with Sherwood Technology over the past two years on a mutual cooperation basis,' comments Peter

Hilpert, managing director of Sicpa-Aarberg in Switzerland. 'This agreement enables us to combine the DataLase marking chemistry with our specialized ink-making technology and global infrastructure, to offer a total coding and marking service to our clients.'

'Sicpa has the expertise and knowledge in the inks and printing markets to help make DataLase available to a wider market,' says Steve Kelly, managing director of Sherwood.

 No.510

Raflatac expands coating and finishing capacity in USA

UPM is investing \$40 million in additional coating and finishing capacity at Raflatac's pressure sensitive labelstock production facility in Fletcher, North Carolina. The investment further strengthens Raflatac's position in the North American labelstock market, which is expected to grow by 4-6 per cent annually.

With the investment, Raflatac will expand its product offering. The most

significant part of the investment is the second coating line, which will focus on the fast growing film market.

Production will start during the fourth quarter of 2005. Raflatac employs 270 people in the USA and its sales in North America were \$150 million last year. Raflatac's US operations concentrate on manufacturing pressure sensitive labelstock for product and information labeling.

 No.511

Nibs

Raflatac president stands down

Pentti Kallio has left his position as president of Raflatac Group, subsidiary of UPM. In addition to his current duties, Pauli Hänninen, UPM's executive vice president, business development, has resumed operative responsibility for Raflatac until a new President is appointed.

 No.512

Labels & Labeling launches China magazine

The first issue of Labels & Labeling China will be hitting Chinese converters this winter. With industrial growth at an all time high in the country, a further two issues are planned for next year, in the spring and fall.

The magazine – written entirely in Chinese – will be distributed amongst 5,000 figures in the industry, including attendees to the 2003 Labelexpo China show.

 No.513

InterLabel show cancelled

The InterLabel converting exhibition, which was to be held on 7-9 December 2004 in Stuttgart has been cancelled. Suffering from a lack of industry support, UK-based organizer Mack Brooks has decided not to go ahead with the show.

The new exhibition was hoping to support the established German and Western European market, whilst also servicing the emerging markets in Southern and Eastern Europe.

 No.514

Labeling News

AIM announces standard RFID label mark

AIM Global has introduced a mark that provides a standard way to indicate the presence of an RFID transponder, its frequency and structure.

With the growing use of RFID-enabled bar code labels in business, industry and military environments, it may be difficult for workers with hand-held readers to differentiate labels that contain RFID transponders from those that don't.

As more variations on these labels appear – differing by both frequency and data format and content – workers must decide which label to read.

The AIM RFID Mark is a distinctive pattern that contains a unique two-character code. The first character

indicates the frequency and coding authority, the second character indicates the data content and/or structure. A provision is also made to identify compatible RFID readers/encoders.

Both light-on-dark and dark-on-light versions of the AIM RFID Mark are provided in order to address the needs of label producers.

The AIM RFID Mark standard was developed by the AIM North America Standards Action Group (NASAG) under the umbrella of the AIM Global Standards Action Group (GlobalSAG) and the AIM Global RFID Action Group (AG).

No. 515

No. 516

Arpeco and Scantech close systems deal

Arpeco division of Precision Automation Co., Inc. and Scantech Automation Inc. have announced that they are working together to provide a family of inspection, slitting and rewinding equipment utilizing the expertise of both companies.

At Labelexpo Americas 2004, a new 18-inch wide "Printrack" finishing machine, featuring unwind and rewind motor-drive technology, was exhibited on the Print Vision stand.

A retrofit count and control package, for existing Arpeco machines on the Arpeco stand.

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Brady Corporation acquires ID Technologies, Singapore

Brady Corporation has acquired ID Technologies Pte Ltd., a Singapore-based manufacturer and supplier of pressure sensitive die-cut components and labeling products. Terms of the transaction were not disclosed.

