

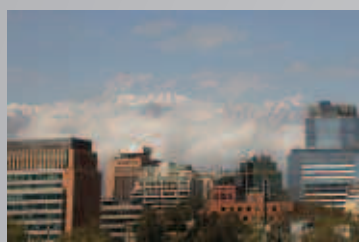
L&L Labels & Labeling

The wider world of narrow web

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Feb/Mar 2007
Issue 1 Volume 29

Latin America



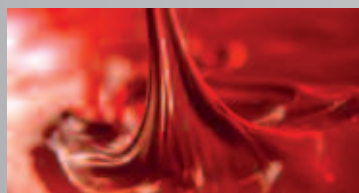
L&L tours Argentina, Brazil, and Chile to learn more about this exciting market

Offset on a roll?



Is offset's place in the industry set to grow?

Ink news



L&L looks at what's new in inks, varnishes and dispensing systems

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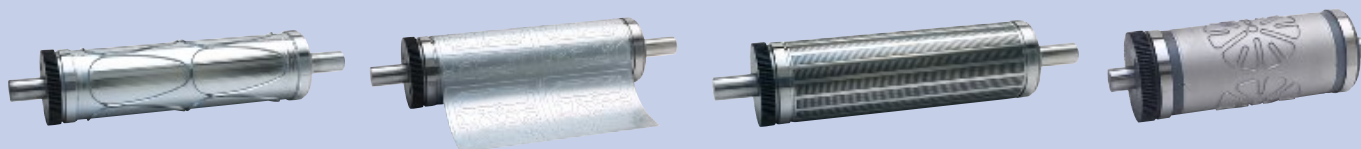
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Group Managing Editor:

Andy Thomas athomas@labelsandlabeling.com

Senior Reporter:

James Quirk jquirk@labelsandlabeling.com

Reporter:

Danielle Jerschefske

danielle@labelsandlabeling.com

International Publishing Director:

Mike Fairley, FIP3, F.Inst.Pkg.

Contributing Editor:

Barry Hunt

Labels Group Managing Director:

Roger Pellow

Labels Group Product Manager:

Lisa Milburn

Advertising Manager:

Tim Gordon

Senior Sales Executive – Europe:

Joerg Singer

Senior Vice President US publishing:

Tasha Janowski

Senior Account Executive – North America:

Phoukham Luanglath

Account Executive – North America:

Randy Kessler

Sales Executive Asia:

Cindy Lei

Marketing & Circulation Manager:

Michael Hatton

Print & Publishing Manager:

John Hoskins

Production Manager:

Dan Taylor

Designers:

Ben Walton | James Wenman

Publishers:

**Tarsus Publishing Ltd,
Metro Building, 1 Butterwick,
Hammersmith, London W6 8DL, UK**

Tel: +44 (0)20 8846 2700

Fax: +44 (0)20 8846 2801

ISSN 1478-7520

USA Office:

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

Tel: +1 (262) 782-1900

Fax: +1 (262) 782-8474

China Office:

**Tarsus Publishing Inc,
Room 1108, Floor 11, 1 Hongqiao Road
Xu Hui, Shanghai, China**

Tel: +86-21-64484890

Fax: +86-21-64484880

USA Mailing:

**Labels & Labeling 002914 is published
bi-monthly by Tarsus Publishing Ltd
c/o SPP, Emigsville, PA. Periodicals
postage paid at Emigsville, PA.
Postmaster send address corrections to
Labels & Labeling PO Box 437 Emigsville,
PA 17318-0437**

Printers:

Wyndham Grange, West Sussex, UK

Subscriptions:

Email: subs@labelsandlabeling.com

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Leader



Firstly, a very Happy New Year to all our readers. Last year was a challenging one, with narrow web converters everywhere facing a tough competitive environment as margins were squeezed by rising raw materials costs and price pressure from end users – all too often driven by internet auctions.

At the same time the industry remained dynamic worldwide, continuing to grow above the rate of GDP in both developed and developing economies. There remains an awful lot of business out there – continued substitution of direct print on glass and metal containers, for example, and brand managers looking for solutions to differentiate their products and move them up the value chain.

“We continue to see a rich vein of innovation from industry suppliers, giving converters the resources to move into these new added-value niches”

And we continue to see a rich vein of innovation from industry suppliers, giving converters the resources to move into these new added-value niches. Notable examples include new films engineered for conformance and wraparound films with high shrink values, as well as the new generation of corn-based films which will find their own added-value niches for environment-conscious end users.

Indeed, machine tools and consumables have never been more versatile. On the same press today we can add tactile finishes, holographic-effect inks, convert flexible packaging and even manufacture our own complex multi-layer materials. And with growing concern about global counterfeiting end users have never been more receptive to the incorporation of covert and overt security labeling solutions.

We haven't even started to talk about personalized labeling with digital print, or RFID.

Indeed, it is the sheer diversity and range of combinations available to the narrow web converter which have allowed smaller, family-owned businesses in our industry to thrive through sheer entrepreneurial dash. And long may that continue.

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Labeling news

Ashland acquires Northwest Coatings

Ashland Inc. has closed on the purchase of Northwest Coatings assets of Oak Creek, Wisconsin, a formulator and manufacturer of adhesives and coatings employing ultraviolet and electron beam (UV/EB) polymerization technologies. Northwest Coatings is a holding of Caltius Equity Partners. The transaction, which includes production facilities in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and Greensboro, North Carolina, is valued at approximately \$72 million. Trailing 12-month sales of Northwest Coatings are nearly \$40 million.

'This is an important acquisition for us in a high-growth, attractive market segment,' said James J. O'Brien, Ashland Inc.

chairman and chief executive officer. 'It demonstrates our strategy to pursue acquisition opportunities in markets and technologies that are experiencing rapid change.'

Marcello Boldrini, vice president, Ashland Performance Materials, and general manager, specialty polymers & adhesives, commented: 'With this transaction we strengthen our adhesive and coatings offerings to the packaging, converting and labeling markets. Northwest is a leader in ultraviolet and electron beam chemistries, and we expect to leverage these technologies throughout our business on a worldwide basis.'

Arpeco and PAT form alliance

Arpeco and PAT Technologies have formed a strategic alliance that will enable Arpeco to offer the Rotoworx line of expandable and reconfigurable modular diecutting and converting systems.

The Rotoworx system is a combination digital UV coater and semi-rotary die-cut and converting system. Complementing a digital press, the Rotoworx system gives 'the ability to perform flood or spot coating, textures and special effects, requiring only a digital file', according to a statement. The Rotoworx system can also be configured to perform many converting functions including thru-cut onto a conveyor.

AVT and Nilpeter China sign deal

Advanced Vision Technology has signed a distribution agreement with Nilpeter China. Nilpeter launched its China operation in 2004, with offices in Shanghai and Shenzhen.

'Eager to improve print quality and reduce waste, our customers were seeking advanced technologies to meet these challenges,' said Ramon Lee, Nilpeter China's general manager. 'AVT's fault-free, 100% automatic inspection platform was found to be the best, field-proven solution.'

'The agreement with Nilpeter China follows the market cooperation between our companies in the last months,' said Gal Shamri, vice president of marketing, AVT Ltd. 'It is an additional step to the appointment of Mr William Bai to the position of general manager of the AVT representative office in China two years ago, and supports our strategy to be a leading supplier of automatic inspection solutions to printers all over China. With Nilpeter China as our partners we can better meet the specific needs of the quality-driven Chinese market.'

Loparex invests in new capacity

Loparex has announced several capital investments to add paper coating and film blowing capacity, and to streamline operations within North America.

A high-speed paper coating line is being started up in Loparex' Hammond, Wisconsin, facility. This line is a two-station emulsion silicone coater capable of coating both sides of the web in a single pass. Turreted unwinds and rewinds allow for continuous operation up to 1,000 fpm. In-line printing allows the web to be printed on either side. A second multi-layer blown film extrusion line will be installed in February, also in the Hammond location.

Coinciding with these investments in the Hammond facility, Loparex announced that some coating lines located in the Dixon, Illinois, operation will be shut down in the coming months. Coater 10 in Dixon will continue to produce solvent and solventless release liner products.

Omet launches Indian subsidiary



Omet has launched an Indian subsidiary company, based in Bangalore. Omet made the announcement at the India Labels Show, where the company demonstrated a six-color

Flexy line converting 38-micron BOPP film as well as self adhesive paper, along with 30-micron PET, 40-micron cast PVC and 40-micron expanded PVC.

Rhodia sells silicones business to China

Rhodia has announced the finalization of the sale of its silicones business to China National BlueStar Corporation.

This business generated sales of €417 million in 2005 and has a total of 1,200 employees. It is mainly situated in Europe, with major production sites at Saint-Fons and Roussillon, in France.

In addition, the Group sold Rhodia Organics' SulfuricProducts activity to Adisseo, subsidiary of China National BlueStar Corporation. This business generated sales

of €47 million in 2005 and has a total of 67 employees. It is based at Les Roches de Condrieu, in France.

Rhodia CEO Jean-Pierre Clamadieu said: 'This divestment constitutes the last step of the plan we launched in 2003 to restore profitability and to focus the Group's portfolio on businesses in which we hold strong leadership positions. This will contribute further to the Group's debt reduction. Q4 2006 was strong compared to Q4 2005 and therefore we will be in a position to exceed our 2006 objectives.'

Kraft Foods tests packaging PDF

The Ghent PDF Workgroup (GWG) has announced the availability of new GWG Packaging Specifications offering best practices for PDF file exchange in packaging applications. The specifications developed by the GWG's packaging experts were tested in North America by Kraft Foods Inc., and in Europe by France's Square. The new specifications are downloadable for free at www.gwg.org.

In the US, Kraft worked with Southern Graphic Systems on the specification for PDF file exchange between designers and brand owners. Kraft's associate director for prepress & print technology, Gary Vogt, says that PDF files will become more integral to packaging workflows as they improve and validate the file hand-offs through the supply chain, and that GWG Packaging Specifications, accordingly, will bring substantial benefit to the industry. 'The GWG is delivering on PDF's promise of truly portable, reliable, file exchange, even for the most complex applications,' he said.

Agfa signs ink distribution deal

Agfa Graphics has announced that it has reached an agreement with Digital Imaging Group LLC of Boca Raton, Florida, USA, for the distribution of Agfa's new aqueous ink for inkjet printing.

Digital Imaging Group will sell the Agfa digital ink set in North America under the LumaChrome name. The partnership is seen as an important step in Agfa Graphics' strategy to expand its global distributor network for its growing range of digital inks.

Agfa Graphics announced its plans to become a leading manufacturer of digital inks for industrial inkjet printing applications in 2004. It has since launched a wide range of both UV-curable, eco solvent and aqueous inks, as well as the new inks now to be distributed by Digital Imaging Group.

Rako installs laser screen engraver



European label converter RAKO Etiketten has installed a direct laser engraving system for high-volume imaging of screen cylinders at its Witzhave (near

Hamburg, Germany) works. In the short time since production began, the company 'is already benefiting from improved productivity, zero defects, perfect reproduction and improved quality brought by the engraver's simplified, eco-friendly and film-free workflow', according to a statement. Thanks to the installation, the company says it has been able to significantly boost productivity in the pre-press room.

More news @ www.labelsandlabeling.com

Authentication alliance formed

To respond to this need for better communication and understanding of how authentication technologies can be utilized in anti-counterfeiting strategy, 18 companies have joined together to form the International Authentication Association, or IAA. The IAA's primary objectives are to promote the use of authentication technologies as an integral part of an effective strategy to protect products, documents and their users from counterfeiting and fraud, and to educate government agencies, inter-government organizations and brand owners regarding the role and use of authentication. Members include 3M, DuPont, Rako, Payne Security, Schreiner ProSecure, Tesa scribos, SICPA, Johnson & Johnson, Label Systems Authentication and ACS Coding.



(L-r) Santiago, Chile; Buenos Aires, Argentina; below right: São Paulo, Brazil

Latin America special

With the next Label Summit Latin America approaching in May, **James Quirk** tours Brazil, Argentina and Chile to learn more about a market that this year is set to grow at twice the global average

One of the downsides of being part of a so-called 'developed' market must surely be the reduced opportunities for growth. In recent years the label markets of the US and Europe have become increasingly saturated, save for a few niche areas, and diversification and multi-national expansion are becoming ever more important for continued profitability and long term survival.

The question for many companies is, expand to where? In recent years, China and India have both received their fair share of acclaim as the 'next big thing'. But while there is undoubted potential in both markets, cultural and legislative issues have hindered immediate progress.

Mention of another major 'developing' market, Latin America, traditionally seems to provoke a cautious intake of breath from North Americans and Europeans. A history of economic and political volatility has given the region a label, so to speak, of instability.

But, in terms of our industry at least, this perception is out of date. Despite a few current governments that some would say lend themselves to this political reputation (Castro in Cuba, Chavez in Venezuela, Morales in Bolivia, for example), many of the region's key economies are enjoying increasing

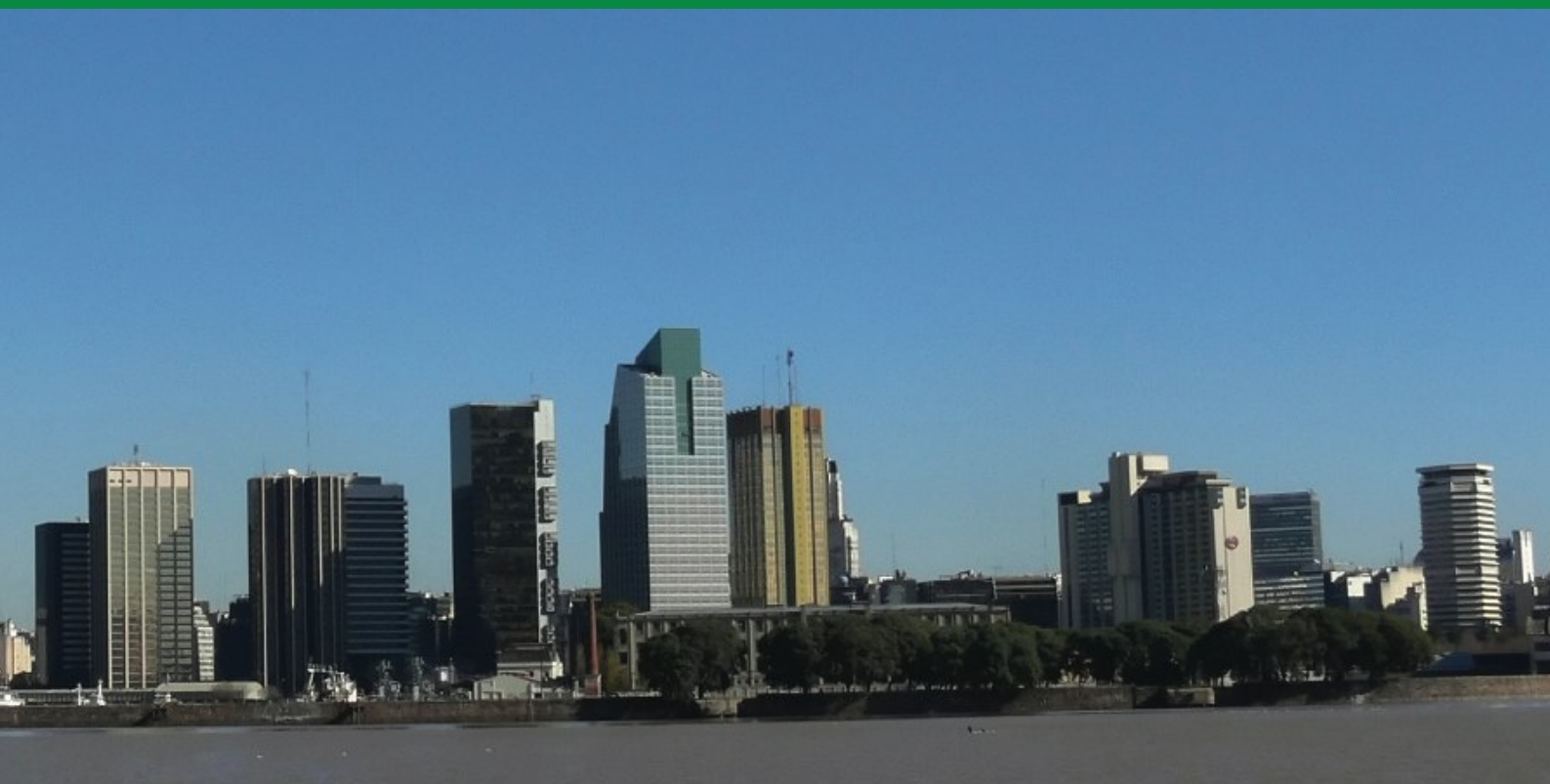
A region of some 20 independent countries, from Mexico in the north to Argentina in the south, including the Hispanic Caribbean, Latin America covers an area of 21,069,501 square kilometers and has a total population of around 560 million people.

Brazil and Mexico are by far the two largest countries, between them making up over 60 per cent of the total Latin American population. Colombia and Argentina are the next largest, followed by Peru and Venezuela.

levels of political and economical stability. Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, Chile and Colombia are Latin America's biggest label markets and all are presided over by center-left or center-right governments which maintain healthy relations with the US.

There is much talk about the potential of 'developing' markets. But of all of them Latin America offers the most complete portfolio of what companies from 'developed' nations are looking for – and it offers it now.

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the key economies, fewer cultural barriers than in the Far East, strong existing trade relationships with the US and Europe, and, as you will see in the articles that follow, top quality print houses and machinery suppliers.

Latin America is sensitive to its perception by the rest of the world, and companies there are waiting for the so-called 'developed' world to update that perception, to allow them to consolidate themselves in the global market.

Latin America is not just a developing region for tomorrow – the time is now. ■



Many statistics, from both general economic surveys and ones specific to the label market, point to the increasing potential of Latin America.

The UN Economic Commission for Latin America reports that the region's economy grew by 5.3 per cent in 2006. Not only is that figure higher than earlier forecasts, but it also represents the third consecutive year of reasonable growth. While the region is accustomed to boom-bust cycles, this recent growth coincides with falling inflation – down on average from 6.1 per cent in 2005 to 4.8 per cent in 2006 – which holds out hope that it will be more sustainable.

The results of the survey of the region's converters carried out by Tarsus Exhibitions & Publishing and *Conversión* magazine prior to Label Summit Latin America in Mexico in the summer of 2006 were extremely positive.

Some 13 per cent of converters surveyed showed sales growth over 20 per cent and 76 per cent indicated sales growth over five per cent. Better than that, more than half of all the surveyed companies said they had an operating profit on sales superior to 10 per cent – impressive when compared to much of the label world today.

The fact that 59.4 per cent of the surveyed companies indicated their intention to buy a press and/or capital equipment in the next year also mirrored a clear awareness of the need to be technologically prepared.

Based on GNP forecasts, the Latin American label industry can anticipate growth in 2007 of between 10 to 16 per cent – twice the global average. Against a backdrop of sustained economic growth, Latin America represents a key global market that offers opportunities for business expansion.



The true innovators

Brazilian company Novelprint has overcome great obstacles to become one of Latin America's leading self-adhesive label manufacturers and converters. **James Quirk** reports

Innovation is hard to quantify. The word requires context, and one parameter is the environment out of which innovation is born.

In 1973 the Arab oil embargo forced the Brazilian government to hike up import taxes and introduce incentives to ensure money was spent on local produce.

Companies which had been importing raw materials and machinery from around the world during the 1960s were suddenly forced to source locally, where the same level of quality was hard to find. Novelprint, founded in 1958, decided to innovate.

The company began to manufacture in-house. In 1974, Novelprint started making its own rotary dies and launched its first line of label applicators. A year later it was manufacturing its own label stock. In 1977, it began creating its own UV inks.

As demand for automatic applications grew, and the cost of polyester was prohibitive to mass production, Novelprint began to look into BOPP as a release material. When 40 micron BOPP came onto the market in the mid 1980s, the company began to implement it in label production.

Now, Novelprint is one of the continent's leading converters and self-adhesive label manufacturers. The result of pioneering the use of BOPP materials is the PAC division, which manufactures the company's label stock, while its NovelTech division builds label applicator machines and has installed over

2,000 worldwide. As a printer, Novelprint can boast all the major printing processes: flexo, offset, letterpress, silkscreen and rotogravure are all achieved with top quality machinery. Novelprint is the only company in Brazil which does all these things under one roof. Now that is a story of innovation.

Jeffrey Arippol joined the company in 1967 and is now São Paulo-based Novelprint's president and owner. 'At one point we had 2,000 customers,' he says. 'We were the only company in Brazil with pressure sensitive technology and the only one with imported machines. But now we have managed to bring the number down to around 300, which allows us to give a much better focus.'

This focus is crucial to Novelprint's success. 'Year by year, our sales continuously increase,' Arippol continues. 'This is because we not only partner with our suppliers, but also our customers. And this is why we've reduced the number that we serve.' The company takes its relationship with its customers seriously, and runs self-adhesive technology courses for them every two months.