ID Technologies, founded in 1990, is a leading manufacturer for the electronics and hard-disk drive industries and sells direct to customers in Singapore, China, Malaysia, Europe and the United States. The company had fiscal 2004 sales of approximately \$24 million (US) and employs about 150 people in Singapore and Shanghai.

'The electronics industry continues to offer significant opportunities for us, given the explosive growth of hard disk drives used in laptops and other mobile applications such as digital cameras, set

top boxes, MP3 players and other devices,' says Frank Jaehnert, Brady president and chief executive officer. 'This acquisition will enhance our position as a leading supplier to this industry and further strengthen our presence in Asia.'

e No. 517



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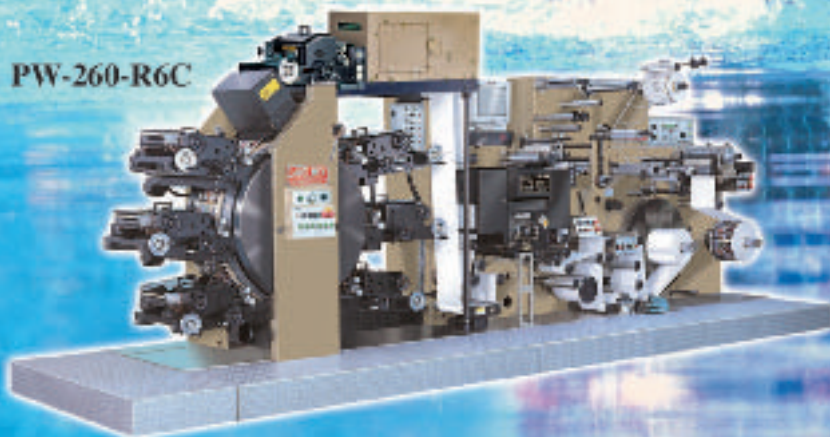
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e No. 109



Labeling News

Tarsus Group

Packaging Services Expo

Tarsus Group – which owns the Labelexpo series of events and L&L magazine – has launched a new exhibition for the contract manufacturing and packaging sectors. Visitors to Packaging Services Expo will include end users looking to partner with contract packagers and manufacturers; packaging consultants; research firms; package designers and marketing agencies; package testing labs; logistics, warehouse & distribution companies; package prototype developers; and quality assurance/ compliance specialists. The industry is a multi-billion dollar business, growing at a rate of 25 per cent each year.

Packaging Services Event Manager Don Browne, said, 'Brand owners' today focus on what they are good at, relying on specialized packaging services companies to handle their non-core activities. Packaging Services will be the 'one-stop' for sourcing critical partners for the best speed to market and we are very excited about the launch of this new show.'

A number of exhibitors have already signed up for PSE, and the interest level for attending the show from blue chip companies, brand owners and specialist manufacturers has been very high, says Browne.

Packaging Services Expo is scheduled for May 10-12, 2005, at the Donald E. Stephens Convention Center, Rosemont, Illinois, and will be supported by the Contract Manufacturing & Packaging Association (CMPA). CMPA is a national, not-for-profit trade association offering contract manufacturing, packaging and related business services.

Patrick Farrey, CMPA executive director, said, 'Because PSE will showcase leading service providers in contract packaging, package design, package testing, assembly, logistics and specialty packaging, CMPA can provide the necessary support and services to help make the expo a success.'

In addition, a keynote and specialist conference will run alongside the exhibition each morning of the show. Expert speakers will discuss how contract packaging and partner sourcing has helped their business; review the latest products and services available; hear about new smart packaging solutions; and discuss the latest compliance, legal and quality requirements. Because of the educational basis of the event's conference programs, PSE previously announced sponsorship support from the Institute of Packaging Professionals (IoPP).

No. 400

GiDue India

Three Combat press sales

GiDue India has supplied three Combat narrow web UV flexographic printing presses to converters in Indore and Mumbai, India. These presses were ordered to cater for the growing demand of pressure sensitive labels replacing sheet-fed, wet glue label applications.