'We don't just supply the label,' confirms Enrique Feingold, general sales manager. 'We provide a whole system that includes

Label Summit Latin America,
a conference and table-top exhibition, will take
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machinery, the label and special materials. Customization is a key aspect: our first question to the customer is "what do you need", and then we offer different options. We also send technical staff to the customers for discussion – we offer the whole package.'

These customers come from a wide range of industries. Novelprint supplies all of Chevron's labels in Brazil, for example, and is present in the food, beverage, pharmaceutical, and agro-chemical sectors. It is the first major supplier to Ferrero Roche outside Italy – and provided the chocolate manufacturer with a specially-developed plastic liner.

'We never take a long-term contract with a client if they ask us to use another company's materials,' says Arippol. 'We send them a sample of our own material and explain the advantages. This happened with one of the leading multinational tobacco companies – Novelprint initially supplied the specified paper liner but we soon convinced them to switch to BOPP liners.'

The advantages of BOPP, says Arippol, are numerous. He reports improved release performance and no paper dust particles that can interfere with machines. It is cheaper than glassine paper, and allows for higher speed labeling with less web breakage. The thinner liner also results in fewer roll changes.

BOPP release liner is also recyclable. 'We buy wastage liner

back from our customers as a service,' he reports.

Novelprint's 8,000 square meter facility in São Paulo is home to all three of the company's divisions. There is a showroom for the pressure sensitive label applicators, five to ten of which are usually sold per month. 'We've just taken an order for 55 from a company in Mexico,' says Arippol.

Machines on display include a NovelTech Speed applicator that can apply 1,000 labels per minute, and the EcoTech that can evenly apply two labels to a bottle. 'Usually it is nearly impossible to line the labels up perfectly,' says industrial head José Luiz Trevine, 'but we have developed an applicator that does it perfectly.'

Novelprint the converter fares no less successfully than its sister divisions. ISO 9001:2000-certified since 2002, the company's penchant for innovation is demonstrated by some creative press customization.

As well as having five presses from Ko-pack and three each from Mark Andy and local manufacturer GGS, Novelprint fused together two Webtrons to allow for an impressive six die cutting stations. The latest addition is a unique flexo press, custom-made by Brazilian manufacturer Rotograf and adapted by Novelprint to run silkscreen. In an innovation thought up by Arippol, a gravure unit can be slotted in – turning 10-color flexo



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“We never take a long-term contract with a client if they ask us to use another company’s materials”

into 10 color gravure in just five minutes.

In total Novelprint runs 18 presses and can manufacture six million square meters of labels a month. There is an on-site laboratory for research and development. ‘We do a lot of experimental samples at the request of our customers,’ says José Luiz Trevine, ‘so we are constantly trying to develop new technology.’

This development of new technology is key to the company’s success. In the last decade Novelprint has begun producing re-sealable closures, pharmaceutical safety seals, booklet labels, hang tags that can support up to a kilo, dry peel technology and shrink sleeves. The latest innovation is the NovelStick, a label that can incorporate a product authentication device. Novelprint holds 41 patents.



Novelprint's president Jeffrey Arippol and Roger Pellou, MD of Tarsus' Labels Group

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Johnstown Ave.,
Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin, Ireland.
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“The beer industry is set to provide massive opportunities with the expected move from wet-glue to self-adhesive labels in the next few years”

Amongst other machinery, slitters and rewinders come from Arpeco; inspector machines for shrink labels from Karville; rotary screen equipment from Stork; and flexible dies from Rotometrics. Novelprint, which employs 155 people, manufactures its own solid circular dies in-house to a precision of seven microns. ‘Our manufacturing of dies distinguishes us from our competitors,’ says José. ‘We can remake or create a new die overnight if needed.’

The quality of the end product produced in its factory can be measured by the company’s impressive list of awards. Novelprint has won six TLMI awards since the year 2000, and picked up another back in 1988. It has fared equally successfully in Europe, collecting seven FINAT awards since 2000 to add to the two it won in the early 1980s.

So what does the future hold for Novelprint? Innovation is sure to continue, with the company recently boosted by a 1.5 million dollar grant from the Brazilian development bank for the advancement of nanotechnology. ‘It will be another way to improve our service to clients,’ says Arippol.

For Arippol, the key is to maximize his company’s efficiency. ‘We have a huge amount of unused capacity,’ he says. ‘We are running at about 40 per cent at the moment – a very disappointing figure but great in terms of potential. We had problems with too many partners and our operations not being streamlined – but these problems are being fixed.’

To aid this process, a consultant with over 30 years of experience in the industry visits the company every two months to advise as to how to improve efficiency.

If Novelprint has been able to achieve so much with so much room to spare, then surely there is no limit for this great innovator. ■



The sleeping giant

The Brazilian label market is growing at 15 per cent per year. With a population of 180 million people, the per capita self-adhesive label consumption is at around 2.2 square meters. In the US and Europe, this consumption is 12-15 square meters.

Jeffrey Arippol believes these statistics demonstrate the potential of the Brazilian market. ‘The beer industry is set to provide massive opportunities with the expected move from wet-glue to self-adhesive labels in the next few years,’ he says. ‘The food sector is also an area with great potential due to the falling prices of plastic.’

In 2006, for the first time, the population of Brazil became higher in the cities than in the countryside. This industrialization is reflected in the rapid increase in supermarkets – of both national and international brands – and is further confirmation of Arippol’s belief that the country is a ‘sleeping giant’.

Problems with perception

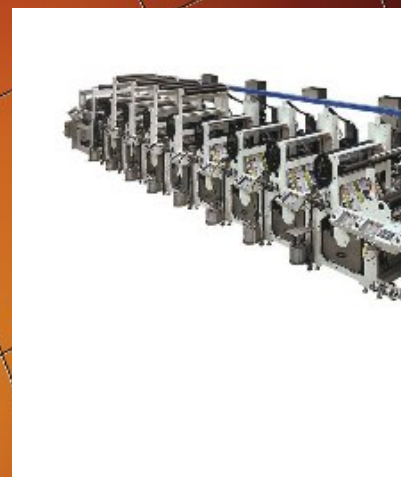
Another obstacle that Novelprint has had to overcome is one of perception from the rest of the world. Debby Forman, an American who has worked as a consultant for Novelprint for many years, says: ‘When you talk of working with a Brazilian or South American converter, the first things people think about are liability and risk.’

Forman spends much of the year traveling, attempting to change this perception and educate people as to the facts about Brazil. On arrival at Novelprint’s offices, L&L was treated to a taster of the talks she gives around the world.

Amongst the interesting facts we learned were the following: Brazil is the largest generic pharmaceutical manufacturer in the world; the country contains the largest number of German and US companies outside their home nations; Brazil is ranked third in the world in numbers of registered trade marks, behind only the US and Japan (Novelprint is ranked number 16 in patents applied for in the last five years in Brazil); and, in what Forman calls ‘a little-known fact’, in the next seven years Brazil intends to become totally energy self-sufficient, for fossil fuels, carbohydrate fuels, hydroelectric and nuclear as well as solar.

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Etirama expanding

James Quirk visits Brazilian press manufacturer Etirama as the company launches a new flexo press which it hopes will further increase its influence in the international market

More than 50 years ago a German named Ewald Dafferner arrived in Brazil. After working for 12 years in coffee plantations, he spotted a foreign printing press – and decided to copy it. He built Brazil's first ever offset press, and then spent two days in jail for his troubles.

He progressed into flat-bed and then flexo machines. Now, his grandson Ronnie Schröter is commercial director of what has become one of the biggest press manufacturers in Brazil – Etirama.

Based in the town of Sorocaba, just outside São Paulo, Etirama boasts over 3,000 installations in around 50 countries. It is present, through a network of representatives, in more than 35 countries. On average, says Schröter, Etirama sells 100 presses a year.

The company produces eight types of presses as well as a range of slitters and rewinders.

Etirama's latest machine is the Flexowine – a 6-color central impression flexo press designed for printing on self-adhesive material, paper, and flexible materials. It will be shown at Labelexpo Europe in Brussels in September. 'The machine is good quality at a good price,' says Schröter. 'The emphasis is on quality rather than speed – to reflect the trend for short runs in the market.'

The press can print in widths of 160, 250 and 400mm, and comprises of a central drum of 800mm in diameter. There is an independent varnish applicator that can also be used as a seventh color for overprinting. The Flexowine is equipped with a triple die cutting station, an online slitter and rewinder, and a UV dryer. Optional accessories include, amongst others, a laminator unit, cold foiling, corona treatment, and automatic tension control.

The majority of Etirama's machines are central drum presses – but it also offers a modular machine: the SuperFlex, a shaftless servo flexo press available for printing widths of 250 or 500mm. It can print up to ten colors and can be used for silkscreen printing, hot stamping, and hot and cold foiling.

While 60 per cent of presses are sold into the Brazilian market, Etirama also has a strong international presence around the world which it hopes will be increased through the new Flexowine.

'We have an advantage in that steel and other components are cheaper here in Brazil compared to Europe. A Nilpeter press

"People think that because we are from Brazil our machines are not good. That is simply not the case"

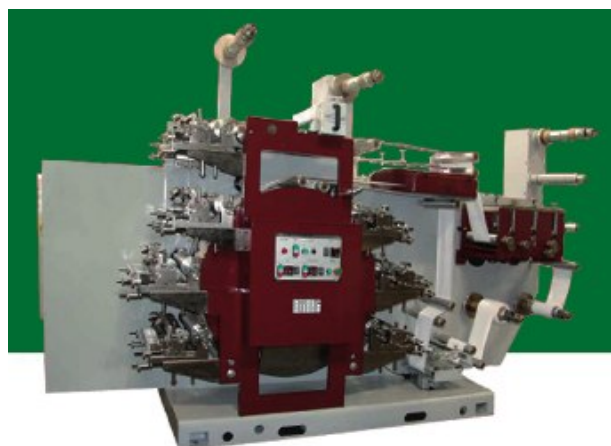
represents a lot of money for a first investment,' says Schröter.

After its local market, the company's main focus is on the rest of Latin America. 'In Latin America we had been selling through agents who have been more concentrated on wide web selling. But we have just moved to a more specialized narrow web distributor, and that will help,' he says.

India is another market where Etirama is having increasing success. Attendance at the India Label Show in 2004 led to the company's first press sale (a Flexorama 4-color CI flexo press) and the appointment of Global Graphics as its distributor for the region.

The Flexowine will be launched into the Indian market this year, and Naalin Sharma of Global Graphics is confident of success: 'It is a simple and compact press which has been designed to give perfect registration with minimal web loss during make ready,' she said. 'We are ardent for its launch in India.'

Etirama's Flexowine 6-color CI flexo press





Ronnie Schröter, commercial director, and Edson Pantarotti, technical manager

“It is a simple and compact press which has been designed to give perfect registration with minimal web loss during make ready. We are ardent for its launch in India”

Etirama is not only targeting the developing markets. ‘Europe is our next key focus,’ says Schröter. ‘We have a strong agent in Russia (Apostrof) and have sold a lot of presses into that market. We also have a good presence in France and Poland. But while our name is a reference of good quality in markets such as Russia, it is harder to sell into markets where our name is not known. People think that because we are from Brazil our machines are not good. That is simply not the case.’

This point was illustrated at Labelexpo Americas in Chicago last year. The winner of Xsys’ ink competition was Brazilian printer Kromos, who’d printed its winning label on an Etirama press. Kromos also won a competition in Brazil for the best wine label printed on a flexo press, which again was from Etirama.

‘Business is good,’ says Schröter. ‘Such is our backlog of orders that if you order a press today it would be six months before you’d get it.’

Technical manager Edson Pantarotti believes that Etirama’s technical support and expertise is a key factor in its success. ‘Most companies in Brazil cannot offer the level of technical support that we do. We’ll fly anywhere in the world to give technical support, and also train all the staff of our local agents.’

The company’s 140 employees are housed a factory that will be 3,000 square meters when complete. ‘We are already looking to expand even further,’ says Schröter. ■

Brady Corporation acquires Brazilian label manufacturer

Brady Corporation, a provider of identification solutions and specialty materials, recently announced that it has acquired Asterisco Artes Graficas Ltda (Etiquetas Asterisco) in Sao Paulo, Brazil, *writes Danielle Jerschevske.*

According to Matt Williamson, president of Brady Americas, the company decided to expand further into Brazil because ‘the country has a growing industrial market that will allow Brady to increase its market share in Latin America’.

Founded in 1980, Etiquetas Asterisco is a manufacturer of industrial labels. It specializes in custom labels printed on film materials for the electronics, automotive, pharmaceutical and other industries. With sales of approximately \$7 million in 2005, the company currently employs 60 people.

The acquisition represents the latest stage in Brady’s expansion into Latin America. Brady opened W.H.B. do Brasil Ltda as a sales and marketing office in 1996, and established manufacturing in the region in 1998 with the acquisition of VEB Sistemas de Etiquetas Ltda. in Sao Paulo. In 2002, it expanded its operations in Latin America with a second manufacturing facility in Manaus, Brazil. ‘The Brazilian government has worked hard to initiate the growth of foreign investment in the country’s manufacturing sector,’ says Williamson. ‘That provides a perfect opportunity for us to set up manufacturing close to our customers.’

Manufactured goods produced in this plant are to serve the local and regional markets, says Williamson – the plan is not to utilize lower-cost labor to produce and then export the goods to a foreign marketplace outside the hemisphere.

Etiquetas Asterisco will also provide Brady with more conversion capabilities, ‘which will allow Brady to offer the broadest selection of label products in the region,’ says Williamson. ‘Brazilian suppliers and customers of this company view it as the undeniable market leader.’

‘We are very pleased to be joining the Brady team. They can provide the resources to further grow our business,’ said Etiquetas Asterisco president José Roberto Pinto Ribeiro.



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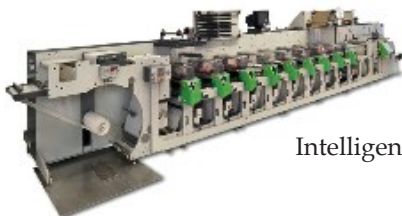
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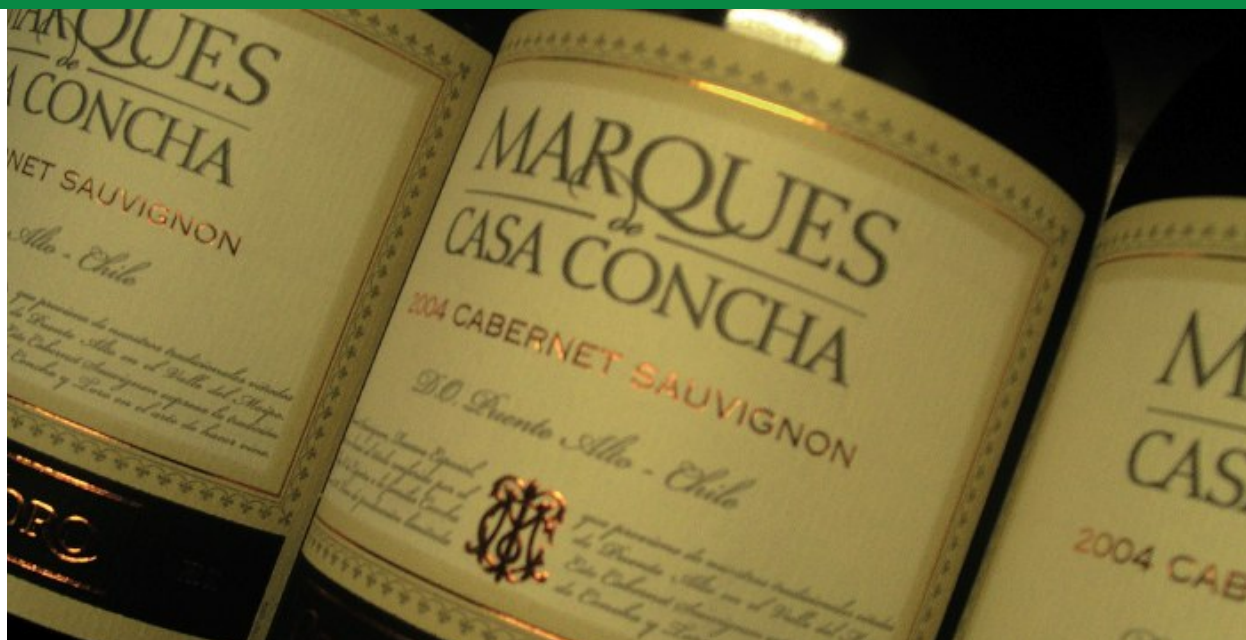


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A wine from the Concha y Toro vineyard, labeled by Etiprak

Etiprak rides Chilean wine wave

Are you a fan of Chilean wine? There's a good chance that the label on what you've been drinking was printed by Etiprak.

James Quirk reports

On arrival at a quiet residential street in downtown Santiago, the capital of Chile, L&L thinks it's in the wrong place. There is little sign that behind these walls lies what Fernando Aravena, Etiprak's president, calls 'the most modern plant in Chile'.

Once inside, however, it is a different story. The recently-renovated offices gleam, and the technology at the company's disposal is world-class.

Between 2004 and 2005, the company installed four new Nilpeter presses: three FA-3300s – with eight colors, hot stamping and cold foiling capabilities and a changeable screen unit; and the first FA-4 in South America – an 8-color servo press with full UV technology specifically for shrink sleeve printing (the biggest growth label market in Chile).

The company uses pre-press systems from Esko and finishing equipment from DCM, Karville, and Stanford. There are three Rotoflex rewinders and four Newfoil machines for stamping and embossing.

World-renowned winery Concha y Toro, founded in 1883, is the company's biggest client. Responsible for half of all exported Chilean wine, it produces 15 million liters each month for more than 110 international markets, and prints 16,500 labels an

hour. Around 60 per cent of its wines are labeled with self-adhesives, and 45 per cent of those are printed by Etiprak.

Heavy investment in new machinery has paid off. 'In the last three years our productivity has improved 100 per cent with the new machines,' says production manager Hernán Vega.

Etiprak, founded in 1983, produces 30 million self-adhesive labels every month – 60 per cent of which are for the wine market. Liquor and industrial labels are the company's next biggest markets.

Forty per cent of Etiprak's label stock comes from Avery Dennison, while Arconvert and Ritrama supply about 20 per cent each. The rest comes from Raflatrac, Gombau, and others. 'We have a very efficient import service from these companies,' says Vega. 'With just one supplier you can have problems, but if you have many then you can always get what you need.'

Etiprak claims to be the leader in Chile for the wine, liquor, and beer labeling markets. It handles 2,000 different orders every month, and yet the company holds very little stock in-house. 'Our processes are so efficient that we just buy stock as we need it,' says Jorge González, sales manager.

The reason for this efficiency is what Etiprak dubs its 'control



(L-r) Sales manager Jorge González, president Fernando Aravena and production manager Hernán Vega

“When consumers of wine and beer labels realize that in Latin America we can match the quality for a better price, companies in the US and Europe will be very worried. I invite them to come and find out”

tower’. It is an office which overlooks the factory floor, from where operations are controlled thanks to a software logistics program developed by the company itself last year.

‘Systems available on the market are expensive and not as efficient as ours,’ says Hernán Vega. ‘You can see every order in real time, and the clients can log in to check exactly where the product is. We can also see what each machine is printing and how long it’s in pre-press.’

‘This program helps us be very flexible with a short turnaround,’ adds Jorge González. ‘We are very quick because of our control tower, and it also means that short runs are no problem.’

Etiprak’s 96 employees run three shifts 24 hours a day. Walking around the factory, the young age of the workers stands

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out. 'The average age of our employees is 27,' says Hernán Vega. 'We feel it is an advantage, because they are keen and enthusiastic. Worldwide there is a shortage of people trained to a high technical level, but here in Chile we have many graphic industry schools.'

The company is moving forward in a variety of areas. Etiprak has been announced as the sole Latin American distributor for the Doubleseal. Produced by Italian company Eno Plastic, the Doubleseal is a screw cap with tamper-proof casing – ideal for wine or liquor bottles. 'It is going to be huge,' says Fernando Aravena.

Etiprak also hopes to become the first plant RFID-certified by Avery Dennison in Chile in the near future, and a Longford machine is being lined up for on-press RFID insertion.

When talking of developing markets, it is easy to forget that to supply a premium quality product to the US or Europe requires local converters with the level of technology to print the



Etiprak installed four Nilpeter presses between 2004 and 2005

highest quality labels.

Jorge González sums up a recurring theme during L&L's tour of Chile, Brazil, and Argentina: 'The day that consumers of wine and beer labels realize that in Chile, in Latin America, we can match the quality for a better price, companies in the US and Europe will be very worried. I invite them to come and find out.' ■



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DIPISA looks to increase PS label distribution

The fast growth of the Chilean PS label market has shown Distribuidora Papeles Industriales that small can also be profitable. **James Quirk** reports

In Chile, a country of just 16 million people, the self-adhesive label industry is growing at around 15 per cent – twice the country's GDP. This shift is the result of a highly developed export market: Chile 'consumed' 47 million meters squared of pressure sensitive materials last year, the bulk of which headed to the US and Europe as labels for wine and fruit – the country's biggest exports.

For Distribuidora Papeles Industriales, or DIPISA, this shift represented a great opportunity. The company has been a major player in the Chilean paper industry for 25 years, and it is now applying these skills to the pressure sensitive market.

'Two years ago the company identified self-adhesive materials as the way forward,' says Edmund Ayres, development manager. 'Historically, DIPISA is a bulk distributor; self-adhesives are showing us that smaller amounts can also be profitable.'

All pressure sensitive materials in Chile are imported, and DIPISA acts as a distributor. The company has a deal, through an agent, for the exclusive Chilean distribution of products from ARclad, the biggest label stock manufacturer in Colombia. DIPISA recently set up a deal with Spanish specialty papers manufacturer Gombau for the local wine market.

'Both ARclad and Gombau have one facility, which ensures the consistent quality of their products,' says Ayres. 'As they have small factories, they value our orders. They are therefore more agile in terms of getting things done quickly.'

Chile's booming wine industry is currently split between wet glue and pressure sensitive labels. 'It was going very heavily towards pressure sensitive a few years ago,' says Ayres, 'while exports were growing and Casillero del Diablo, for example, was still a relatively new name abroad. But it took off to such an extent that it almost became a commodity. If millions of bottles are being sold then labeling costs become an issue again, so some went back to wet glue.'

Chilean wine has become a billion dollar export industry. Wineries like Concha y Toro have become known throughout the world, and in recent years Chile surpassed Spain and Germany

to become the third largest exporter of wine to the US. Concha y Toro alone now sells two million cases a year to this market – up from 100,000 a decade ago.

DIPISA, which ships 3,000 tons of paper every month and employees around 100 people, is currently expanding into a new warehouse that will see capacity increased by 50 per cent. The new facility is due to be completed in February 2007, and the company is looking to spread into different areas.

'We are expanding into self-adhesive film, synthetic papers and paper for non self-adhesive labels,' says Ayres, an Englishman who worked for Avery Dennison before joining DIPISA. 'Our yearly growth has been very impressive, and we want to continue with our market share – we are not trying to dominate the market. We are looking to diversify what we can supply – the Chilean market has always been dynamic.'

Chile is one of the world's largest suppliers of copper, and this is another area where Ayres sees potential: 'We are working with a company on a project to label copper sheets, which could save them millions,' he says. ■



(L-r) Edmund Ayres, development manager; and Alberto Tuñon, sales executive



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Multi-faceted labels

Five years ago Argentine converter Multilabel was kept in business thanks to its trusting suppliers. Now it is expanding all over the continent. **James Quirk** reports

The Argentine economic crisis of 2001 was the breaking of many companies. The local currency was devalued, and restrictions were placed on money being spent on imported goods (see boxout on next page).

Multilabel, based in Buenos Aires, had to rely on its principal suppliers such as Yupo and Arconvert trusting its owner Luis García. 'Even though we were unable to send money out of the country, our suppliers continued providing us with containers of materials,' he says. 'We are proud of the trust that our suppliers had in us.'

That trust has paid off. Multilabel is now one of the country's biggest converters and has expanded throughout the continent with operations in Brazil, Mexico, and Chile.

Luis García and Juan Carlos Sacco attended Drupa in 1992 to learn about new opportunities in graphic arts. García had set up Argentina's first pre-press company, but the arrival of the Mac saw the photo-composition business decline. Sacco, who had been working in continuous forms, was suffering a similar fate due to the increase in laser printing.

The pair bought a 6-color Ko-pack letterpress with UV flexo and silk screen, and Multilabel was born.

The food and beverage sectors have traditionally been the company's main markets. García says that Multilabel is the only company in Argentina which can produce in-mold labels,

and the only one whose labels are certified for safety in direct contact with food.

In recent years, however, García has been steering Multilabel towards value-added areas like promotional labels. 'Promotional labels can be a very profitable market if you have the right knowledge and equipment,' he says.

Multilabel can produce a vast array of promotional and security labels: from booklet label coupons, peel and reveal labels and tattoos to voiding labels and holograms.

Two years ago, for example, Multilabel worked on a big promotion with Carrefour. Using dry peel BOPP film, the company created a label in which a hidden message can be read through a red filter. The promotion ran in Brazil, Spain, Turkey, and Greece.

The company's loyalty to Ko-pack presses has continued since the first purchase: the plant in Buenos Aires has three Ko-pack letterpress machines with 6, 9, and 13 colors. The 13-color press has been customized to include more lamination, a rewinder, cold stamping, and a silk screen unit from Telstar. Multilabel's Brazilian plant has two 9-color machines and there is a 6-color press in Mexico.

'We know Ko-pack's machines very well now – we can strip them down and build them back up again without problems,' says García.

(L-r) One of Multilabel's three Ko-pack presses; at work on rewinders from Rotoflex





Multilabel president Luis García

Multilabel also has a 9-color Propheteer 1000 flexo press, which it is currently rebuilding to include a UV system from GEW. 'The people from Gallus couldn't believe the quality I can get out of the Propheteer thanks to our modifications – even though the press is quite old,' says García. 'We made the printing cylinders ourselves; we clean the anilox rolls regularly and carefully; and we use good quality plates from Toray.' The plan, says García, is to use the Propheteer to make wine caps with shrink PVC labels.

Multilabel uses Agfa pre-press equipment and Avery Dennison for raw materials. There is Newfoil equipment for hot stamping and embossing and a KDO for reprinting wine labels. The company uses Rotoflex for inspection and rewinding – with four machines in Buenos Aires and three in Brazil. Inks come from Siegwark and the company uses water-based flexo plates from Toray. García believes in consistency: 'I have standards that I try to maintain.'

Countdown to the crisis

Argentina's economy collapsed in 2001, following years of mounting instability which saw the destruction of much of the country's industrial infrastructure. By early 2002 the situation was stabilized to some extent, and when President Néstor Kirchner took charge in May 2003 the economic outlook was completely different from that of the 1990s; the high exchange rate made Argentine exports cheap and competitive abroad, while discouraging imports. The peso slowly revalued and Argentina began to return to growth with surprising strength. GDP has grown by around nine per cent for the last four years, with unemployment considerably reduced.

Multilabel also makes its own plates. 'If we're working at night or at the weekend, what would we do if we didn't have any?' This philosophy of cover is also demonstrated by the fact that in the company's workforce, according to García, everyone is trained to do everything. 'They all know each other's jobs, so we never have a problem in production.'

Multilabel do Brasil was opened in 2001 in São Paulo to serve the local market. 'Our strategy is to open a commercial office,' says García, 'and when there are enough customers we open a plant.' After Brazil and Mexico, Chile is the next country into which the company will expand with a commercial office already open. Multilabel also has a facility in Mendoza – Argentina's biggest wine region – for reprinting wine labels.

Expansion is also underway at home. The company has taken over the next door property, which will increase its size to over 4,000 square meters, and Avery Dennison is set to certify the Buenos Aires plant for RFID. ■





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Grupoflex gathers momentum

Grupoflex has established itself as an agent for cutting-edge label converting technology in Argentina, and is finding its consultancy services in increasing demand. **James Quirk** reports

Grupoflex is hard to pigeon-hole. The company is a used machine reseller, an applicator manufacturer, a distributor, and a consultant.

Its ability to work in these varied sectors is facilitated by the experience of its owner, Alfredo Aray, who has worked in the packaging industry for nearly 30 years. Aray began working in the industry in the late 1970s, and set up flexible packaging company Bolsaflex in 1987, before selling it to International Paper in 1999.

Grupoflex's work as a used machine reseller is, according to Aray, 'the biggest part of the company at the moment'. The other divisions, he says, are quite new.

The company specifically resells equipment for the narrow web industry, and takes orders not only from all over Latin America but also from France and Spain. 'We are looking for more work in Europe,' says Aray, 'and we are very interested in the US market.'

One company's used machinery, which it wants to sell after buying new equipment, for example, could be another company's catalyst for increasing sales at a low cost. The problem, says Aray, is a lack of communication. 'When companies look to sell their machines, sometimes they don't talk to their competitors,' he says. 'We occupy this space.'

Grupoflex the applicator manufacturer is similarly international. It produces a range of high speed applicators and rewinders for promotional labels. One applicator can apply 3,000 tickets per minute.

It has sold machines into Spain, Italy, and Russia as well as Latin America. At home, its local market is its biggest, followed by Brazil. The company sold 400 applicators into Central America between 2003 and 2004, and 200 in Argentina in 2005.

Grupoflex has an exclusive distributor deal for Argentina with Spanish flexible die manufacturer Lartec. 'We don't want to represent lots of companies,' says Aray, 'only those with specialty equipment that you don't already find in the Argentine market.'

Other deals have been set up with, amongst others, Argentine corona equipment manufacturer Mazzuchin & Zarate, tension control specialist FMS, and Alphapaton – Comexi's Argentine representatives. Grupoflex also distributes inspection equipment from Argentine company Visión Robot.

Grupoflex's role as a consultant is 'set to grow a great deal – particularly as we are in a developing market,' says Aray.

"The market has changed – this same equipment is manufacturing a wider array of products than ever before"

The company consults in a variety of ways. 'Some companies want ISO:9001-2000, for example,' he says. 'We visit them, analyze their operations and make recommendations to the certification company.'

'We also advise people about streamlining their organization,' he continues. 'Often they think they need a new machine – when in fact the problem is not in production, but in sales. They don't need a new machine, just to be more efficient.'

'The trend of lean manufacturing has risen because of product diversification. There's a greater frequency of jobs going in and out of machines. The market has changed – this same equipment is manufacturing a wider array of products than ever before.'

Grupoflex relies on an extensive database to help advise on the buying and selling of machinery, and provides an advertising service in Latin America for companies wishing to export machinery.

'We also help companies get more out of their equipment,' says Aray. 'We give advice on any packaging project – particularly in the buying and selling of new and used equipment.' ■



A 6-color semi-rotary offset press from Etipol from 2001, one of the many used presses that Grupoflex offers

Graphic arts leader of South America

James Quirk visits Artes Gráficas Modernas in Argentina, whose charismatic president was recognized by the Printing Association of Florida last year

Artes Gráficas Modernas' president Fernando Leiro was named 'Graphic Arts leader of South America' at an award ceremony by the Printing Association of Florida last year. 'I was very proud to win as it was voted by my colleagues in the industry,' he says.

Leiro is an important figure in the Latin American label market. As president of Artes Gráficas Modernas, he presides over what is thought to be the biggest converter on the continent. The company is made up of three divisions: converting, self-adhesive material manufacturing, and label applicator manufacturing.

Leiro is president of FAIGA, the Argentine federation of graphic arts, and is involved with the Gutenberg Foundation, an offshoot of FAIGA, which offers education and training to the industry.

He entered the label industry in 1963 when he began to work with his father in what was then a small typography and offset printing house. He assumed management of the company in 1976 and in the 1980s moved Artes Gráficas Modernas towards narrow web printing. In 1991, recognizing the increasing need to produce labels of high quality, he bought a 6-color letterpress with rotary die cutting and hot stamping – the first in Argentina.

The machine may have been what the market was demanding, but finding sufficient high quality materials locally was difficult. Leiro solved the problem by creating the company's self-adhesive and silicones materials manufacturing division.

Today, this division makes two million square meters of self-

The Varyflex press from Omet



AGM president Fernando Leiro

adhesive materials each month. Much is used by the company, though Artes Gráficas Modernas also supplies it to converters across Latin America.

As a converter, the company can call on a complete portfolio of the industry's top technologies: Artes Gráficas Modernas offers flexo, UV flexo, letterpress, offset, digital, rotary screen, gravure, and hot and cold stamping capabilities.

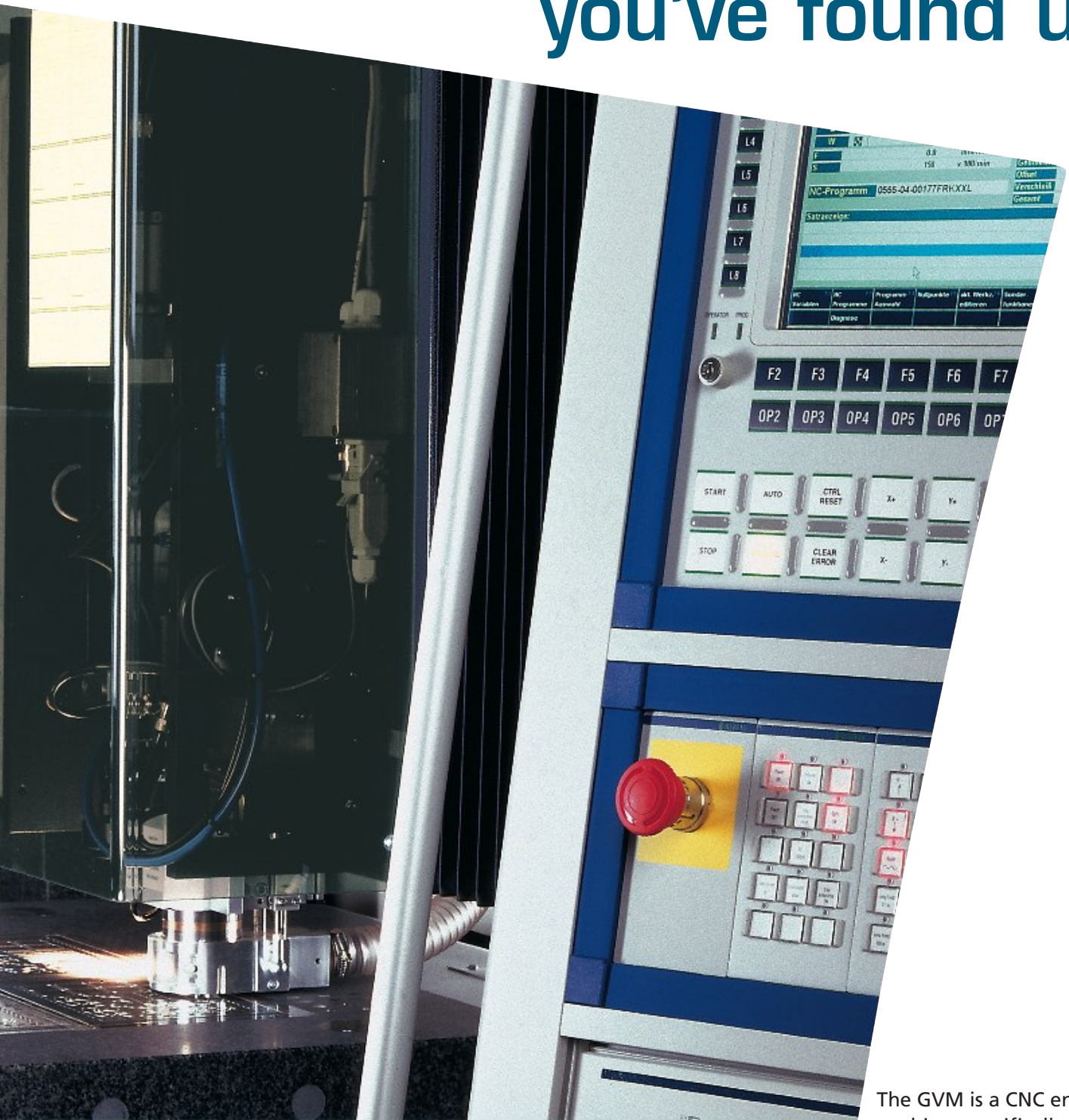
Amongst the 20 presses at its disposal, the company boasts four HP ws2000s; three Nilpeter MO-3300s; three presses from both Mark Andy and Ko-pack; two from Gallus and one from Omet. There are no less than 20 inspection systems – mainly from Rotoflex and arpeco. 'My clients say I am the biggest converter in Latin America,' says Leiro.

Leiro reports shrink sleeves and security labels to be the major growth sectors in an Argentine label market that has seen massive growth in recent years. 'The rise in the label market in Argentina reflects the country's ongoing recovery since the economic crisis of 2001,' he says.

Artes Gráficas Modernas' factory will be 16,000 meters squared when the current expansion is completed. Its 200 employees are housed in three buildings that occupy both sides of the street in San Justo, Buenos Aires, where the company is based.

'Our secret is stock,' says Leiro. 'We hold ground stocks of lamps, electronics, engravers cylinders – everything. We don't wait for anybody.' ■

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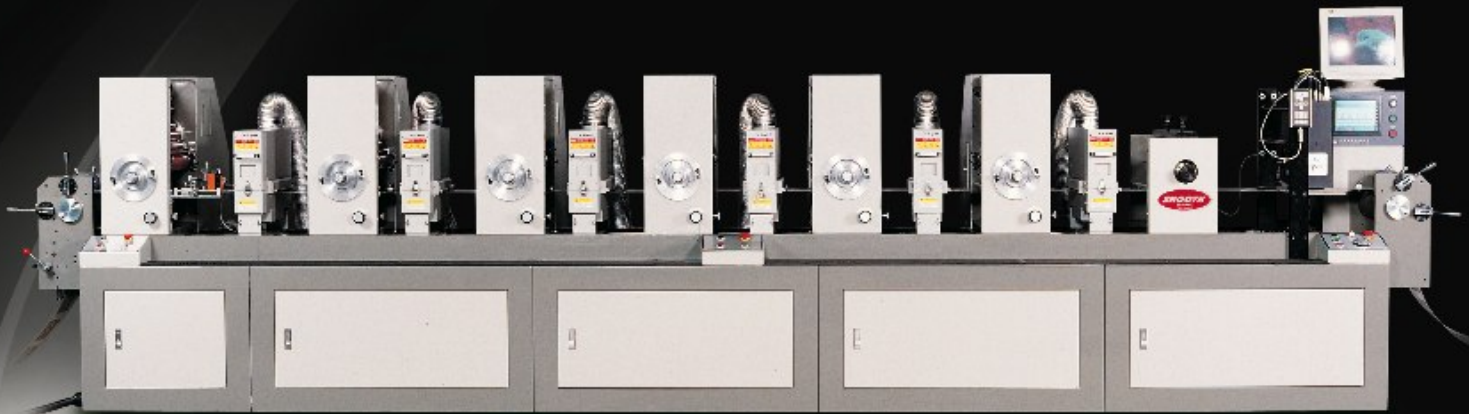
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Offset advantage for Etiquetas Autoadhesivas

Etiquetas Autoadhesivas has moved into high quality wine label production using a range of print processes – including sheetfed presses modified to convert pressure-sensitive rolls.

James Quirk reports

Etiquetas Autoadhesivas moved into offset printing in 1990 and it currently represents 75 per cent of the company's business.

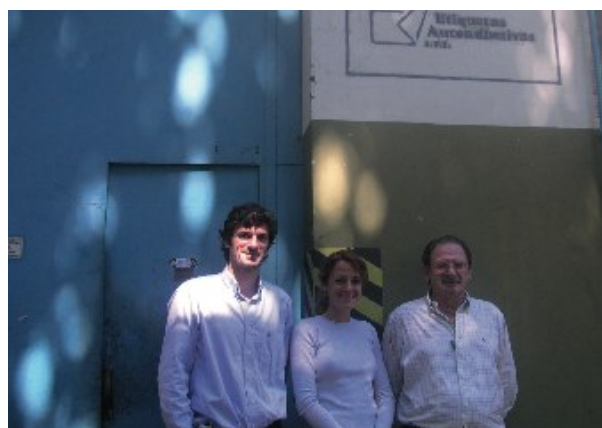
Florencio Baques, managing director of the Argentine printer which specializes in wine labels, believes that offset gives the company an advantage over its competitors. 'Few companies in Argentina have offset capabilities – so we don't have much competition in this area at all,' he says.

Etiquetas Autoadhesivas was founded in 1930, and began by printing labels for school equipment before moving into paper and cardboard – with little success. In 1976, the company returned to what Baques describes as its 'first love', by buying a flexo press from Brazilian manufacturer Inirama for self-adhesive labels for food packaging. Today the company's Polypropylene labels are certified for contact with food.

In 1985 the company moved into thermal printing, which today makes up the majority of the remaining 25 per cent of its business. Ford is one of the major customers of the company's thermal printed labels.

The launch of Avery Dennison's specialty paper for wines moved Etiquetas Autoadhesivas into that market in the early 1990s, as Baques explains: 'Avery asked us to do some examples using its paper – and some vineyards liked it so much that they got us to print their labels.'

As well as four 2-color offset presses from Japanese



MD Florencio Baques, far right, with son Pablo and daughter Florencia

manufacturer Ryobi – originally designed for printing stationary paper but modified to use rolls – Etiquetas Autoadhesivas has letterpress and flexo presses 'to complement the Ryobi presses for more color and varnishing', says Baques. A 4-color offset press is currently being developed for Etiquetas Autoadhesivas by Argentine press manufacturer Grafín.

The company, which employs 33 people, produces 100,000 square meters of labels per month.

'The Argentine wine market is growing very fast,' reports Baques, whose son Pablo and daughter Florencia also work for him. Etiquetas Autoadhesivas works with Chilean and French companies who own vineyards in Argentina. 'As we produced high-quality wine labels, a big part of them are exported,' says Baques.

Etiquetas Autoadhesivas' emphasis on short runs, particularly for high-quality wine labels, allows the company 'to do many short run jobs that our competitors won't do,' says Baques.