As part of its expansion plans, a second 370mm wide Combat press has been purchased by Pragati Graphics Pvt Ltd. Serving the prime label food and pharmaceutical markets, the company made the purchase as part of the demand to switch from wet glue to pressure sensitive labels. The seven color, full UV press is capable of handling a wide range of substrates from paper to plastics with carton production also a possibility. Comments Rajesh Nema, managing director, 'The press is capable of very fast make-ready and the unique design of the GiDue Flower concept print head and set up procedures mean that we can be up and running with product coming of the press in 15 minutes. Standard settings on the press mean it is very simple to operate and that we are not operator dependent.'

Planet Labels, a new start-up in the pressure sensitive label segment, has installed a 280mm wide Combat press equipped with seven UV flexo printing stations, laminating and web cleaner for film labels. The purchase has allowed the company to enter the lubricants & beauty care markets. Arun Rawat, director, comments 'Our operator is very happy with the machine for its simplicity and user friendly operation. Our operator is not a printer and the fact is, the press is not dependent on this. The simplicity of the printing heads, organized work environment and overall ease of operation, means we can even use unskilled machine operators if necessary. We especially like the fact that the press holds tight register even when splicing.'

GiDue has also sold an 8-color Combat 370 press to Flexiprint, Sri Lanka, a company specialising in packaging for tea.

No. 401

Logotech

RFID label applicator with in-line verifier

Logotech Machines and its sister company, Tadbik Advanced Technologies have introduced a line of automatic label application machines featuring in-line label verification systems. The TAD-RF series applicators discard defective labels, applying only working ones.

'One of the biggest challenges facing packagers who use radio frequency identification (RFID) labels is the high rate of defective units,' says Gadi Hoenig, general manager of Tadbik Advanced Technologies. 'Until now, packagers have had to remove defective

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labels from machine-labeled packages by hand, discard the packages altogether, or live with a large number of non-functional RFID labels on their products. Obviously, that is extremely costly, and at worst, it defeats the security or inventory-management benefits of using RFID labels. With the TAD-RF system, marketers can be assured that 100 percent of their packages bear a working RFID label.'

The new Logotech/Tadbik machines employ an in-line testing unit that directs a radio signal to each label on the roll before it is applied to a package. Labels that do not respond to the signal are discarded. Average-sized labels on 12-inch-wide packages can be applied at a rate of about 60 working labels per minute, says Hoenig. High rates of defective labels will reduce operating speeds, he adds.

Hoenig points out that the TAD-RF system can be equipped with hardware and software to verify either active or passive labels, at any frequency.

TAD-RF machines are available with one or two labeling heads. Optional ink-jet or hot-stamp heads are also available. TAD-RF applicators may be configured for horizontal, vertical or inside-the-carton label placement.

 No.402

Avery Dennison Fasson Iridescent film

Avery Dennison has unveiled Fasson Iridescent, a multi-layered film in the Premium Packaging range, giving designers a creative means of achieving multi-colour shelf impact without the use of inks or dyes.

The film construction of Fasson Iridescent, an 18um translucent PET film, causes intense diffraction of light, so that it is separated into a full spectrum of colors, which change according to the angle of observation. The film's dominant reflection colors are red and green, which are seen from right angles to the substrate, on a black background. It has been designed to lend visual impact to a wide range of decorative applications in a host of premium markets, including cosmetics, wines and spirits.

Compatible with both solvent and water-based inks, Fasson Iridescent can be printed with flexo and gravure methods, and is claimed to offer excellent temperature and heat resistance. The film is offered with the permanent adhesive Fasson S692N along with the BG50 white, supercalendered glassine paper release liner.

 No.403

OSCL Free JDF guide

Management Information Systems (MIS) supplier OCSL has produced a second version of its JDF guide. The 24-page A5 guide was written by Henny van Esch, international director of OCSL, who is also chairman of the CIP4 MIS working group and industry expert on the subject. The booklet includes quotes from leading industry players and clarifies many issues surrounding the technology, how it fits into the industry, and how it can be used in the future. It also explains the link between JDF and MIS and as well as covering key terminology.