As well as Avery, Etiquetas Autoadhesivas uses paper from Spanish manufacturer Manter and some local suppliers. It buys materials from 3M for tamper-proof and void security labels – a market which Baques says is 'on the rise in Latin America'.

Like many converters in Latin America, Baques reports that Etiquetas Autoadhesivas is looking to move into RFID: 'The market demands it,' he says. ■



Gidue hosts packaging conference

James Quirk reports from Gidue's first Packaging Change event

Around one hundred people gathered for Italian press manufacturer Gidue's first Packaging Change event, which consisted of a conference followed by demonstrations of the company's presses at its showroom in Turate, northern Italy.

The conference included presentations from Air Liquide, Siegwirk Ink, IST Metz, Karville, Ciba Speciality Chemicals, and Gidue's charismatic managing director Federico d'Annunzio.

'This is our first seminar devoted exclusively to packaging,' d'Annunzio said to welcome attendees. 'We want to cover the packaging world in different ways to allow for diverse approaches to the market. That's why we decided to involve suppliers announcing their newest technologies which, up to now, have not been taken into consideration by the printing world.'

Air Liquide, the world's biggest gas supplier, used its presentation to announce its move into the packaging market. Géraldine Rames-Langlade discussed how to overcome oxygen inhibition in the curing process by removing the oxygen and replacing it with nitrogen. The cost of nitrogen, she asserted, is counterbalanced by both the lower ink cost and by higher productivity.

'The use of nitrogen can increase curing level from 75 per cent to 95 per cent and increase speed by a factor of three,' she said.

Dr Panayotis Cocolios, corporate market manager and a university professor of chemistry and physics, then introduced Air Liquide's new ALDYNE gas phase primer coating technology. ALDYNE replaces the conventional liquid primer coating on any plastic substrate, and can reduce the primer cost by a factor of 5-10.

'We have moved into the flexible packaging industry because we see a great opportunity to create a new market,' said Dr Cocolios.

Laurence Claveyrolles of Siegwirk Ink discussed the principles of formulation of UV inks. Her presentation centered on the advantages that inerted atmosphere can bring to the printing process: such as a reduction in the consumption of energy and the number of lamps, and better adhesion on non absorbent substrates.

'The effect of inerted atmosphere can be spectacular and there is much to be gained by utilizing it,' she said

Claveyrolles underlined that actual cost optimization has to be obtained by balancing performances, adapted ink formulation, gas consumption, lamp power and intensity, and equipment costs.

Bernd Pratl, sales manager, IST Metz, presented the company's applications for the mid and wide web markets. He underlined the company's ability to supply different lamps and reflectors depending on which inks the customer is using.



"This is our first seminar devoted exclusively to packaging. We want to cover the packaging world in different ways to allow for diverse approaches to the market"



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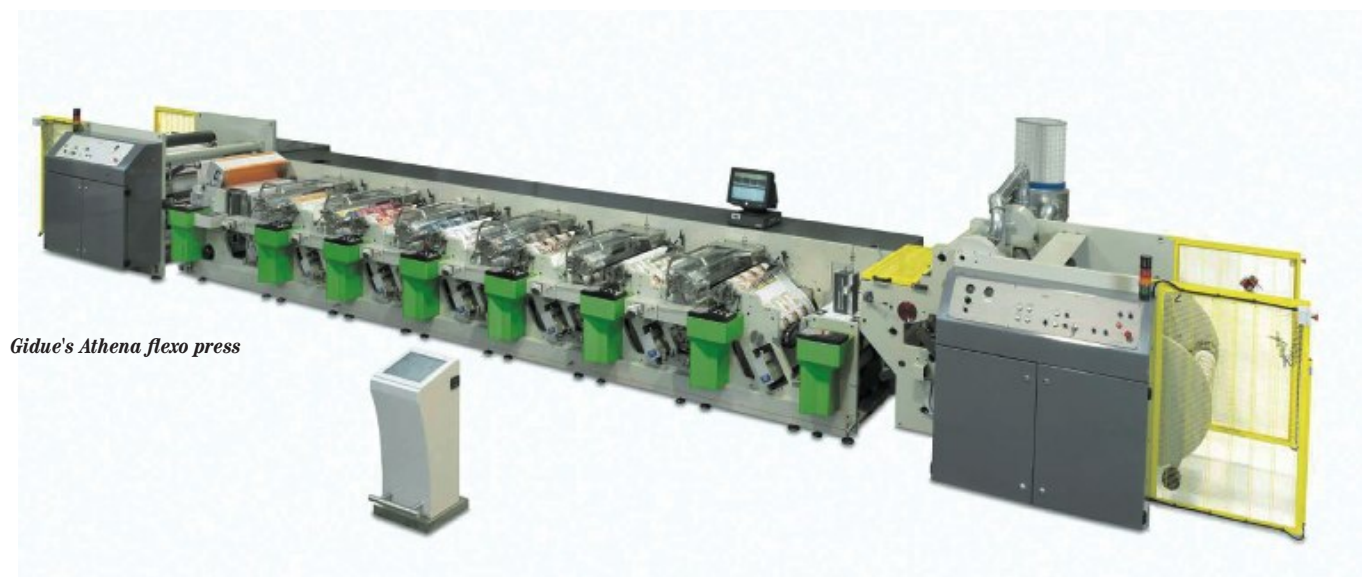


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Gidue's Athena flexo press

Diego Acevedo, technology center manager, Karville Development, provided attendees with an overview of the fast-growing technology of shrink sleeve labels. 'Shrink sleeve is a relatively new technology – but one that is growing rapidly,' he said.

He emphasized that shrink sleeves can be applied to containers of virtually any shape or size – from plastic bottles and empty glass to metal cans and specialty applications such as candles, cosmetics and CD boxes. 'Someone asked us at a tradeshow if we could put a shrink sleeve on an onion – we can! With our machine you can shrink sleeve anything.'

Rodolfo Merola, global project manager Prime IT for Ciba Specialty Chemicals, presented Prime IT technology, which solves adhesion problems of UV curable inks, coatings and adhesives on plastic and metallized substrates. Prime IT can be applied in line with the printing process. The permanent surface modification given by Prime IT ensures maximum and long-lasting adhesion on a wide variety of applications, substrates and printing technologies, including water-based systems.

Federico d'Annunzio, MD of Gidue, concluded the conference with a comparison between offset and flexo. The simplicity of UV offset, he said, resides in the possibility of supplying companies around the world with consistency, whereas in flexo standardization is dependent on the specific production environment.

Cost, he said, is also an issue. 'While the cost of flexo plates rises exponentially with higher quality, the cost of an offset plate remains the same for any level of quality. This advantage must not be underestimated as the market is increasingly orientated towards excellent print quality.'

The attendees were then treated to demonstrations of the company's Xpannd and Athena presses in its showroom.

The Athena, first launched in 2005, is a mid web press with sleeve technology which can interchange flexo and gravure on the same print unit. Due to its gearless and heavy duty

“Someone asked us at a tradeshow if we could put a shrink sleeve on an onion – we can. With our machine you can shrink sleeve anything”

configuration the Athena can print and convert any web substrate available for packaging, from thin film to heavy laminated board. The press runs at speeds up to 270m/min and comes in printing widths of 430mm, 530mm, 630mm and 730mm with print repeats from 304.8mm to 812.8mm.

Gidue's newest press, the Xpannd, was launched earlier this year. The press, configured with two UV flexo, four UV offset and two UV flexo printing units, was complimented by a pneumatically operated slide-in slide-out cassette system on guides rails that makes changing the printing heads a simple operation. The press features the Intelligent Register system from Gidue for automatic register of the printing units and PC press interface for interactive print management and job tracking.

Xpannd is also available in 430mm (17") and 530mm (21") widths with a wide range of converting options and can be specified to include any combination of flexo offset and screen printing processes. A further advantage of the Xpannd UV offset process is improved ink lay-down for high density print coverage at speeds up to 150m/min (490fpm).

Gidue's next Packaging Change event will take place in March 2007. ■

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Ink news

Andy Thomas rounds up what's new in inks, varnishes and dispensing systems

The explosive growth of new substrates, surface coating treatments and food-contact narrow web packaging applications has led ink manufacturers to bring out new formulations to tackle a wide range of surface adhesion and end user requirements.

At the same time, the growing number of presses sold as combination machines with UV screen, offset, flexo, letterpress and gravure, has increased the demand for over-printable opaque screen whites, predominantly with silicone-free formulations.

Shrink sleeves and the latest generation of high shrink value roll-on films present another challenge for ink formulators, while the need for product security and marketing-led special effects has led to the availability of a wide range of inks including tactile, scented, heat and light sensitive, pearlescent and metallic. Below, we feature a selection of the latest products on the market.

Alden & Ott has introduced several new flexo ink systems. Multi-Shrink is for reverse printing on a variety of shrinkable substrates, and includes a self cross-linking high opaque white. Temp-O-Grip is for surface printed applications on film and foil lid substrates that require heat resistance up to 450 degrees F. The system may also be catalyzed for solvent resistance. G-Force allows converters to use a single ink system for both film and paper. The company has also introduced a line of UV overprint varnishes including a high gloss UV scratch and scuff resistant product to replace film lamination.

Zeller + Gmelin is working on the development of a low migration ink series for packaging applications, building on experience gained producing low migration inks for direct container printing. Print trials have shown that a migration limit of < 10 ppb can be achieved.

Other new products include Interact, a comprehensive range of special effect printing inks introduced by Intercolor, a member of the Zeller-Gmelin Group. The range includes visual effects such as pearlescent inks, bright metallic effects and fluorescent inks through to functional systems with tactile and texture lacquers, fragrance coatings and a range of inks which react to light or temperature. The Interact range is available in March/April this year for flexo and screen processes and runs on standard printing presses without the need for modification.

The products will be supplied press-ready.

Zeller + Gmelin has also developed a solvent free UV matt lacquer for flexo application using chamber-type doctor blades. Apart from a good adhesion on different substrates, it provides good slip properties, is embossable and thermo-transfer printable, says Z&G. Due to its odor reduced and ITX free formulation, it is applicable for food packaging applications.

Since February last year, Zeller + Gmelin has implemented a program to make all newly formulated UV inks ITX free, including all UV flexo-, offset-, letterpress- and screen-ink series, and the company reports all inks show a high color intensity, low odor and a good adhesion on various substrates.

Marabu has launched UltraRotaScreen UVRS ink. The opaque white – classified into UVRS 170 and 171 – is a further option for use with the existing UltraRotaScreen UVRS system. The ink is press-ready and no additives are required. UVRS 170 has been developed especially for hybrid/combination letterpress and offset rotary presses utilizing Gallus Screeny and Stork-Screens Rotamesh, while UVRS 171 is identical but optimized for lower printing speeds. For UV flexo combination presses, Marabu has UltraRotaScreen UVSF, a silicone-free opaque white curing up to 65m/min (200 fpm). The Ultracolor ink system now contains 13 glossy shades, opaque white, opaque black, a special binder and a printing varnish.

Ink dispensing specialist SPEC has added a Rework Wizard to its ink management system. It allows the operator to store the LAB/LCH value from a spectrophotometer for new colors as well as press returned inks. The user can then search returned inventory to find the closest color match to the color correctly needed.

SPEC has also expanded its dispensing capabilities into the paste ink market with the introduction of the RTP3000, a fully automated system optimized for small batches.

UVitec Printing Ink has introduced a new UV ink system for shrink sleeve label applications using flexo or letterpress. The inks are available in opaque white, 4-color process and spot colors, with a viscosity low enough to work well on standard anilox and pumping equipment for the flexo version, with excellent flow and transfer on letterpress equipment, according to the company. A strong opaque white will cure without the need for special UV curing systems such as doped bulbs or

microwave units.

The company has also introduced inks designed to withstand the autoclave sterilization process available in UV flexo, UV letterpress, and UV litho ink series, as well as in all PMS colors and special matches, as well as an Opaque White UV letterpress ink.

Siegwerk has introduced a highly pigmented set of process colors – Sicura Flex 39-6 – based on a new binder resin system. Despite its high pigmentation and intensive color strength, these inks have low viscosities comparable to more conventional products, says Siegwerk, as well as less thixotropic than its predecessor, achieving improved flow properties. Siegwerk has also launched a new range of 1-component gold and silver metallic inks for UV offset and UV letterpress printing claimed to exhibit good abrasion resistance, adhesion and hiding power.

Spring Coating Systems has launched a range of new inks including a new range of water based scratch off inks for promotions and games, available in silver and gold, and FUV-NX, ITX-free UV flexo inks.

Spring has also purchased a new factory in Europe to expand manufacturing capacity and to house its enlarged research and development capabilities. As part of this expansion plan, Spring is looking for distributors to represent its full range of products.

Dispenser efficiencies

Ink room productivity has gone up by 30 per cent for printing firm Römer Etikett since it started using the new Solaris Colorsat ink-dispensing system

developed in a partnership with Sun Chemical and GSE Dispensing.

The Solaris Colorsat ink dispenser is designed for users of relatively low ink volumes or printers doing shorter print runs who need to keep waste to a minimum and cut ink formulation times.

Printing labels on self-adhesive materials is a niche market for Römer Etikett, which employs 110 people at its headquarters at Marburg, near Frankfurt, Germany.

Half label-making production time is spent setting up, as Alexander Römer, managing director of family-owned Römer Etikett, explains: 'Take Nestlé for example. Five years ago, a single order of a million labels would involve just one print run after set-up. Today we get the same order but the requirements involve 200,000 labels in orange, the same number in, say, red or blue – and then perhaps a mixture.

'Under the old system of printing a constant change in requirements would hit our profitability in terms of set-up costs in front of the machine. However, the new Solaris Colorsat machine can now change one color in just five minutes – 25 per cent of the time it used to take an operator to do the work – and the quality of the color mixing is perfect.

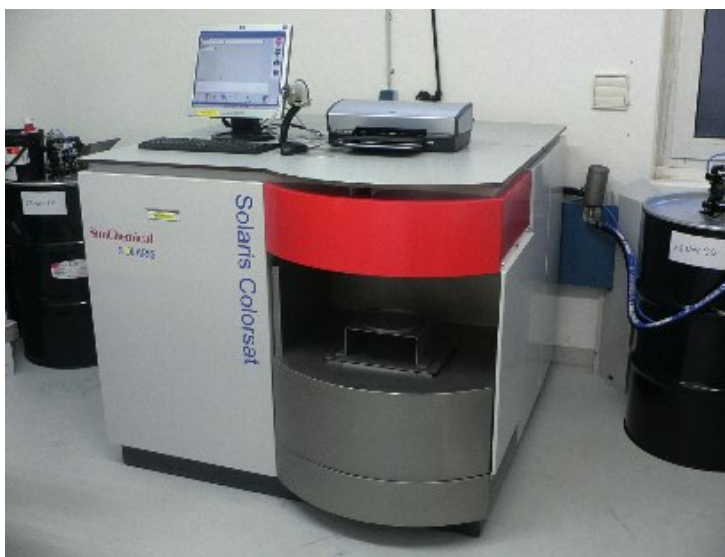
'We blend about 70 different colors a month on average – accurately producing a large variety of special colors in small amounts is absolutely vital. Brand owners want the same consistency today as they did six months ago – and this ink-dispensing system enables that to happen. We are delighted with the results – we have had a 30 per cent improvement in ink room set-up costs.'

Jonathan Sexton, Sun Chemical's European product manager, narrow web labels, said: 'These results from our first customer are a perfect example of how the Solaris Colorsat dispenser is now bringing narrow web printers real savings and improved speed-to-press. Römer Etikett is already finding that the machine is easy to use and, with hardly any moving parts, it requires minimal maintenance.'

Anne Lourens, managing director of GSE Dispensing, added: 'Römer Etikett is expecting a return on investment of as little as 18 months, which will be achieved by dramatically driving the cost out of the supply chain by using return inks and raising quality levels.' ■



(L-r) Alexander Römer, managing director, Römer Etikett; Jonathan Sexton, Sun Chemical's European product manager, narrow web labels; and Anne Lourens, managing director of GSE Dispensing



The Solaris Colorsat, developed in a partnership between Sun Chemical and GSE Dispensing



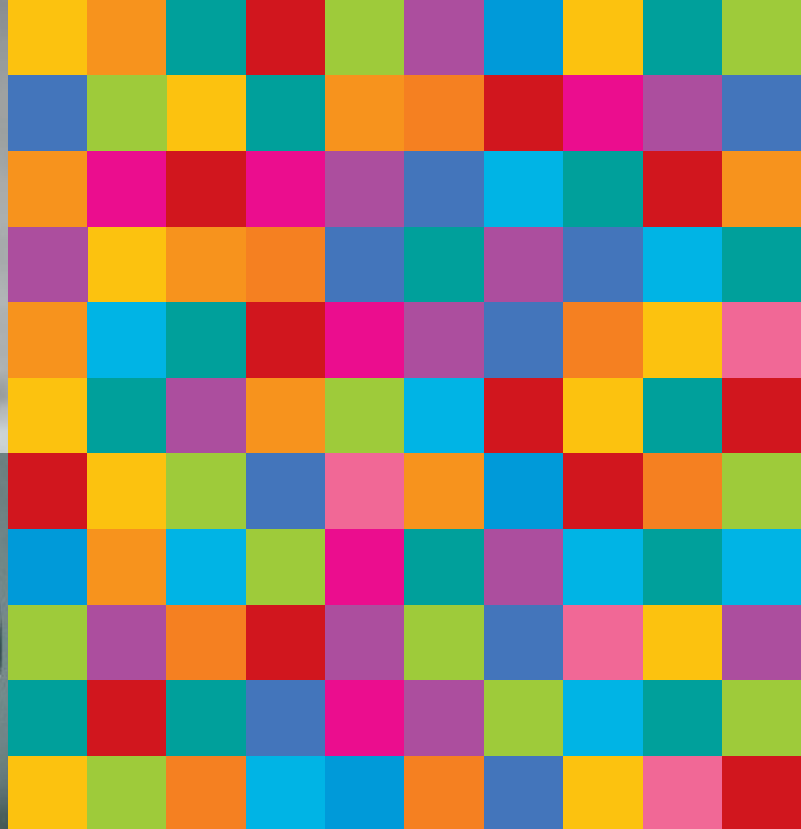
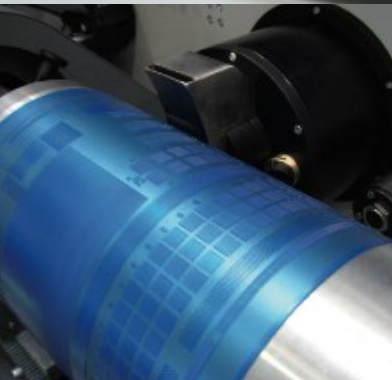
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More than a gimmick

Niklas Olsson, global brand manager, Xsys Print Solutions, looks at the trend towards specialty inks

Lately we have seen an increasing interest from end users to make use of specialty inks which add functionality, improve aesthetics appearance and make the product 'jump out' of the supermarket shelf.

Special effects or 'gimmick' inks are not a new thing, but we see clearly that in the last quarter these are now being seriously looked at in projects aimed to 'bring labels to life'.

Thermochromic inks – which change color with temperature – light sensitive or phosphorescent (glow in the dark) are examples that have been around some time, but a much cleverer use of the effect, incorporated early in the label design stage, is adding functionality with effects that make 'something happen' on the labels.

Another 'effect' that has seen a tremendous growth in number of enquiries recently are optical variant inks – inks that change color with the angle of light reflecting on the label, or that glitter or sparkle. Again, known effects, but which have been instrumental in the sales success of some health and beauty products recently.

As an example, a new brand of HABA product was launched with traditional color inks and some nice pastel shades. The product launch wasn't too successful and the end user, who wanted to convey 'pearl luster' in the hair care product, was introduced to adding Pearlescent effect inks to the label. When the product was launched with the additional effects, sales were boosted. It is an interesting example of how the right effect can add value to a brand and why end users and label converters may benefit by working with their ink maker already in the label design phase.

As a narrow-web printer, you have an enormous portfolio of ink-based options available to you to create precisely the printed image your customer wants.



Shelf appeal can be achieved via bold graphics, bright colors, fluorescents or metallic shades, but more and more frequent is the request for effect inks. Leading end users see in their focus groups that the consumer perceives different values in a product when colors and effects are designed to appeal to the targeted consumer group. ■

Matching inks and process

Today's solvent, water, and oil-based ink formulations are all used in narrow-web print – but it is the advanced UV ink technology which is predominant, and which can be used with all the 'standard' print processes, including flexo, letterpress, offset and screen. It can also potentially be used with gravure and digital print.

For self-adhesive labels on film substrates, optimal results can be achieved with water-based flexo inks and all the UV-curable ink ranges, depending on your choice of print process. With paper self-adhesive substrates and wrap-around non-adhesive film labels, the same is true – although UV screen inks do not perform quite as well. In fact, with all the commonly-used substrates – including cartonboard, in-mould, sleeves, folding carton, sachets and pouches, and flexible packaging – water-based flexo inks and UV curable flexo, letterpress, offset, and screen inks can be, and are to a greater or lesser extent used today. UV screen inks are not, however, recommended for shrink sleeve applications.