OSCL group managing director Nicola Bisset plans to have the guide updated regularly, as a direct result of the number of requests for the original version. 'The number of people downloading the book was quite staggering. There is obviously a great need for something that clearly explains JDF and we believe that we cater for that need with the guide.'

Visit www.optimus2020.com for a free download of the JDF booklet .

 No.404

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 No.104

Labeling News

Herma

Tough, heat resistant adhesive

Herma has developed an adhesive, called PE-laser, that will still adhere reliably even at a temperature of 180°C. This material will be of particular interest for labels that are used in hot filling, for instance with chemicals. Because this is the first PE material that is also suitable for laser printers, it meets the requirements for simple, decentralised, variable printing – for example with serial numbers, and for Printing on Demand.

Tests with printers from well-known manufacturers have shown that the material achieves good results both with black-and-white and with color laser printing, says Herma.

The basis for this adhesive material is a UV-acrylate adhesive, which gives it great heat-resistance and resistance to aggressive solvents and other chemicals. 'PE-laser with UV-acrylate adhesive is currently the only one that will reliably adhere to PE drums,' says Herma. 'These widely used plastic barrels, which are the standard containers in the chemical, pharmaceutical, and cosmetic fields, for instance, always used to be very difficult to label at all reliably because of their rough surface.'

Herma PE-Laser meets the stringent definition for seawater resistance laid down in the British Standard BS 5609.

 No.405

Paxar Systems

White ink replaces hot stamp for seatbelt labels

Paxar Systems has launched a white thermal transfer ink for use with its seatbelt labels. When used in conjunction with the company's seatbelt label fabric, it meets all of the international standards for flame-retardancy, color-fastness to rubbing and tensile strength, having been independently tested by an accredited testing house. The introduction will, according to Paxar, significantly reduce the cost of its seatbelt label solutions when compared with printing with silver ink.

The company has introduced two pre-packed standard kits which are fully compatible with Paxar's 6x6 range of in-plant thermal printing systems, solutions that Paxar says are particularly appropriate to car, child and aircraft seatbelt and safety restraint manufacturers due to the complexity of the variable data that has to be incorporated. Another major advantage is the speed of response that manufacturers can achieve, enabling them to change the label's variable data in line with a customer's amended call-off. Other cost saving benefits include the elimination of any need to maintain a stock of labels as a 'just in case' contingency.

The label printing method traditionally used by seat belt manufacturers is hot stamp printing, a technology that necessitates producing printing plates for every label design, so even the smallest copy change on a label means delay while new plates are made.

Alcan Packaging

Holographic images applied in-line

Alcan Packaging has introduced 'HoloAuthentica' to its packaging range – a technique that allows holographic images to be applied to packaging in register with either flexo or gravure print. Created using special inks, this concept offers brand protection, tamper evidence and decorative benefits.

Either diffraction pattern holograms or custom-designed images can be applied, and they are 'virtually impossible' to remove without tearing, helping to ensure product integrity, according to Alcan.

This element is of particular importance for products that are easily damaged or need to remain sealed such as makeup and pharmaceuticals.

Holograms can be produced carrying both text and logos. Alcan Packaging's HoloAuthentica can also be created using colored inks and in combination with other print based security systems including flip inks or microtext.

 No.406

Avery Dennison Fasson

Tactile label films

Avery Dennison has released a new range of tactile label films for body care and fabric softener products, writes Tom Tonks.

Fasson Soft Touch matt transparent films have a structure that eliminates the contrast in feel between the container and the label. According to Avery Dennison Fasson Soft polypropylene 65mm PP Soft Touch is specially suited where an exceptionally soft, velvety feel to the surface is required. It is claimed to be supple, yet tough to withstand tearing, and is designed for use either as an over laminate or a printing film.

The alternative to this is Fasson Polyethylene 100mm PE Soft Touch, designed primarily as a printing film, which offers similar softness, but creates a sensation of friction when stroked. Both products are compatible with major printing processes, though Fasson PE Soft Touch allows outstanding results to be achieved with screen, claims Avery Dennison.

Treatment is recommended prior to printing to get the best ink-adhesion results, with either film. Both products come with Fasson S692N clear, permanent adhesive, which offers UV resistance and good adhesion, even on apolar substrates.

 No.407



Labeling News

Sato America

RFID hardware testing program

SATO America has announced its participation in the EPCglobal

Hardware Interoperability testing program. The testing is part of an effort by EPCglobal Inc to improve Electronic Product Code (EPC) and Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) hardware interoperability within the EPCglobal community.

The Hardware Interoperability testing evaluated the interoperability of SATO's Class 1 RFID Printer/Encoder, the CL408e industrial printer, and M8485Se leading print engine, configurations with those provided by other manufacturers. In addition to passing the mandatory EPC Global Interoperability test cases, SATO RFID products also successfully completed the optional test case scenarios.


'This is extremely significant because it signals a bold step forward in making EPC a reality in global commerce,' says Michael E. Di Yeso, president and chief operating officer of the Uniform Code Council.

SATO now delivers not just RFID printing solutions, but complete EPC-compliant RFID solutions including pre-planning consultation, on-site survey, pilot planning and implementation, and post-pilot and consultation.  **No. 701**

Ritrama

Tyre grade materials


Ritrama has launched a new range of high tack self-adhesive materials suitable for the labeling of very difficult and uneven surfaces such as vehicle tyres. The Tyre Grade Series is available with three different face materials featuring an extremely high tack aggressive hot melt adhesive for use on non-smooth surfaces.

All of these materials are available for trial as 166mm coils with a narrow dry edge – pattern coated – to avoid adhesive bleed. Enquiries for alternative widths will be considered subject to minimum order quantities.  **No. 702**

Worldlabel.com

Embedding RFID tags in paper labels

Worldlabel.com has developed a low cost method of embedding RFID tags accurately into a paper label - even though each batch might use varying size labels and require the RFID tag to be embedded in different areas of the label. The system has patents pending.

'Typically,' says Alex Choong, managing director and co-inventor, 'about 20 per cent of the RFID labels in rolls have defective chips, but there's often no way to differentiate the functioning and non-functioning tags until after they've been placed on products. Our system and methods of manufacturing increases the reliability and consistency of RFID labels to 100 per cent accuracy. You can print bar codes on our labels embedded with UHF Class 1 and Class 0 RFID tags with most popular thermal label printers. Embedded Tags can meet the requirements of both USA and European standards.'  **No. 703**

Multi-Color Corporation

Heat transfer labels

Multi-Color Corporation has been recognized by the Institute of Packaging Professionals with a 2004 AmeriStar Award for their contribution to the Folgers AromaSea canister.

Its 'revolutionary' shape, decorated with heat transfer labels from Multi-Color Corporation, is promoting a unique shelf presence. The labels are gravure printed at Multi-Color's Framingham, MA facility, and are applied in one pass onto three separate panels with specially developed Therimage decorating equipment. The distinctive shape of the container and paneled walls were engineered by Procter & Gamble to preserve the integrity of the canister during transportation. The labels simply conform to these panels to create a "no label look."  **No. 704**

Installations

■ Aquaflex, now a branch of F.L. Smithe Machine Company, has announced several new press orders.

Control Group, Norwood NJ has purchased a 28 inch, 8-Color FPC full servo press with UV on all flexo stations. 'After investigating what servo presses were available, we decided to purchase the Aquaflex Servo FPC due to the state-of-the-art design and their track record for superior technology,' states Jeff Levine, CPA and co-owner of The Control Group.

Cory Packaging, Palmyra NY has purchased a 10 inch, 10-Color multiple UV DBX press to print variable data phone cards, pressure sensitive labels, wine labels, and pharmaceutical products. Strouse Corporation, Westminster MD has installed a 10 inch, 6 color full UV Instaprep press. The Instaprep is capable of multi web and combination printing KDV Label Company, Waukesha, WI has purchased a 10-inch 8-color Instaprep press.