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Clarifoil, the cellulose acetate film used for print lamination, pressure sensitive labels and tapes, has been accredited under EN 13432

Film show

Filmic label stocks are undergoing a period of intense development to meet the demands of end users for more flexible and cost-effective solutions. **Andy Thomas** surveys the latest products from key manufacturers

Performance films are the name of the game in today's labels market, as end users demand materials which can effectively replace direct printing and lower the overall applied cost of packaging systems. Important trends include the development of thinner films and liners; of conformable and semi-squeeze films which can replace direct printing on tubes and non-rigid containers; new ranges of cut&stack films with higher shrink values; clear film replacements for paper patch labels; and new ultra-destructible security films.

Avery Dennison's Performance Polymers division recently launched its roll-fed shrink label film (RFS). RFS allows end users with roll-fed application machines to label highly contoured containers, with a shrink up to 40 per cent. RFS can

be printed with solvent, water-based and UV inks by flexo and gravure presses.

The end user requires only an additional UV station to cure Avery's specially formulated UV adhesive, which produces a clean, strong and consistent seam, according to the company. High shrink initiation temperature means temperature control to prevent pre-shrinking during storage and transit is not such a problem.

ExxonMobil, meanwhile, has upgraded its Label-Lyte ROSO (Roll-On-Shrink-On), offering a developmental 40 micron higher-shrink film, which increases on-bottle shrinkage to approximately 20 per cent using an optimized shrink tunnel.

From Avery Dennison's Fasson division comes a new range of



film products including Fasson Global Co-Ex TC white and clear films designed to help global converters reduce inventory with a single material capable of decorating a range of end applications. Fasson 3.0 Mil MDO Films meet the need for full-squeeze, plastic tube applications. Matte clear and white Fasson 3.0 Mil polyolefin films are said to provide excellent print skin performance and are ideally suited for irregular surface or compound-curved containers.

Fasson S7200 Adhesive is Avery Dennison's latest product designed exclusively for the beverage market and post pasteurization labeling, claimed to incorporate improved hot and cold water resistance, wet out and wet stick – essential to adhere in refrigeration to backyard ice-cold coolers and well suited for clear-on-clear and PET venue bottle applications.

Green Bay Packaging has launched a line of BOPP films for both rigid and semi-squeeze applications, including a 2.0 mil top-coated clear, and 2.3 mil top-coated white. Combined with the new 102 permanent adhesive, which has short-term repositionability, high clarity, and conformability, and 12PT 1.18 mil polyester liner with slip control coating for better on-press registration, these structures can be used in most prime label applications.

For conformability applications FlexiClear and FlexiWhite films have been launched. In wall-to-wall squeeze tests, the bottles failed before the labels showed signs of darting, lifting, or fracturing, says the company. These two are available with the 102 adhesive and 12PT liner.

MACTac has launched a new self-adhesive construction for highly resistant labels on difficult substrates such as drums, wood, tyres and carpets, combining the benefits of Yupo's PP film and a hot melt rubber based adhesive. MACTac says MP 710 N hot melt adhesive shows excellent adhesion on a large range of substrates including wet surfaces. It has passed pasteurisation tests and BS 5609 approval is in progress. Yupo non top coated film offers outstanding thermal transfer printing properties and a 12 month outdoor resistance, says MACTac.

FLEXcon has introduced a series of print-treated 3.7 and 3.8 mil flexible polyethylene films, optiFLEX SQUEEZE, specifically engineered for full-squeeze tube applications to provide a permanent bond to specific areas of the tube container, such as the crimp, shoulder and the label overlap.

Building on its leading global position in the cellulose films sector, Innovia has launched a range of new films. Designed for pressure-sensitive labeling applications, NatureFlex NVLC is claimed to exhibit high clarity for use in 'no-label' applications. The film has a central cellulose core, to which print and adhesive-receptive biodegradable coatings have been added. The film is stiffer and more oriented than many biopolymers currently on the market, says Innovia. It is also static-free for easy handling.

Rayophane, meanwhile, is a regenerated cellulose label facestock developed specifically as an alternative to clear plastic films for the labeling of glass and plastic bottles. It eliminates the need for major capital expenditure typically required to install new pressure sensitive labeling equipment, and should

run on any existing wet glue applicator line. Rayophane has a low barrier to water vapor, and using special coatings, Innovia Films is able to fine-tune this natural characteristic to produce a film with the optimum permeability to allow fast drying of wet glue adhesives.

Rayophane labels can be removed using traditional industrial caustic washing equipment to allow bottles to be used in a returnable stream. The material has been qualified by the German body Versuchs und Lehranstalt für Brauerei (VLB) for this use. Cellulose film will sink in water and washed-off labels show minimal curl, allowing effective label waste collection.

The water permeability performance of Rayophane also plays a role in allowing caustic wash water to penetrate through the label and attack the adhesive. This applies to both wet glue and pressure sensitive applied labels. Innovia says the wood pulp used in the manufacture of Rayophane is sourced exclusively from plantations operating sustainable forestry principles.

At the same time Innovia Films has also expanded its range of specialty BOPP films for Variable Information Printing. Rayoface WTR is a white label film with a proprietary topcoat which significantly reduces print temperature requirements and increases print speed on a wide range of wax/resin systems, says the company. WTR sister film, Rayoface VTR, has the same top coating, but on a high yield cavitated base film. Print temperatures can be reduced because of the insulator effect of the cavitated film.

Clarifoil, the cellulose acetate film used for print lamination, pressure sensitive labels and tapes, has been accredited under EN 13432, which covers 'requirements for packaging recoverable through composting and biodegradation'. The EN 13432 accreditation is internationally recognised and is equivalent to the American ASTM D6400 standard. The accreditation covers all Clarifoil surface finishes – gloss, matt, semitone and satiné up to 106 microns.

Arjobex has developed a new material combining the properties of its proprietary expanded HDPE films and ultra

New capacity

UPM Raflatac is set to double its European film capacity with the completion of a new film lamination line. 'UPM Raflatac has succeeded excellently with the aim set a few years ago to seek strong growth in films. This sizeable investment in new production capacity shows our continued commitment to serving our customers and meeting their growing needs for high-quality film products,' says Jan-Erik Forsström, senior vice president, Europe.

The new lamination line enables the production of thinner films, particularly for personal care and beverage industries.

Treofan officially announced a \$45 million expansion in their Americas manufacturing facility. A significant percentage of this new capacity will be dedicated to multilayer, coextruded label films. The company will transfer label films production from Europe to its Mexican plant in 2007 and will introduce several new products.

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destructibility by delamination. Once applied on the packaging, the new Polyart TE label delaminates if there is any attempt at removal. Also this year, Arjobex is set to release Polyart certified for use with RFID applications. Its water, chemical, and tear resistance along with ESD immunity, will protect the electronics and print of an RFID tag in hostile situations. During the print process itself, the superior cushioning provided by Polyart will protect the connection of the chip to antenna in the tag, thus reducing waste in the production cycle, says the manufacturer.

Leading Indian PS materials manufacturer Weldon Celloplast has launched non-residue tamper evident void security labels. When removed, these labels do not stain or leave any residue on the surface. The word 'void' is not readable until the label is peeled off from the surface on which it is applied. The label is rendered unusable on removal.

Gombau has launched two new products. Label Drum is a product targeted at drum chemical labelling applications complying with BS5609. Secur Label UD is a new tamper evident film with a structure which causes multiple film delamination when label removal is attempted. This ultra-delaminable security product allows normal die-cutting and matrix stripping. Secur Label UD has a white matt top coated finishing, which permits all the label printing processes; letterpress, flexo, screen, offset, thermal transfer, hot foil etc. It is supplied in combination with GSP06 adhesive.

NAStar Inc. has introduced a white polyolefin on its T1055 Temporary Adhesive, which compliments its existing BCZ5055, a pearlescent white polypropylene with Temporary Adhesive. TT Polyolefin is a 3.0 mil Matte White Coated Polypropylene based film. The coated film surface offers excellent ink adhesion and Thermal Transfer printability, says the company. The product is manufactured with a 40# liner. Coupled with NAStar's Temporary Adhesive, applications for TCZ4055 include distribution labels, including tote & bin labels and picking & shipping labels. Other industrial applications include work in process labels, window labels, candle labels, and labels for mirror and glass manufacturers.

Neenah Paper, the company derived from the separation of the technical papers division of Kimberley Clark, has launched a new range of strength films. Multitask films are designed for high strength label and tag applications where a high quality print result is also required. The products will be sold direct and through global distributors including Wrapid in the UK.

Nordenia's latest 60 μ m polyolefin label film is claimed to combine excellent optical properties with good dispensability, die-cuttability, squeezability, conformability, dimensional stability and water resistance. The film is finding particular applications labeling small radius tubs following its accreditation by leading global standards bodies.

Intercoat aims to increase converters' productivity by producing its clear-on-clear materials in exact 2,000 running meter lengths to match up with hot foil products supplied to exactly this specification. Intercoat will also be offering net widths and splice free at no extra cost to allow efficient printing of clear-on-clear labels without interruptions from splices or roll shortages. This follows a long process of working with its supply chain partners and optimization of internal processes. ■

News in brief

Dates set for Harper Flexographic Solutions Tour

Harper GraphicSolutions has announced the dates for the 2007 Harper Flexographic Solutions Tour. Once again, industry experts will join the Harper GraphicSolutions team for a series of free one-day seminars that focus on trouble-shooting pre-press and print room problem areas, and cover the latest trends to improve print quality and press efficiency.

The dates, cities and venues for this year's tour are as follows: Dallas, Texas, February 22; Mesa, Arizona, March 15; Columbus, Ohio, March 28; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, April 11; Chicago, Illinois, May 17; Atlanta, Georgia, June 21.

First United Kingdom customers install Label Traxx

Tailored Solutions, developer of the Label Traxx print business management software for flexographic narrow web label printers and converters, has installed Label Traxx at two United Kingdom customers. These installations – at Hamilton Adhesive Labels in Leicester, England, and CV Labels in Irvine, Scotland – mark the introduction of Label Traxx into the United Kingdom, and follow the recent opening of a Tailored Solutions office to serve the European market.

Top performers force others to raise their game, says research

A staggering 91 per cent of last year's sales growth in the UK labels industry went to just 22 firms, according to a new analysis of the market by industry commentators Plimsoll Publishing.

The flipside of the coin is that many others are struggling to survive in an atmosphere of declining sales and increasing debt, with at least 73 staring failure in the face.

The assessment confirms that constant rounds of consolidation are creating 'super companies' that are exerting an increasing control over the market. Most of the companies in question are large, with sales over £10m. But four have sales of less than that – an indication that it is not simply a case of smaller firms being squeezed out.

The recently published research includes an individual analysis of 440 companies in the labels sector and shows the impact these increasingly powerful companies are exercising in the market.

David Pattison, senior research analyst, commented: 'Looked at separately these 22 super companies are great news for the industry. Yet the reality is much more disturbing. These companies are forcing such intense competition that others are battling for survival.'



The Nilpeter MO offset press has been a trendsetter ever since its launch in 1994

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Offset on a roll?

Is offset's place in the labeling industry set to grow? **Barry Hunt** puts the process into context

It may be just a ripple on a placid pool, but there are signs of increased activity on the offset front. For example, Nilpeter says it will increase the sales budget for its MO-Line by 50 per cent in the current trading year. Then there is Gidue, which through its highly automated Xpannd offset press has hopes of changing flexo printers' perceptions of the process. Whatever the outcome, we are still talking about a relatively narrow segment of the labeling industry. While it has led a greater penetration of pressure-sensitive labeling within the wine and spirits industries, offset is associated mainly with the healthcare, toiletries and cosmetics sectors, with some pharmaceutical labeling. Of course, these are also prime added-value markets for UV flexo printers, but offset's position in these sectors is fairly strong. One explanation is that the buyers and brand managers of the multinational manufacturers of such products work in an offset-oriented environment. As in the commercial world at large, offset accounts for most of their promotional needs.

In labeling it has become strongly associated with the development of combination presses. This gained a substantial boost in 1994 when Nilpeter introduced the 330-mm wide M-3300 offset press. Seen as an ambitious gamble at the time, it eventually gained a niche foothold, mainly among the larger, quality-conscious converters with fairly deep pockets. Not surprisingly most have been European, as Jakob Landberg, Nilpeter's sales and marketing director confirms: 'These types of companies tend to deal with the larger globalized clients. They naturally seek converters who can combine consistent quality for their labels and packaging with keen pricing. Traditionally, the quality levels expected of offset have been less of a determinant in certain markets, especially in the USA, which generally depends largely on water-based flexo printing. Nevertheless, we are seeing increased interest in UV rotary offset from several large American converting groups with global accounts.'

Typical of the large integrated groups whose plants include some form of offset printing are CCL, Skanem, Pago, Rako Etiketten and WS Packaging. Rotary offset has also been adopted by several large sheet-fed offset printers of glue-applied or cut-

and-stack labels. Here the aim has been to raise productivity by combining reel-fed production with inline finishing. Servo-driven narrow or mid-web offset presses can also offer an economic alternative to wide-web flexo or gravure presses. This has led to several sales to companies producing shorter runs of flexible packaging products, including shrink sleeves and wraparounds.

Technical differences

It's worth recapping that the planographic offset process is very different from the direct imaging flexo process. Naturally, this has a bearing on offset's position in a flexo-dominated environment. At the platemaking stage, the image areas of the metal plates are exposed with an ink receptive coating. On the press, they are dampened with one set of rollers and inked with another set. The ink adheres to the image area and the dampening solution adheres to the plate's non-image areas. As the plate cylinder rotates it transfers the printed image to a rubber blanket. The image transfers to the substrate as it passes between the blanket and impression cylinders. To achieve the high resolution for which offset is noted, the ink/water ratio must be finely balanced to give a sharp separation of the printing and non-printing areas.

All this requires a lot of roller power. A typical offset print unit may have upwards of a dozen fixed and oscillating rollers, including two or three forme rollers to transfer the UV-curable ink to the blanket cylinder. Both the inking and dampening systems require high levels of automated control. UV offset inks are also thinner and more paste-like compared with flexo inks, but they give excellent gloss, color depth and metallics. A properly set-up press will produce pin-sharp shadow and highlight halftones with minimal dot gain for accurate flesh tones and fine vignettes.

With there shorter ink trains and relatively simple anilox roll assemblies, flexo presses are very much simpler. This contributes to fast ink changeovers without requiring automatic wash-ups. The process is noted for laying down uniform coatings

Gallus' RCS 330 offset press



of inks and varnishes to achieve consistent solid areas. The latest UV flexo inks also give flexible thicknesses and can deliver opaque white backgrounds when producing clear filmic labels, as well as clearly-defined bar codes in all colors. In fact halftone reproduction compares well with that of offset. Naturally, the quality issue figures largely in comparisons between the two processes.

Among the many other pros and cons, the issue of handling jobs with different repeat sizes is hard to ignore. Flexo offers far more flexibility at lower operating costs, although as ever there are contrary views. For example, in a recent 'offset backgrounder' Federico d'Annunzio, Gidue's joint managing director, considered it was not necessarily such a problem: 'It's true that UV flexo can print any repeat size with limited investment costs, but most converters operating rotary offset presses are comfortable to work with just four to five repeats. These can cover most of their existing needs.' He added that for certain niche applications, especially wine labels, offset does not have flexo's limitations with rough or textured materials: 'Offset can print on most substrate textures without significantly increasing operating costs.'

Despite this, most converters consider any move into offset as being both impractical and hugely expensive. Manufacturers ease the burden for prospective buyers who think otherwise by offering post-installation training schemes. They can also point to the highly-automated nature of modern presses. Designed to keep operator involvement to a minimum, this factor helps explain why most competent press operators can be expected to produce saleable quality products within a comparatively short time. Of course, unless they rely on trade sources, offset converts must also invest in some expensive repro and platemaking kit. They can console themselves with the fact that an offset plate costs five to ten times less to make compared with a polymer flexo plate.

Digital imaging techniques for plates and sleeves using CTP systems are now commonplace for both processes. For flexo these digitalized techniques represent a timely move towards the

adoption of industry-wide standards of color measurement and on-press ink control of the type that offset printers take for granted. Nevertheless, much still needs to be done before UV flexo shakes off its 'near-offset' quality tag. Arguably, this is a non-issue anyway for most of the industry's applications, especially as printing offers so many ways of delivering acceptable levels of reproduction. The issue surely turns on how well the graphic designer makes use of the respective variations in different print processes.

Press manufacturers

As to the choice of presses, the narrow web offset market is surprisingly extensive. As with letterpress, press ranges can include several types of semi-rotary designs. Aimed at the ultra-short run market, their intermittent web feeds offer many variable repeat sizes. Combined with single-pass die cutting (flatbed or rotary), hot foiling and other finishing techniques, semi-rotaries deliver a flexible range of output options on most substrates. In some case they can provide an economical alternative to digital color printing.

As noted above, offset is an ideal primary process for combination printing. With over 175 presses installed, Nilpeter has a sound platform to promote its third-generation MO-Line for labels and packaging, which now includes a servo-driven version. The company has developed a computerized system to obtain perfect ink/water balances relative to specific press speeds. It claims to reduce set-up times to 15 minutes for individual units, so reducing set-up wastage and facilitating smaller run lengths. 'MO operators can therefore maintain consistent levels of quality whatever the size of the run, anywhere in the world,' says Landberg. 'It's a big advantage especially as end-users are reluctant to order large quantities of labels for their fast-moving consumer goods, so risking expensive waste.'

Gallus's direct drive RCS-330 uses a platform architecture for interchangeable print and finishing units for a 330-mm printing width. The latest UV offset units were developed as a joint project with Heidelberg its commercial partner. They employ the company's Alcolor dampening system as incorporated in its sheet-fed technology. The RCS-330 features an automated start-up method with a low idling speed to reduce material waste (see *L&L* Issue 6, p15). Other processes can include UV flexo, screen, foiling and UV gravure.

The Xpannd, developed by Gidue with Nuova Castagnoli, links operating parameters to a form of digital storage, said to control every press variable. The Nemo PC interface operating system also links up with the user's MIS to send job orders, planning and

Gidue's Xpannd offset press



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Nilpeter says it will increase the sales budget for its MO-Line by 50 per cent in the current trading year

additional information directly to the operator through a multifunctional touch screen. Sanki's label and packaging presses include the SKP series of rotary offset combination machines.

Several manufacturers offer the hybrid waterless offset method, which does away with the need to fine-tune the ink/water balance. Instead it requires precise thermostatic control over ink temperatures using special silicone-coated plates. Two established semi-rotary models with waterless offset are Codimag's Viva 340 and Etipol's Combi 2000.

Other intermittent-feed offset presses include the Gallus TCS 250. It now offers the Uviterno 'intelligent' UV lamp head with variable power output to save total energy costs. Last year Iwasaki introduced the five-color TR2, based on a proven design. The Sanjo PO3, now with dial-in repeat changes, has been available for several years, while the FX series is Shiki Corp's semi-rotary offering.

With the exception of the former RDP Marathon, now part of Drent Goebel, most North American label press manufacturers have paid scant regard to offset. There are no signs at present that Aquaflex, Mark Andy, Comco et al will be anything other than firmly committed to water-based or UV flexo. One limiting factor is that few manufacturers have the technical ability or commercial freedom to offer bespoke print modules on an OEM basis. Nevertheless, changing market conditions bring new dynamics. Mark Andy actually developed a prototype waterless offset unit in the mid-90s before dropping the project for technical reasons.

This leaves an interesting grouping of narrow and mid-web presses from manufacturers previously identified with the forms and mailer markets. Drent Goebel's shaftless VSOP offset sleeve press – based on the Vision – is among the more innovative designs.

It has installed around 40 during the last three years with six going to North American customers. A method of mounting lightweight sleeves with a 'staggered' profile avoids the usual non-printing gap introduced by the plate lockup. Owners can compete with printers using flexo seamless sleeves or engraved gravure cylinders. The VSOP also facilitates a fast and economical way of switching repeat lengths.

Edelmann Graphics' label/package press range includes the Evo-Print. One of its global distributors, Matik North America, set up a web offset division with Christoph Davis as sales manager. He was formerly sales director with CP Graphics, Edelmann's UK distributor, and additionally handles Codimag semi-rotary offset presses and Omet UV flexo presses for Matik. In 2005 Muller Martini entered the label and packaging market with the 20.5-inch wide Alprinta-V press, again with sheet-fed printers as possible users. Rotatek diversified from building essentially business forms presses in the late 1980s to making offset/flexo combination presses, such as the 440-mm wide Combi and bespoke versions of the Perfect web-offset series for label printing.

Common to all these developments is interdeck UV curing, which benefits from a new generation of compact, energy-efficient lamp units. They have ensured good productivity of a variety of substrates at high press speeds. It will be therefore interesting to see whether the latest compact, electron-beam drying units will have a similar impact. Compared with UV curing this lampless 'on/off' method offers even lower energy costs. Also, by having a fully variable power supply, the drying rate can match press speeds. So far, EB's most prominent application is in food packaging thanks to the immediate drying of its high viscosity inks. Examples include the EZCure-1 stand-alone dryer from Energy Sciences Inc running inline with a seven-unit VSOP from Drent Goebel. Late last year Rotatek also announced it was fitting dryers from Advanced Electron Beams for the beta version of its new Universal shaftless press.