■ Mark Andy has sold an LP3000 to New York Label of Islandia, New York. New York Label primarily serves the health & beauty and nutraceutical markets. The 10" 8-color flexo press has dual rotary screen and cold foil capabilities, complemented by the Mark Andy Quick Change technology.

■ Texas Barcode Systems has installed a second Nilpeter press in its Plano, TX facility. The company, with 13 sales offices across the US, is the recipient of the 2002 Dallas Business Journal Fast Tech 50 Growth Companies. The purchase is part of Texas Barcode Systems' move into the prime label market.

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e No.158



Labeling News

Sleeve International

Thermochromic ink on shrinksleeves

Sleeve International can now offer thermochromic inks - which change colour with temperature - on its range of shrinksleeves.

'Using the way these inks change colour with temperature has practical and aesthetic benefits,' says Eric Masson, Sleeve International's European sales director. 'It can be used to make sure products are stored at the right temperature. If a sleeve is used which changes color when the product gets, for example, too warm, it gives an easily seen early warning. This makes it very useful for food and cosmetics, which are often temperature sensitive products.'

'It can also make the product more attractive, particularly to children,' he said. 'By combining the white, pink, blue and green inks we use, we can create a huge range of dramatic colours.' Sleeve sees packaging for toys as an area in which thermochromic ink is likely to find a big market.

The inks can be made to change color at a range of preset temperatures, currently 24, 40 or 60 degrees Celsius. Depending on the inks and how they are applied, the change can be permanent or temporary.

'We can apply thermochromic inks on our Powersleeve, Powersteam and Powershrink machines to shrinksleeves,' says Eric Masson.

 No.408

Harper Corporation

Virtual flexo training

Harper Corporation of America has added to its training facilities the FlexSys Press Simulator, developed by the Foundation of Flexographic Technical Association (FFTA). The FlexSys system will be operated out of Harper's corporate headquarters in Charlotte, NC. Harper is also a licensed distributor for the FlexSys simulator.

Training is not limited to just the staff of the pressroom. The simulator works extremely well in exposing newcomers to Flexo and those behind the scene people who need a fundamental understanding, but are not exposed to the pressroom.

Todd Luman, customer product analyst, commented, 'The FlexSys simulator is an excellent operating tool. One of the main benefits is that personnel can examine various print related defects and learn valuable troubleshooting skills without absorbing the cost of materials and presstime.'

 No.409

Seal-It Inc

Holographic shrink bands and labels

Seal-It, Inc., a converter and printer of heat shrink labels, sleeves and tamper-evident bands, is introducing holographic shrink bands and labels, designed to provide manufacturers of

consumer products with a visible security device that cannot be copied or simulated.

Seal-It's heat shrink bands and labels with a holographic strip can be applied to any package that needs to be tamper-evident. The holographic strip is a three dimensional image and can be custom designed with a company logo or pattern. It is highly visible and the complexity of the pattern makes it almost impossible to be reproduced, says the company. Applications will include pharmaceutical, cosmetics, beverage, personal care products and many other manufacturers where extreme secure measures must be taken in order to make a product tamper-resistant.

 No.410

John Watson

New Operations Manager

International label specialist John Watson & Company has appointed Alan Edwards in the new position of Operations Manager.

With over 30 years experience in the labels and commercial print sectors Edwards was previously employed as Production Manager with Jarvis Porter Plc, Wine & Spirit Division and latterly with Highland Printers, Inverness.

Edwards will be responsible for controlling all production activities at the Glasgow, Scotland-based operation which supplies highly decorative and embellished labels for prestigious brands, particularly in the drinks and beverages sector.

A key focus will be maximising manufacturing efficiencies and utilisation from a "state of the art" operation which has received over \$2million of investment in the last 12 months. Edwards states, 'Operating smarter and more efficiently will enhance customer service response times and present further opportunities to reduce the applied cost of our labels.'

 No.411

Weyfringe

Thermal Transfer printers

Weyfringe Labelling Systems is launching a new range of thermal transfer label printers, writes Tom Tonks. The H Series, in both 203 and 300dpi versions, comes with PC label design software. In standalone mode, a large multi-line LCD prompts for variable data entry. The V Series is for less demanding applications. It offers a print speed of up to 150mm/second and holds a 300metre long ribbon roll.

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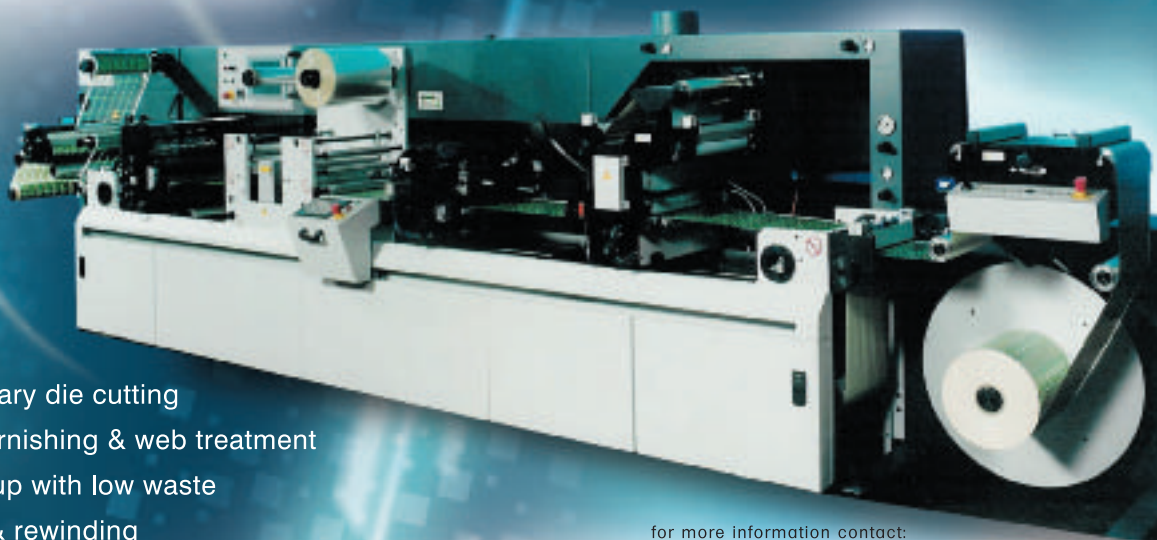
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Labeling News

Steven Label

Cavity pump for doming applications

In a move to obtain tighter control of manufacturing and reduce lead times, Steven Label has chosen a dispensing system that features progressing cavity pump technology for 2-part polyurethane doming resins. The company has specified a benchtop system from Fluid Research Corporation, a positive displacement design that has no pistons or check valves, eliminating the problems caused by out-of-phase pistons and improper valve seating. The compact unit will reduce the label maker's reliance on contract manufacturing for its domed label products, improving customer service and lead time.

The PluraShot system was fitted with a custom-designed manifold for multi-label dispensing. The machine is equipped with a 3-axis robot and programmable microprocessor that stores dispensing coordinates, shot sizes and other data for all production runs.

Ken Klein, Steven Label's director of engineering says that with the manifold in place, the company can dispense from up to six points at a time using a single static mixing tip, an obvious advantage when some sheets hold as many as 150 labels. 'Most of our domed products are between 1-10 square inches in size, but we now have the capacity to manufacture this type of label anywhere from 1.5-15 square inches,' he adds. Dispense cycle times currently average 5-10 minutes per sheet, and the resin has a gel time of about 20 minutes.

To control dust and contaminants that produce defects in the air-cured resin, Steven Label created a soft-walled, environmentally-controlled workspace equipped with a BEPA-filtered air supply.

 No. 413

Checkpoint

Convenience store security solution

Retail group SPAR's North England franchise is installing Checkpoint's 3rd Generation Trend anti-theft solution at its new forecourt shops in Rawtenstall and Sunderland. Checkpoint also provided scan deactivators, paper tags and bottle tags.