All this gives an insight into an often under-regarded aspect of print technology in our industry. Of course, having only just arrived on the scene, UV flexo is not going to roll over in the face of any perceived or actual increase in offset usage. Both processes involve hefty investment costs, although neither should be seen in isolation. Offset especially requires to be considered in the wider scheme of things. This means assessing productivity gains based on the type of Total Cost of Ownership principals commonly found in other industries. Incidentally, TCO linked with the use of direct drive/servo offset technology was discussed at a recent Gallus offset-based seminar promoting 'industrialized' production. It adds yet another dimension to the issue. Ultimately it all comes down to how well converters can meet the market's future demands within a globalized context. ■



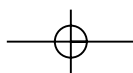
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Going lean

Smaller label converters can completely transform their business by the comprehensive implementation of a Lean Manufacturing program supported by focused investment, as the example of a UK company shows. **Andy Thomas** reports

Label Apeel, based in Leicester in the UK, has implemented a Lean Manufacturing program to focus its energies on developing customer relationships. The project is part of a £750K investment program which has included a Shuttleworth management information system (MIS) and an 8-color MPS EF300 press.

More than half way through the project, managing director Stuart Kellock says it has turned the business around, increasing turnover by 10 per cent and putting profits into double figures. 'Two years ago things were tough, and that was a good thing. It made us look at the business, what we produced and who we sold to,' Kellock explains.

The turnaround involved a combination of investment in new machinery, a critical analysis of customer profiles, and the implementation of a Lean manufacturing program supported by the new MIS system. Today the £3.2M family-run company employs 44 people working across two shifts.

Label Apeel used the services of consultancy Vision in Print to help implement its Lean Manufacturing program, which involved a series of intensive workshops to identify where the business could gain efficiencies and develop action plans.

'The process brings out the natural leaders,' says Kellock. 'One press operator on the nightshift took control of the layout of the machine, while a lady operating the rewinder became a cleanliness champion, insisting that other workers cleaned up after their shifts and making the rewind area the cleanest part of the factory.'

Other 'no cost' improvements have included moving the location of pre-press. Previously it was on the ground floor with production on the first floor. 'Ten minutes were lost between jobs because pre-press elements were not available, so we have moved the plate making department to be nearer production and improved communication between the two departments. A light now flashes in pre-press to show which machine is waiting,' says Kellock.

The Shuttleworth MIS system has proved a critical element in implementing Lean. 'To implement Lean Manufacturing you have to be able to measure and report. The first thing we noticed

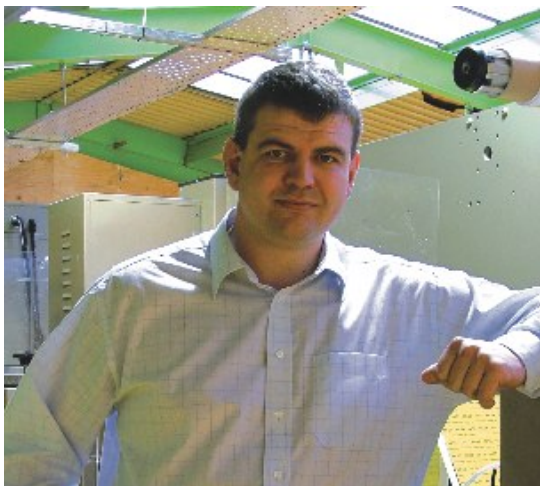
is that the Shuttleworth system helps keep control of finished stock. We can identify stock which never moves, so we save on storage space and this has a big impact on cash flow. Before, we had stock which hadn't moved for six months and we didn't know about it! The system also helps us manage customers' stock more efficiently and balance lower costs for us in producing longer runs against the cost of holding stock.'

Stock management will be further enhanced once the Shuttleworth MIS can talk directly to Raflatac's materials ordering system.

Ambitious goals have been set by Kellock: 'With the control we now have, we would like to get to the point where finished stock is a thing of the past – where makeready is so fast, we don't need stock. Our customers are in the food and retail sectors, where turnaround time of three days is normal but is not fast enough for most people. One job for 300,000 labels went through from order to finished goods in five hours – so why can't we get every job through in five hours?'

Since purchasing the MPS EF300 press, the company has seen a drastic reduction in makeready times. 'The quality on the MPS is second to none and it provides clear savings just from make ready times alone. We are now making ready in 25 minutes instead of a couple of hours. Press set-up waste is vitally important too. We currently get through





Label Apeel managing director Stuart Kellock

as much as 100m of material in set-up and this will be greatly reduced. I anticipate further material cost savings to be in the region of between £10-20,000 a year.'

Kellock estimates that the Lean program and the MIS have together saved the company £20K last year alone, expected to rise to £30K in year three of the project.

Customer focused

A significant result of implementing the Shuttleworth MIS has been to cut manual intervention and allowed repetitive tasks to be automated, freeing up staff for more productive work and helping shift the company's focus to customer relations management (CRM).

'It was the tool we needed once we started thinking from what was a customer benefit,' explains Kellock. 'It means we can move people from raising estimates to doing something more important in customer relations management. CRM is today not just for the sales team, but for the whole company. This business is all about relationships – of our top ten customers, eight have been here for five years.'

As part of this service, the company works hard to ensure that artwork is correct when it arrives, and has published a PDF of tips to help designers and end users produce print ready artwork. 'You should be wary of artwork companies which do not speak to printers,' warns Kellock.

The document also encourages end users to take advantage of the capabilities of modern in-line presses. 'For example we have been pushing the benefits of cold foiling hard since we built our own system six years ago! Another example is a manufacturer of fishbait, who we helped design an 8-color label for a market which does not traditionally use complex design – and he now outsells his competitors by 5:1.'

Label Apeel has just completed its first flexible packaging job on the MPS press, converting heat seal confectionery wraps on 50 micron unsupported film. 'It was a local company, and we went to them and said we had bought a machine which the manufacturer said would do flexible packaging. The cooling system on the MPS, the automatic registration and the servo-controlled printheads allowed us to print the film and hold register.' Kellock believes this opens up new business opportunities for narrow web converters. 'The food industry – and particularly the Own (private) brands – work on a ten day turnaround, and we can beat the big flexible packaging companies on turnaround.'

A project for gaining the BRCIOP (British Retail Consortium Institute of Packaging) food hygiene accreditation and standards is already underway. ■

Implementing an MIS

Installing a management information system demands a close relationship between converter and supplier.

'Shuttleworth was able to demonstrate that it really understood our business and our core values,' says Stuart Kellock. 'During the evaluation process they provided satisfactory answers to our questions and delivered practical solutions to our needs, wants and aspirations. When it came time to install the system we had two of Shuttleworth's application and support people with us on site during the entire process. This was very valuable as they helped to guide us through the system every step of the way.'

Kellock believes that it was Shuttleworth's engagement of the company's staff during the implementation process that was responsible for bringing about a more flexible approach to later problem solving and subsequently helped the company to change the way in which it thinks about its business.

'This really paid off for us because the process helped our staff to engage with the MIS and they were able to specify just exactly what they wanted the MIS to do for them. Since installing the system we have been able to evaluate our business model and strategise much more, and this has resulted in making specific areas of our business more profitable. We are also working more efficiently as a team and have identified and increased business from several product lines that were underperforming but have now become more profitable. It really is helping us to monitor and make inroads into improving the overall business as well as our cash flow – which for me is the tangible proof that the MIS is working for us.'

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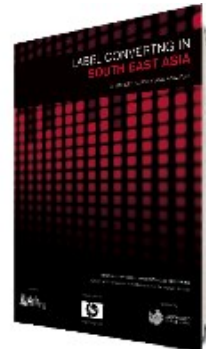
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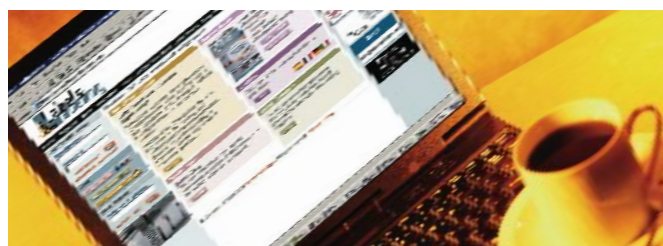
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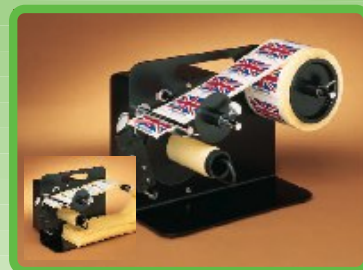
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Degraf launches plate processors

James Quirk reports from Degraf's first International Open event in Monte Carlo, where several new plate processing systems were launched

Degraf, Italian manufacturer of equipment for the production of flexo plates, hosted 180 customers, partners, and journalists at its first International Open event. The event, held in Monte Carlo, welcomed visitors from 52 countries and was attended by large delegations from the US, Far East, and South America.

The company used the occasion to launch a series of new products and to acknowledge the ongoing support of its distributors and OEMs. Organized in association with AZ, a subsidiary of Degraf, and Mekrom, the company's main distributor, the two-day event celebrated the company's 20 years in the flexo industry.

Degraf, which sells its products through major plate manufacturers such as Dupont, Flint Group, Kodak, MacDermid, and Asahi, displayed ten machines at the event, four of which are new this year: the 'Concept' processors 305 P, 505 XP, and 505 DW, and a multi-process unit, Concept 305 EDLF.

The Concept 305 P is the updated version of Degraf's 301 P, which was also displayed at the event. The 305 P is a processor for flexo plates of up to 92x120cm (36x48"), which allows the operator to remove all brushes manually – allowing maintenance and cleaning operations to be simplified. As with all Degraf washing units, the movement rotating cylindrical brushes, which oscillate in different directions, reduce processing time and eliminate plate shifting, according to the company.

Concept 505 XP is claimed to be the first wash-out unit in the world that can process flexo plates of up to 132x203cm (52x80") in batch or in-line mode.

In batch mode, the plate is loaded into the washing bed at high speed. Comprehensive washing is ensured by 22 oscillating cylindrical brushes, which rotate over the entire surface in opposing directions. When this operation is completed, the plate passes to the exit section and the machine is ready to load the next plate. Working in batch mode is particularly useful in the resurfacing of individual plates and in non-standard or occasional production, as well as in the use of extra-thick plates (exceeding 4 mm), offering significant time savings compared to the inline/incremental mode.

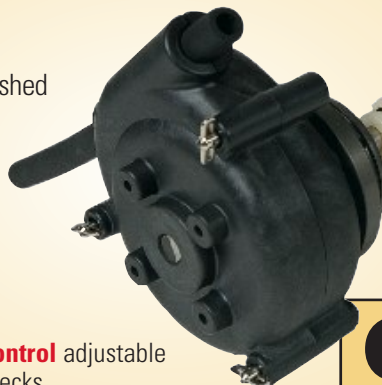
Concept 505 DW, a wash-out unit launched in May 2006, is specifically designed to allow the production of analogue and digital plates using a single piece of equipment. The machine can process plates of up to 132x203cm (52x80"). The processor is equipped with a prewashing section, which removes the carbon layer from the digital plates, which is then collected in a



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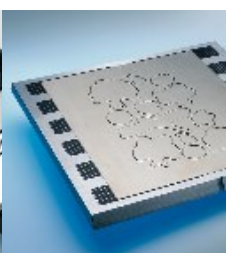
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(L-r) His Excellency René Novella, secretary of state for Monte Carlo; and Degraf president Riccardo de Caria at the gala dinner at the Hotel de Paris

separate tank. This approach ensures that the washing solvent is always non-contaminated.

The first Concept 505 DW was installed at NuMaber, a flexo trade shop based near Treviso, Italy. Impressed with the new unit, the company installed a second machine in May 2006.

Concept 305 EDLF is a multi-process unit for exposing, drying and finishing flexo plates. It can process plates of up to 92x120cm (36x48"), and contains a new automatic system for the opening of the lid, allowing the operator fast and safe access to the equipment from three sides.

Concept 305 EDLF is also equipped with a lamp temperature control which keeps lamps at 45°C to maintain optimum UV output. A controlled cooled bed considerably reduces oxygen emissions, with the consequent decrease of blurring problems.

This multi-process unit also includes a drying section made up of four drawers, each one with its own timer, where the air flows uniformly for a quick evaporation of the solvent, resulting in a general reduction of process time. The finishing section is made up of 20 UV-A and 19 UV-C lamps, which can be activated together or individually to ensure maximum flexibility for a better management of the equipment.

Alongside the new machines, Degraf also gave visitors the chance to see Concept 201 HTD; an all-in-one unit which can manage the entire flexo production cycle for plates up to 66x81cm (26x32"); Concept 400 ECLF, a multi-process unit for plate exposing and finishing; Concept 501 ETL, a large format exposure unit; and the Concepts 501 D and 501 LF, a large format dryer and light finisher combination.

Degraf used the event to underline its continuing strategy of selling its machines through a network of OEMs, partners and resellers around the world. 'We do not like to sell directly to the customer,' said Jacques Dutard. 'We want to create the demand from our five OEMs, instead of just making the machines that they ask for.'

The company's emphasis is on investing in R&D and developing new solutions – it lacks a commercial structure strong enough to enter the market independently. Géry Dubois, sales manager for Degraf's main distributor Mekrom, reiterated: 'Selling directly necessitates a local support network and therefore great resources.'

During the event, Degraf thanked its OEMs and partners in an award ceremony. OEMs Asahi, Dupont, Flint Group, Kodak and MacDermid were all acknowledged, as well as customers NuMaber and JV Imaging, and Asia Pacific equipment service leader Remi Loh.

The two-day event culminated in a gala dinner in the luxurious setting of the Hotel de Paris in Monte Carlo, where guests were entertained by the Philharmonic Orchestra of Nice. ■



Welcome to the World of self-adhesive films

Due to intense demand from the market, Intercoat decided to produce its **Clear on Clear** Material (no Label look) in exactly 2000 m lengths, this is to accommodate the high number of converters using hot foil products which are supplied exactly to this specification.

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suppliers raw materials with less defects and optimal roll lengths. Process planning and an enhanced quality control avoid unnecessary raw material cuts which appear as splices. Higher machine speeds increase the daily output giving additional flexibility to fulfill the huge variety of demands, placed upon us. Due to a careful improvement on all the above mentioned process phases, culminated in the new Clear on Clear labelstock emerging as our new standard. With this innovative launch coupled together with the market renowned quality, Intercoat are truly amongst the leaders in the industry within this segment of the label business.



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Wet glue forum

The European Wet Glue Label Association recently held a seminar focusing on the trends and future prospects for the wet glue sector in Europe

ELMMA, the European wet glue label association, held its fifth wet glue label forum in Nuremberg last November, focusing on trends, developments and future prospects for wet glue labels in the beverage segment.

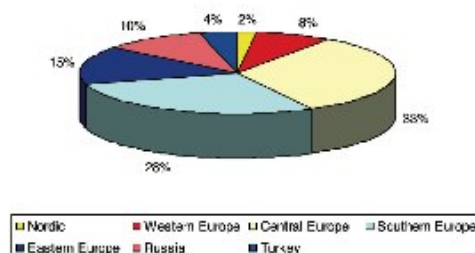
In his overview presentation, Corey Reardon, of AWA Alexander Watson Associates presented a summary of results of AWA's Global Glue Applied Label Market & Technology Review, released recently. According to the study, the world label market amounted to 36.8 billion square meters in 2005. Wet glue labels held a market share of just over 50 per cent of this total, against 39.4 per cent for self-adhesive labels, 7.3 per cent for sleeves, 1.8 per cent for in-mold labels and 1.3 per cent for other product decoration technologies. Nearly 84 per cent of the total volume of wet glue labels consumed (18.5 billion square meters) was hot melt based. Wet glue label consumption is forecast to grow between 4.75 – 5 per cent annually till 2010.

In 2005, with 6.1 billion square meters, Europe consumed about one third of total wet glue label demand worldwide. Contrary to the global trend, about 70 per cent of this volume is based on cold glue applications.

While to a large extent, the demand for self-adhesive labels is driven by 'smart' and VIP (variable information) applications – which represent more than half of self-adhesive label demand – wet glue technology focuses on the primary label market segments, said Reardon. 'In that segment, wet glue is still the dominant technology in Europe with a market share of almost 70 per cent,' he argued.

Looking at the regional division of wet glue markets, Central Europe and Southern Europe together in 2005 accounted for more than 60 per cent of total wet glue label demand in Europe. Whereas last year, demand growth in these regions slowed down to 1.3 and 2.2 per cent respectively, the newly emerging markets in Russia, Turkey and Eastern Europe recorded growth rates in the range between five and six per cent.

Wet glue label demand in Europe by region, 2005



Reardon looked at the future drivers of wet glue label demand in Europe. On the negative side he cited:

- A static or declining beer market in western and central Europe;
- A growing beer market in Russia and eastern Europe;
- Growing use of wrap-around labels on carbonated soft drinks and mineral waters;
- Growing use of direct printed cans for soft drinks and beers, especially in eastern Europe and Russia;
- Growing competition from alternative labeling technologies like shrink sleeves for energy drinks and stretch sleeves for mineral waters;
- The present low quality image of cold glue labels;

The positive factors for wet glue include the significant installed base of cold glue equipment, the technical suitability of wet glue labels to multi trip bottles, and the emerging development of filmic materials for cold glue. Reardon stressed that wet glue labels currently still offer the lowest total cost outside direct printing.

'However,' he added, 'self-adhesive labeling technology is catching up and higher application speeds are challenging the position of wet glue labels from a total cost perspective.'

Friedrich Tschoggel, head of marketing and application consultancy at Brigl & Bergmeister, then highlighted the influence of labels on the marketing success of beverages, stressing the example of water. Tschoggel introduced delegates to Water Label World, a platform for the wet glue label industry developed in co-operation between designers, press manufacturers, diecutting equipment suppliers and label paper producers. The consortium aims to introduce a systematic approach to R&D in order to enhance the value of labels to brand owners. 'Water is the business of this century. To capture these opportunities, the wet glue industry should speak with one voice,' he concluded.

At the ELMA General Assembly members elected a new Board. Peter Lightfoot of Buckleys Colour Printers (UK) was elected as president. Having completed his term as president, Ragnar Brynildsen (NovaGroup, Norway) will continue past president, while founding president Jacques Schor (CPC, France) who also chaired the forum in 2006 and Zagorsky (Ekotek, Russia) were elected as board members. ■

Smart business

Timestrip has developed a new technology to secure pharmaceutical supply chains and looks set to license its technology in the coming months. **Danielle Jerschefske** reports

A year after *Labels & Labeling* first reported on smart label specialist Timestrip, the company's technology for monitoring elapsed time has proven itself in the commercial market place.

The technology has been integrated into Hamilton Beach/Proctor Silex's True Air range of air filters and into Proctor and Gamble's Febreze products, while consumers can now purchase Timestrip fridgestrips, freezerstrips and room temperature strips online at Timestriponline.com. Soon consumers will be able to view and buy the products on the American shopping network, QVC. 'There has been a wave of people ordering Timestrips online and 95 per cent of them are American,' says joint CEO Paul Freedman. 'The product provides important waste reduction benefits to a household.'

The latest product developed by Timestrip is the iStrip, designed specifically for the pharmaceutical industry to determine if a product has been accidentally frozen along the supply chain.

'The iStrip is like the Holy Grail of the industry for monitoring temperature decreases,' says Paul Freedman, pointing out that in 2005, Novartis had to recall over a half million vaccines because some had been frozen. The shipments are only monitored by the case, not on a unit level. 'Not all half million vaccines were frozen, but they couldn't tell which ones were from those that were not. This technology could save lives.'

iStrip technology was launched in September and is currently undergoing testing. As an example, one South African company is trialling iStrip to monitor that blood has been maintained at a temperature at or below ten degrees Celsius for up to 35 days.

Timestrip is looking at other industries where iStrip has potential applications, including fresh fish – very dangerous if defrosted and frozen again – fresh flowers, which need to be transported at refrigerated temperatures, paints, agro-chemicals and LCDs.

Product development on Timestrip has also continued. 'This year we have really been focusing on time-delayed promotions, where a hidden message is revealed after a certain amount of time,' says joint CEO Reuben Isbitsky. 'It can be used on products such as sunscreen to let you know when to reapply. More potential uses lie in children's products, as well as anti-counterfeiting – keeping a barcode or message hidden that gets revealed after a period of time. These areas have not yet been fully explored.'

Isbitsky and Freedman are anxious to develop the US market,



Joint CEOs Paul Freedman and Reuben Isbitsky

and have had some success already. DayMark Food Safety Systems, for example, is promoting the use of Timestrips in commercial kitchens to aid restaurants in complying with Federal Food Codes. The indicator on the strip allows food service operators to efficiently identify the shelf life of perishable inventory, and thus helps notify kitchen staff when a product is no longer safe to serve.

In Europe the EU Food Hygiene Directive is a key selling point for European distributor Label Lord, part of the NSD Labeling Group, which has signed a three-year exclusive contract to supply Germany and Benelux.

Next year Timestrip is planning to license its technology more widely, as Reuben Isbitsky explained to *L&L*: 'To meet the demands of the huge potential market, we have to be able to license it out. There are so many markets – we can't be experts in all of them.' ■

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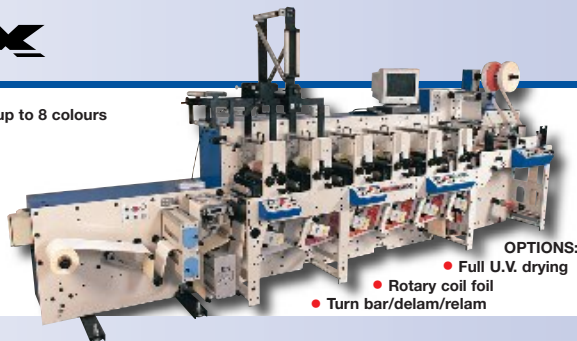
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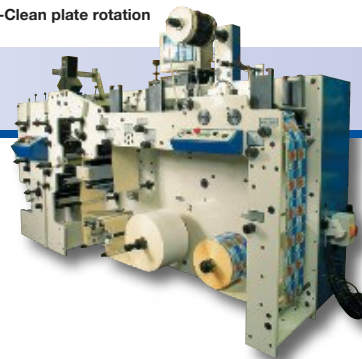
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New machine and move to US for DPR

The Italian manufacturer of slitters, rewinders and dispensers has launched a new product to help its move into the US market.

James Quirk reports

DPR is set to open its new US office in Charleston, West Virginia, in the coming months. Initially a distribution point, the company will ship 200 pieces of equipment to kick-start its new venture. The move is complimented by the launch of a new double dispenser, which managing director Enrico Panzeri believes to be perfect for the US market.

DPR is based in the small Italian town of Barlassina, north of Milan. The factory is directly next door to Panzeri's home, and there is an atmosphere of quiet domesticity that belies an ambitious level of productivity. DPR can produce over 300 machines per month, and manufacturing continues seven days a week.

The Double Dispenser DD01 was launched in October. It is able to dispense labels of varying type and size from two different rolls at the same time. For example, it can simultaneously apply one label containing product information and another with details of a special offer or discount – ideal for the food packaging sector.

'We regard this as a potentially very big machine for the US market,' says Panzeri.

DPR was present at Labelexpo Americas in Chicago in September. 'We made some good leads,' says Panzeri, 'but to do business in the US you have to be present in the market there.' While the initial plan is to ship units to the new office in bulk, Panzeri admits that long-term the company may manufacture in the US too.

The company is relatively young in the labels market, having manufactured its first rewinder just four years ago. But in this

short space of time DPR has developed a diverse range of products that serve companies in 16 countries on two continents. Its dominant market is Europe, with Italy, Spain, and Germany its key regions, but the company also has machines installed in Australia, New Zealand, and Latin America.

'Our core business was initially installing computers and other equipment into offices,' says Panzeri. 'I was asked to solve a labeling problem, and developed a rewinder that was such a success I ended up manufacturing a whole line of them.'

Now the company's aim is to break into new markets: DPR hopes that the office in the US will also lead to finding a distributor for Latin America. Panzeri is aware of the difficulty of serving foreign markets like the US from Italy. 'It is simply not possible to send units over from Italy one by one – but if we ship 200 at the same time and store them, it becomes viable.'

The machines will be serviced in the US – a part of a strategy for excellent customer service that Panzeri believes is crucial to success: 'Business can only be done nowadays if you provide a good service – if you can do that then the customer will stay with you.'

The letters DPR stand, fittingly, for Distribuzione, Produzione, Ricerca – or, in English, Distribution, Production and Research. The company prides itself on its versatility, and Panzeri loves the challenge of creating new products. 'If a customer asks me to make a machine, I do it and add it to my product line. As a result, I always know exactly what the market is after. I want DPR to be known by people as a company which produces special products.' ■



(Above) Luca Bortolon, foreign sales manager, and Enrico Panzeri, managing director; (right) The Double Dispenser DD01





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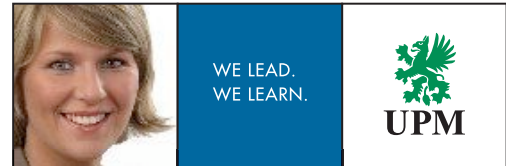
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Edale opens house

James Quirk reports from UK press manufacturer Edale's Open House

The recent Open House held at Edale's offices in Romsey, Hampshire, proved to be so popular that it was extended to an impressive four weeks instead of the planned two.

With large delegations attending from all over Europe, UK sales manager Andrew Morton admits: 'We've had a better response than we ever could have imagined.'

The main draw of the event was the company's new Lambda press, which comprises a range of offline options – the Lambda Booklet, Lambda Coater, Lambda Multi-Layer and Lambda RFID. The press can be configured to single or multiple web paths, and can even enable the running of multiple jobs simultaneously.

A Lambda RFID was on display, featuring Tamarack P500 RFID equipment and configured as an offline solution for inlay insertion.

The press, which can run to a maximum speed of 50 meters a minute, was launched at Labelexpo Americas in Chicago last year, where it received massive interest. 'The majority of enquiries at the moment are for the Lambda,' says Morton.

Also on display were the Alpha, Beta and Sigma presses. The Alpha, winner of the 2001 FlexoTech Innovation Award, is a compact start-up flexo press, available in 250 or 330mm web widths (10 or 13") and with up to five print stations. The company's best-selling press, with over 120 sold into around 30 countries since its launch in 2001, it is essentially a basic model that can be upgraded with add-ons normally only found on more expensive modular machines. Morton proudly reports that only one of those sold is now available on the second hand market.

The Alphas have mainly been sold into Europe, with nearly half of them in the UK (one impressed customer runs no less than eight). Edale America, established last year in Indiana, recently sold the company's first Alpha into the US market, and took orders for two more.

'We had been present in the US market for three years,' says Morton. 'But in order to show that we are serious about the market we felt we had to be present there. Having an office there increases the market's confidence in our products.'

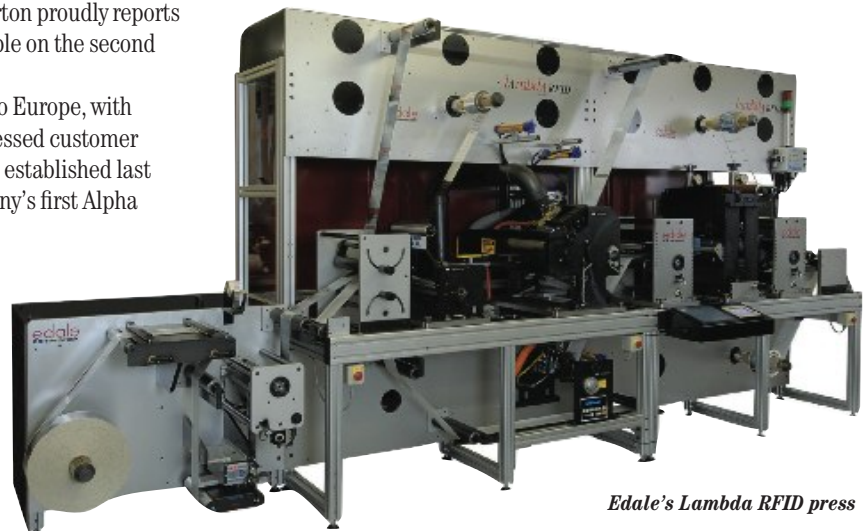
The Beta, also launched in 2001, is a line shaft driven modular flexo press whose open architecture lends itself to the value-added market (Edale has done five specialty installations in the last year for products including phone cards and lottery tickets). With up to fourteen print stations, the Beta is a flexible press available in 250 or 330mm web widths (10 or 13") that can run at up to 150 meters per minute.

The Sigma, Edale's gearless servo-driven packaging press, was launched in 2003. 'We recognized client's desire to go wider,' says Morton. 'So we began to look at servo technology.'

The company regards the Sigma as its flagship press, and it is available in web widths from 330 to 650mm (13 to 24") with a large number of print and rotary die stations. Edale is especially proud of the machine's flexibility, as every one is tailored to the customer's specific requirements.

'We used to build every press bespoke to customers' requests,' explains Morton. 'But as this took up a great deal of design resources, we decided to build a press that would be a platform to allow for versatility. The result is the Sigma.'

Edale has over 50 years of experience in manufacturing printing presses (there are over 300 over the company's early E250 flexo press installed around the world), and Morton puts this success down to a focus on customer service: 'If someone shops with you today,' he says, 'they should be able to shop with you for the rest of their lives.' ■



Edale's Lambda RFID press

Moving to the head of the class

Danielle Jerschefske reports from the fourth annual Phoenix Challenge Foundation Fundraising Luncheon

At the recent fourth annual Phoenix Challenge Foundation Fundraising Luncheon held in Charlotte, North Carolina, participants were excited to attend an event to support education for young students learning about the flexographic industry. All of the money raised at the event helps fund expenses for students participating in the annual Phoenix Challenge high school competition. Bettylyn Krafft of Krafft Printing Systems was instrumental in migrating the foundation to a non-profit in 2004 and has considerably improved its operation since.

For the past ten years the high school skills competition, held at the Central Piedmont Community College in Charlotte, has offered North American high school students the opportunity to show their stuff. Some of the difficult tasks they are to perform include: testing their ability to operate a flexographic press, their pre-press knowledge, plate making skills, written knowledge of flexography and their flexographic math skills. At last year's competition 23 teams competed with two students per team. This year, the Phoenix Challenge Foundation anticipates even more competing teams and even higher scores on the tests performed. Bettylyn is delighted with how the young participants are becoming increasingly more skilled as the flexographic knowledge is shared and the training continues.

A collegiate challenge will make its debut at the FFTA annual forum in Montreal Canada next spring. 'The demand for flexographic education is growing. The college students want to compete now,' Bettylyn says. The format of the competition will be set up a bit differently, however. College students will be tested more on their research skills over a period of a year, starting this year in Montreal. Then, at the next forum in 2008, competitors will present their findings and be judged on the quality of their research.

Bettylyn often looks to Ron and Katherine Harper for guidance. 'They are like my cheerleaders. Ron has been a mentor for me and I respect him as a businessperson,' Bettylyn tells *L&L*. It is obvious that the Harpers have passed their passion for education onto Bettylyn. 'She has been doing a wonderful job for the Foundation. We have been so pleased to see the growth and advancement already,' say Katherine and Ron Harper, dubbed the



(L-r) Margaret Harper Klutz, Katherine Harper and Natalie Harper all attended the Phoenix Challenge Foundation Luncheon

'undisputed founders of flexographic education.'

The Foundation wants the high school and collegiate Challenges to continue to grow, but holding these competitions is not cheap. 'We are in the process of seeking major financial supporters to help keep the momentum moving forward,' Bettylyn says. 'Fundraisers help, but industry leaders really need to get more involved.'

Current industry sponsors of the competition include: All Printing Resources, Anderson & Vreeland, Avery Dennison, Benton Graphics, Canadian Flexographic Training Committee, Dunwoody College, Flexo Exchange, Flexographic Technical Association, Graymills, Harper Corporation of America, J R Cole Industries, Krafft Printing Systems, Mark Andy, Mastergraphics, RBcor, Rotometrics, Water Ink Technologies, and Workflow One. Because of the priceless support these leaders provide to the foundation and competitions, industry education – and therefore, the flexographic industry as a whole – improves. The Phoenix Challenge competition works as a catalyst to increase interest in flexography among the young students, and by the same token, helps to develop the future North American flexographic leaders for the industry. ■

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United front

Uni-Label of Illinois has been revolutionized by a brother-in-law partnership, which has turned the company's fortunes and made it one of the fastest growing in the Mid West. **Katy Wight** reports

When Casey Zgonina, founder and president of Uni-Label & Tag of Elk Grove Village in Illinois, sadly passed away in the year 2000, the heart and soul of the company was lost. Colleagues not only missed his presence and personality, but also his innate knowledge of the business, its equipment, and also the close, personal relationships he had built with customers and suppliers. It was an impossible gap to fill. Customers began to fall away and sales flagged as a result. The beginning of the new millennium was tough for Uni-Label as it struggled to get by. But six years later it's a completely different story. Frank Kmet and Jim Brunner, both married to Casey Zgonina's daughters, took on the challenge of rebuilding the

I took over, there was no training period or transition into the job. I had to really hit the ground running. Customers would call in with questions or problems with their product and we just worked out what we had to do. At the beginning, there was lots of trial and error, lots of reading and research. We were fighting to keep our customers and lost about 25 per cent of sales after Casey's death. Two major accounts left and another customer was acquired, so 50 per cent of our income was reduced to just five per cent.'

In 2003, Frank Kmet joined his brother-in-law, a friend since college, at Uni-Label. An entrepreneur, Kmet had sold his internet business in 2000 and was looking for a new career

"The duo has made careful decisions, invested in people and equipment, created a new vision for the company and is now expanding its capabilities into new arenas such as RFID"

family business and in just six years have catapulted Uni-Label to sales of \$6 million. Despite their polar opposite personalities – which they believe is key to their successful partnership – both Kmet and Brunner have common goals and a united approach to reach them. Neither came from the label, packaging or print industries, but the duo has made careful decisions, invested in people and equipment, created a new vision for the company and is now expanding its capabilities into new arenas such as RFID. These are exciting times.

Jim Brunner began his career as a construction engineer, but joined Uni-Label in 1997 as a temporary measure to help his father-in-law out in sales. Casey had built a highly successful company in the 1980s and 1990s, but by the time Brunner joined, the equipment was starting to look old and outdated, the computer system had seen better days and there wasn't even email access. When Casey unexpectedly passed away, Brunner was left to pick up the pieces.

'Casey had really operated as a one-man band, handling everything from the books, to ordering,' explains Brunner. 'When

challenge. Kmet brought a fresh perspective and also experience of building a company from scratch to the table.

'Business is business,' says Kmet, 'whether it's the internet and IT or label converting. Being involved in a start-up company previously, I realized that having the right people is key. Anybody can buy equipment, so it all comes down to people. Our first mission was to redevelop personnel and get everyone out of the old mindset. There was a lot of friction internally. Jim had also been struggling to recruit experienced operators and people with pre-press experience. So, we decided to get rid of the old and go after the best of the best. We told potential new recruits about our vision and at the time we had nothing to show for it, it was all a promise, but we attracted some highly qualified operators and paid them well.'

Then Brunner and Kmet set about building new relationships with customers and suppliers alike.

'We suffered for a while getting paper and ink suppliers to work with us,' says Kmet. 'We really found out who are friends in the industry are! Seventy-five per cent of our vendors stood by us

“We were taking a huge risk personally too – we both had to invest a lot of money and we could have gone bust in a heartbeat in those early days. We put in long, hard hours and reviewed everything daily”

and some walked away. We were taking a huge risk personally too – we both had to invest a lot of money and we could have gone bust in a heartbeat in those early days. We put in long, hard hours and reviewed everything daily.’

Today the company has 45 employees – and 41 are new to the company. With the right team in place, Brunner and Kmet spent time analyzing their workflow and streamlining internal efficiencies to optimize quality and product turnaround. Those long, hard hours paid off and the company has seen growth of 40 per cent year on year since 2003.

‘Everyone is looking at cost,’ says Kmet, ‘but we are not competing on cost. You are getting the best service possible. Our fast turnaround and overnight shipping – that’s the difference. The next stage we are pushing for now, is to expand the business by getting involved with customers more, helping with their application and adding services. We have the answers now.’

Uni-Label is now focusing on the kinds of customers that value great service. A large percentage of the company’s focus is on the pharmaceutical market. Sixty-five per cent of Uni-Label’s growth comes from pharmaceutical applications, but the company has made headway looking for customers outside this industry who also have the highest quality and service expectations – companies such as customer Weber Grill.

The company is cGMP compliant and runs all Mark Andy presses – three 2200s, two 4200s and an 830. They make plates with the Cyrel Fast CTP system and have two VR series 100% inspection slitter rewinders from KOR Engineering that use AVT inspection equipment to back up defects, replace and re-inspect. The company aims to get rid of the manual inspection systems they have inherited eventually.

Brunner and Kmet also decided to invest in a new computer network and customized their own MIS system in Great Plains to streamline the admin around processing an order.

‘Once a PO comes in, we can get that job ticket out on the shop floor in two minutes. Everything is kept in real time,’ explains Brunner. ‘The operators scan jobs when they start working on them and you can see the status of all your jobs at any one time. We can keep a check on what jobs are late and if we are going to



Frank Kmet, left, and Jim Brunner with the custom-designed AVT inspection unit designed by KOR engineering

have the right materials available on time. We also have full traceability of bad materials and inks, which is important for our pharmaceutical customers.’

It’s Uni-Label’s interests in the pharmaceutical industry that have led it into RFID territory, with a patent that is sure to raise interest. A major US pharmacy company approached Uni-Label back in the 1990s because they were having problems with source tags being stuck in the wrong places on containers. In 2000 the issue was revisited so that Uni-Label could keep hold of the business and Brunner and his team worked on prototypes to insert an inlay into a label for accurate application. The process was so good, Brunner decided to patent it. The patent partly covers the machinery and also the process to apply it and Uni-Label has plans to ultimately license out the technology.

‘This patent is potentially huge,’ says Brunner, ‘We still get a lot of source tag work, but in terms of RFID we are still testing and there are still a lot of questions to answer. Who is paying for the inlays? Who is writing to the chips? Who is storing all of the data? I think it will be a number of years before it really takes off, but we have the equipment ready for when it does.’

So what about the immediate future? The company is currently rebranding to reflect their focus on quality and service, to differentiate themselves from their competitors.

‘We have fixed our company internally and now we want to step up the sales. Our goal is to reach \$15 million within three years. We plan to maximize on our customers’ needs and go above and beyond just printing labels. We are value-add company and we want to partner with the companies that we are servicing.’ ■

Katy Wight was formerly the deputy editor of *Labels & Labeling* magazine. She now works for Tailored Solutions in its new European office, concentrating on business development for its Label Traxx management information software.



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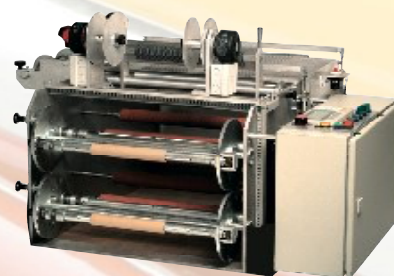
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Waste stripping

Following an examination in *L&L* issue 4 of cutting problems, experts from **wink** look at the problems that can arise during waste stripping, and how to tackle them

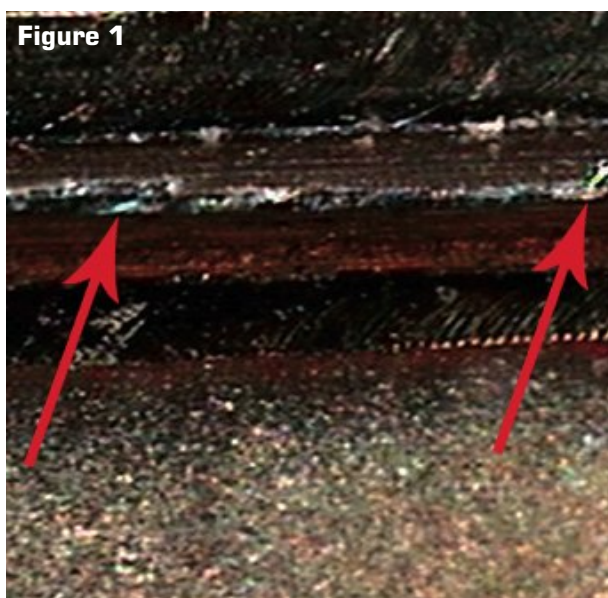


Figure 1
Blade with damage caused by rewind cylinder covered with sandpaper

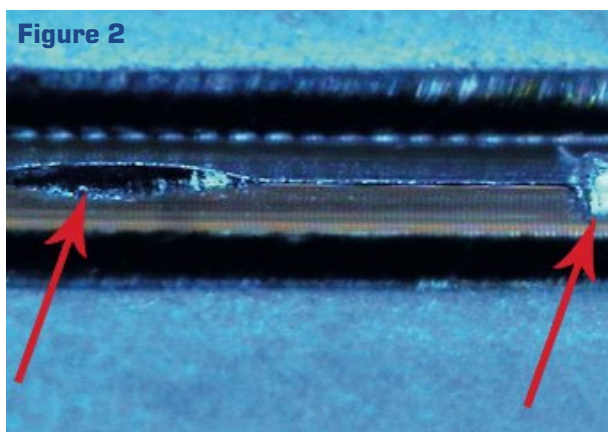


Figure 2
Blade which has been damaged by slipping with a knife when taking the flexible die off the cylinder

Just like heavy die cutting, certain negative influences can lead to problems which mean that clean waste stripping cannot be achieved. This problem is just as serious as heavy die cutting because the customer will generally not accept rolls in which single labels are missing. Following are some factors which can lead to waste stripping problems.