Geoff Hughes, security and audit manager at G&E Murgatroyd, comments: 'We have been trailing AM tagging technology in some SPAR stores for a while but made the decision to switch to RF as it enables better integration with our existing scanning systems. Also, RF tags are more discreet and there is the future option of linking the technology with our existing CCTV.'

'We took the decision to invest in more advanced security technology as the convenience sector started to attract shoplifters who assumed that, as the major multiples had more protection, chains like SPAR would be an easy target.'

Mark Bird, senior national account manager at Checkpoint Systems UK, comments: 'Most convenience outlets don't have the luxury of being able to employ security guards and many don't have backroom CCTV to help protect against shoplifters. This places increased importance on the staff and security system to do its job properly.'

 No. 414

Anderson & Vreeland

Modular water-wash photopolymer plate processor

Orbital X is a new design stack-style processor of water-water photopolymer plates - polyester or metal-backed plates - which allows flexographers to customize the unit for their specific needs. It is now available from Anderson & Vreeland, Inc.

The Orbital X is an all-in-one system featuring an orbital washout, exposure section, a three-drawer dryer and post expose or detach section. Any of these features can be assembled to customize the platemaking system, which processes photopolymer plates up to 24" x 30".

Components are easily accessed, including the light drawers, from the front of the unit. Safety features include "ground fault" protection, component fuses and a safety switch for UV lamps. The washout section is stainless steel to prevent corrosion. A dual orbital action platen provides for smooth and efficient washout and a digital timer assures accurate washout times.

 No. 415

Paragon Group

Reel solution to security labelling challenge

Specialist in bespoke labelling solutions, Crusader Europe, has designed and engineered an all-in-one labeling and reel-to-reel system for print solution provider Paragon Group UK.

Operating stand-alone in Paragon's Sunderland premises, the Roll-Fed Stock Handling and Labelling machine is applying protective labels to secure pin (personal identification) numbers for Barclaycard, MBNA and Marks and Spencer. The machine reaches speeds of 150m/minute with placement accuracy of +/- 0.5mm. The handling system is capable of rolls up to 1.25m in diameter, with a web width up to 500mm. Production manager at Paragon, Dave Alexander, comments: 'The performance of the machine is exceptional, especially since it is the first of its kind. The label placement integrity is ensured by a fibre-optic PLC that detects any missing labels and stops the machine automatically, which is extremely important for accurate production. Without Crusader we would have had to make do with two separate machines from two separate suppliers, which was far from ideal.'

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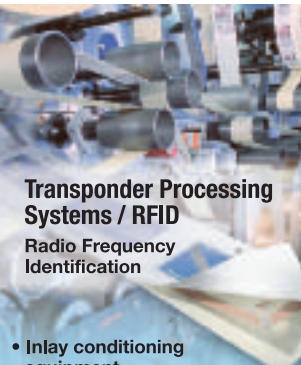
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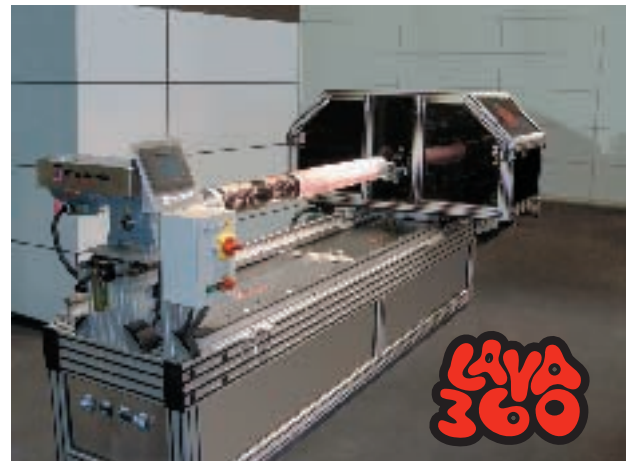
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