Damaged cutting edges

One reason for waste stripping problems can be damage to the cutting edge (see figure 1). Often consideration is not given to how fragile the cutting edges on flexible dies are. A little carelessness when mounting or removing the die from the magnetic cylinder can be enough to cause a fault on a blade (see figure 2). This small defect can become a large problem during waste stripping if the tool does not cut cleanly at this point. The effect is like a tie in the cutting edge which can cause a label to be removed with the waste. Similar problems can be caused with lack of care during storage.

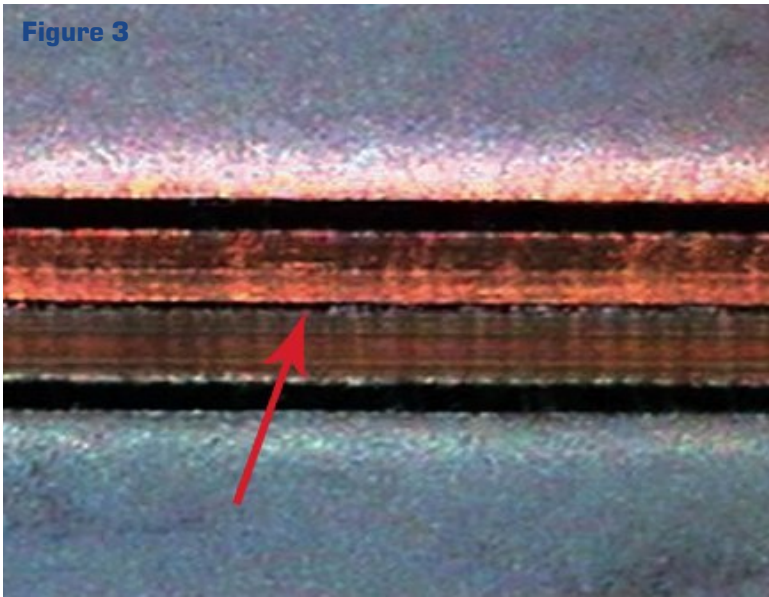
Fully reduce cutting pressure before every tooling-up

Often problems occur when the operator has forgotten to reduce the pressure after running the previous job before mounting the flexible die for a new run. This can lead to the cutting edge being damaged at the tip, losing sharpness and consistency. In addition, the correct undercut – standard value according to EU-standard is 0.48 mm – can be significantly reduced by using too much pressure, and the blades can be destroyed due to there being insufficient space between the magnetic cylinder and the anvil. If the pressure is reduced after this has happened it is too late, as the tip of the cutting edge is already damaged (see figure 3). When starting the run labels will be removed with the waste, therefore it is very important that the machine operators pay special attention to completely reducing pressure before tooling-up.

These problems are easily avoidable with some simple measures. For example, the flexible dies should never be

problems

Figure 3



Insufficient space between the magnetic cylinder and anvil will cause blade damage

removed using a knife or similar tool. Aids for this task which are specifically designed for the job – for example the wink die lifter – are far more suitable. It is also advisable that the cutting pressure be monitored, for example with wink pressure cells. This way it can be easily verified that the pressure has been suitably reduced before mounting new dies.

Common causes for strip-off problems

As already described in *Labels & Labeling*, many factors – for example incorrect undercut – can lead not only to heavy die strike in the liner, but also waste stripping problems. Actually, it is possible to have a heavy die strike and waste stripping problems at the same time.

Following are a number of common problems with possible solutions:

Problem:

- Waste snaps during stripping

Possible solutions:

- Check distance between labels, possibly decrease label size to increase gap between labels

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While light adhesive particles can be recognised in figure 5, which run out on the side under the label, figure 6 shows unproblematic material for comparison.

Problem:

- Waste stripping problems due to unequal pressure.

Possible solutions:

- Check pressure on the right and left of the cylinder with the aid of pressure cells and regulate accordingly
- Check test sample supplied with die. In case of irregularities contact the manufacturer

Problem:

Cutting angle not suitable for the material being cut.

Possible solutions:

- Check test sample supplied
- Check test certificate and compare with the material specification on the order
- Possibly send sample material to the manufacturer to ascertain the correct cutting angle required

Problem:

- Wrong undercut (0.48 mm is specified as the EU-standard).

Possible solutions:

- Check the measurement report of the magnetic cylinder
- Measure gap (procedure has been described in the previous issue)
- Possibly, use plus or minus anvil or adjustable anvil cylinder
- Optional, use another magnetic cylinder with same gear size

Problem:

- Uneven backing material.

Possible solutions:

- Measure backing material with micrometer and compare with order, possibly replace material or order new flexible dies with correct parameters
- Optional, install plus or minus anvil or adjustable anvil cylinder

Problem:

- Unevenly manufactured flexible die.

Possible solutions:

- Check test sample supplied

- Turn flexible die by 180 degrees. If fault 'moves' with the die, the problem is probably with the die itself. If fault remains in the same position, the problem is more likely to be associated with the magnetic cylinder, anvil or machine setup

Problem:

- Flexible die manufactured too low or backing material does not conform to the specification of the order.

Possible solutions:

- Check test certificate and test sample supplied. Possibly install plus anvil or adjustable anvil cylinder
- Possibly put foil of 10 to 15 μm thickness under the flexible die
- Possibly replace material

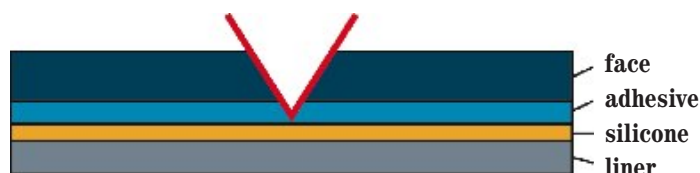
Stripping problems caused by strong 'flowing' adhesive

When cutting adhesive compounds, not only the top material, but also the adhesive layer must be separated cleanly and reliably (see figures 5 and 6). In this case, the backing material must not be damaged. However, exactly at this point problems may appear repeatedly and it can be the case with difficult adhesives that the separated adhesive 'flows' back together before the waste has been stripped. The consequences are that the labels connect again to the waste and will be pulled by the backing material. A possible solution in this case is a larger cutting angle (see figures 7 and 8).

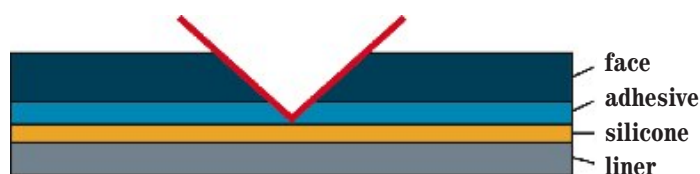
For other adhesives – for example those suitable for freezing – with different characteristics, the exact opposite can actually be the case. For these special materials, it's not the flowing characteristic, but the difficulty to separate the adhesive that causes the label to be removed with the waste. Therefore, to solve the problem, a narrower cutting angle instead of a large cutting angle will be used.

Stripping problems due to adhesive residues

As well as the coating applied by manufacturers to increase die life – such as wink's MC-coating – a non-stick coating is a further finishing variant for flexible dies. This reduces the risk of

Figure 7

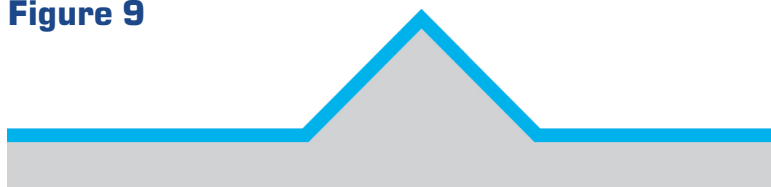
The blade separates the top material and displaces the adhesive during the cutting process.

Figure 8

Blades with a relatively large angle (e.g. 100 or 110 degree) displace the adhesive further than slimmer angles.

adhesive and ink residues building up along the cutting edges of a flexible die and provides for an undisturbed production process. In addition, it does not reduce in any way the flexibility of the die. Furthermore, there is no loss of magnetic adhesion or tolerance differences with this coating.

However, there is one important process to be observed when handling flexible dies with non-stick-coating. These flexible dies must at first be 'run in' for several revolutions, so that the tips of the blades are freed from the coating (see figures 9 and 10). During this brief 'running-in' phase, light cutting and waste stripping problems may occur. Only after the 'running-in' phase is the full functionality of the flexible die guaranteed.

Figure 9

The non-stick-coating is applied over the whole surface of the flexible die.

Figure 10

The tips of the blades are freed from coating after a brief running-in period.

Trouble shooting

Should problems described in this article continue to occur, L&L readers can take advantage of a special service offered by wink. wink has invested in a 'Leomat' machine complete with two cutting stations, not only to evaluate special materials in order to ascertain the correct parameters for the flexible dies, but also to be able to imitate customer problems 'in house' at the factory in Neuenhaus, Germany. ■

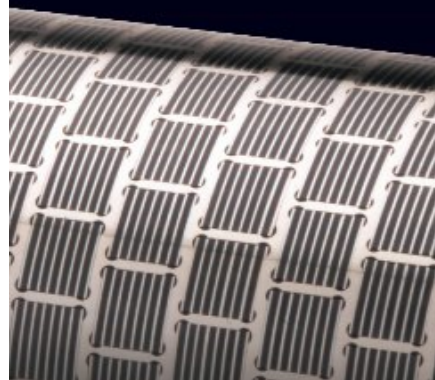
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Trade Associations: not another 90210

State-of-the-art knowledge exchange and sharing, networking and good, old-fashioned fun characterized the TLMI and LPIA annual conferences. A personal viewpoint from L&L's new North American reporter **Danielle Jerschefske**

School and recess too? Yes, the age-old question adults continually ask children – ‘What is your favorite subject in school?’ – is still answered with a resounding ‘recess’! And, believe it or not, if that was your answer as a kid, there is still a way for printing professionals to fulfill this need to learn and let loose and make new friends along the way.

Trade associations have long provided their members with wide networking opportunities in comfortable settings, while ensuring that valuable new knowledge is exchanged among the members to take home and implement to the betterment of both their company and our industry.

Set up to monitor the evolving printing and packaging industries, the Tag and Label Manufacturer's Institute (TLMI) and the Label Printing Industries of America (LPIA) each provide their members with opportunities and tools to progress further in the industry.

The TLMI's mission statement promises that the organization will ‘provide effective forums to address issues critical to the success of the narrow web, tag, label, packaging and converting industries of North America’. Similarly, the LPIA mission statement sets out to ‘provide proactive, take-home resources for members and industry suppliers through various conferences, practices, and programs designed to give members a strong sense of camaraderie’.

To this end, the TLMI and LPIA hold annual meetings, inviting members to gather and discuss pertinent issues for a few days, helping company and industry leaders to ‘think outside the box’, possibly while playing in a sand trap – or even a sandbox.

For the first time ever, TLMI enjoyed its Annual Meeting in conjunction with the European pressure sensitive label

association FINAT, in Orlando, Florida. More recently, the LPIA offered their Fall Management Conference in Sedona, Arizona. Membership attendance for both conferences was impressive. Both settings effectively channeled old and new participants to meet and greet through scheduled business and social events. Keynote speakers, other industry experts and well-respected peers offered insight into three key areas of the industry: brand strategy and trends, environmental concerns, and the increasing pressure for companies to expand globally. Networking events included golf and tennis tournaments as well as other social activities to promote participation of attending members.

TLMI Annual Meeting

Cindy White from Channeled Resources, chairwoman of the TLMI communications committee, introduced me to my first TLMI conference: ‘Once you get to know members here, you begin to feel like you are part of a family. This is really a great group of people: bright, eager, and professional’. As the conference proceeded, I quickly found out how true Cindy's words were.

The printing and converting industry is dynamic. But, throughout all the changes our industry has seen, the best performing companies consistently have maintained a commitment to provide outstanding customer service.

Duane Knapp, guest speaker at the TLMI conference and president of Brand Strategy Inc., provided valuable insight into how to market one's own company and differentiate it from the competition. Duane used two excellent examples: Starbucks and Tiffany & Co. He explained how ‘the successes of these companies did not stem just from selling coffee or



TLMI tennis tournament winners Tapio Martti of Novamelt, and L&L's new reporter for North America, Danielle Jerschevske

jewelry. The success these companies experience comes from how they make the customer feel.' Exceptional customer service was the key to these companies' success.

'The way you make a customer feel and the experience you provide... will make your product and your company stand out,' Duane continued. For example, a supply company can efficiently expedite an order for paper, so the label printer can quickly respond to, and deliver on, an increased order request from a retailer.

The TLMI industry trends committee provided a forum for suppliers and converters to openly discuss future trends, and a main concern was Brand strategy and its relation to the environment – particularly the trend towards producing, converting and selling 'sustainable' labels and packaging.

Phil Ludwig of Plastic Suppliers described EarthFirst, his company's line of corn-based film, as 'a completely compostable substrate, and a competitive option for printers and converters.' The company co-branded the product with NatureWorks to support the close relationship between brand strategy and industry trends.

'Plastic Suppliers' decision to co-brand the product with NatureWorks was to advertise the support for our environment that the end user is looking for and to help the consumer recognize the choices they have,' Rich Eichfeld, vice president of business development, added. By showcasing 'sustainable PLA' on the label, environment-conscious consumers can drive demand for the product in the future.

As our world grows smaller, the need to have strong international relationships grows. Consistency of a brand label color and of product packaging are key tools in global brand management, as the examples of Tiffany & Co. and Starbucks demonstrate.

But global end users expanding into emerging markets need to find the same inks in China, for example, that they use in the USA. If US ink suppliers can get the same product and customer service support to printers and converters in China, they have taken a step toward a positive growth strategy. ■

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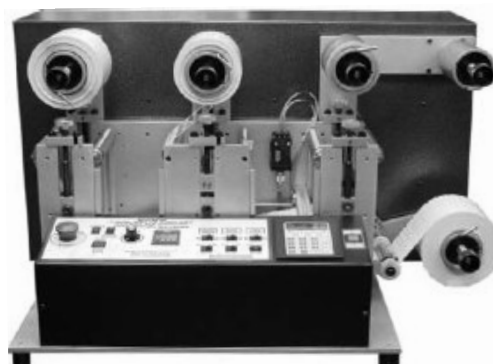
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Global partnerships

FINAT recently organized a series of one-to-one meetings in New Delhi between Indian and European label converters with the idea of encouraging partnerships and joint ventures. Here, Indian converter **Rouble Sing Dunglay** outlines why his joint venture with Reynders Labels in Belgium has been such a success

An alliance between label converters across continents would have seemed a daunting prospect just a few years ago – until globalization showed its face.

I would like to share our experience in forming an alliance with a European print company, Reynders Labels. The new company is called Reyduunn Label, a joint venture between Reynders Labels in Belgium and Good Work Co and its sister concern Reblon films from Manesar in Haryana, North India.

As recently as four years ago, Reblon stepped into the world of narrow web printing. At that time, we acquired our first letterpress and screen combination press – the famous Gallus R200 letterpress and screen printing rotary press. Reynders Labels is a 60 million euro label manufacturing operation, based in Antwerp, Belgium. The name Reyduunn is an extract of the two family names Reynders and Dunglays. Each of us contributes assets and shares risks in a carefully crafted business module. We troubleshoot together and even celebrate our achievements together. A joint venture is a relationship that requires total transparency, and clarity in game plan.

We met the Reynders family at the India label show just two years ago, and immediately realized how similar our psychology was.

- We both hold a firm, yet growing standing in the label markets in our respective countries
- We both recognize the growing markets within the packaging sector in India and found an interesting long term prospect within it and wanted to contribute to it
- Reblon Films found a great partner and made it even easier for us to be recognized in foreign markets.

Both these companies operate under three directors representing the family, and strangely enough both with 50 years of experience in the field of printing, separated by just a month or so. Both heads of families are obsessed with the art of printing, be it litho graphics, letterpress, screen or flexo. You can sit them down like sitting with some war veterans, and the stories of labels that were, and some that never came to be, will start pouring out.

We also enjoy a mirror-like client database – we both work with many common international clients and in many cases print similar labels at our respective ends.

It's amazing how both of us have had problems with labels of the same client in both our countries and yet have provided

“We troubleshoot together and even celebrate our achievements together. A joint venture is a relationship that requires total transparency, and clarity in game plan”

completely different solutions. There are always multiple approaches to rectify the same problem, and there's much we both learn from each other.

Like any relationship one must learn to work at it, to be able to mould one's business model and adapt and evolve together. There are many reasons why this partnership had to happen, and many reasons why this and others like it will work.

Smart label age

We are in the age of the smart label, which I believe will change and transform the way people – even outside the packaging scene – look at labels.

Examples include RFID, security labels, tactile, odor-infused inks and time-temperature labels. Of particular interest to us is the booklet-type label application, where we now have room to explain more, and in some cases there are requirements for mass production of a single label with multiple languages. I see this as a great contribution to production in India. With over 400 living languages here, we could circulate the same label with mandatory information for all four corners of our country in one run. The more surface, the more one can do with it. There are so many applications we have yet to equip ourselves with.

When you want to talk a language like this, a strategic alliance and a strong support structure is key to make these things possible, and it allows us both to enter foreign markets with a credible networking.

We see all around us a pattern of foreign interest in our markets, whilst domestic players want international standards and have a hunger for know-how. Many key players in the Indian consumer goods sector had been importing labels from Europe, Singapore and other countries because of a label lapse in the

market, limited resources, and basic machines.

In a country as large as ours, with the appetite of a small world, with the coming of the upscale mid-segment buyer and the explosion in trade known as 'The big Retail Boom', we now face the brand conscious consumer, the 'I want to be better informed and impressed' consumer, and the supply of high quality labels for the same was sure to follow.

So, apart from great friendship, what do we hope to achieve from our joint efforts?

- Immediate access to updates and new developments in the label world: we are regularly informed of any new updates in technology within narrow web printing, which helps us make crucial decisions for our clients, while new ideas for applications are posted for feedback and amendments
- Access to high tech label printing machines with up to the date training – we are already in possession of the first all-combination plant with four Gallus R200's
- Quality control procedures and tools give us an edge like never before
- A fully trained IT division that makes this world a small place
- Online trouble shooting and assistance: we share an Ftp server with our partners and daily share information about our tasks, solutions and even lunch menus!
- Strategic technical know-how – we have at our disposal a large tech team that guides us through technical troubles
- Maintenance and upgrading our systems from the mother computer in Antwerp: a work flow that was designed and re designed and redesigned over the years to perfection is now at our fingertips thanks to this alliance. Our jobs are now documented and processed with an amazingly simple 'shortest distance between two points is a straight line' attitude.

As a general outline, it is necessary to be cautious when venturing into partnership, realizing that one can't jump into a car with another and have the same direction but different destinations, neither the same destination but different directions.

At Reyduinn, both our partners and us realize that and openly learn new things, slowly learning from these experiences on how to take this venture to its optimal performing state. ■



Reynders recently opened a new plant for its Pharmaceutical Labels division. The official inauguration was carried out by Minister Kris Peeters (r). A full report will feature in the next edition of L&L.

News in brief

Indonesian printer orders Comco press

With a view to expanding its business beyond pressure sensitive labels, Indonesian company PT Primasindo has ordered a Comco press for its production facility in Jakarta, where it will join three Mark Andy flexo label lines, all installed since 2002.

According to company owner Alamsjah Sudjana, who established the business with his wife in 1996, the Comco was chosen 'because it represented a natural progression in technology and maintained the strong working partnership we have built up with Mark Andy and its local distributor, Rieckermann'.

USW and Stora Enso reach paper industry agreement

By working together instead of acting as adversaries, the United Steelworkers union (USW) and Stora Enso North America have chartered a new approach to bargaining in the paper industry.

The contract, which covers Stora Enso's Wisconsin facilities in Stevens Point, Biron, Whiting and Wisconsin Rapids, not only guarantees employment security for the work force, it helps the company remain competitive.

A majority of USW members at all four locations ratified the agreement on January 17. The pact reflects the innovative approach taken by the union in negotiations, the first negotiated with Stora Enso since the PACE merger with the USW in 2005.

The agreement includes unprecedented job security language that is a first for the paper industry. No active employee will lose permanent employment as a result of the contracting, work restructuring or work competitiveness provisions of the labor agreement.

BPIF's 2007 lobbying plans announced

Globalization, phony phoenixes and red tape will be targeted by the BPIF as part of its lobbying plan for 2007.

Cost margins, the economy and employment issues will form the cornerstones of the British Printing Industries Federation's campaign plan for 2007, following approval by the BPIF's policy committee. The plan, developed through consultation with members, identified specific action to target the negative effects of globalization, the postal service market, insolvency practices, training provision, public procurement procedures and the growing regulatory burden. The BPIF will also be supporting UK business campaigns on pensions, energy prices, transport and business rates.

Esko launches new website

Esko has announced that its website has been completely redesigned and will offer new content and an 'intuitive, stylish format'.

New Products

Bell-Mark launches EasyPrint Duo thermal transfer equipment

Bell-Mark Corporation, a supplier of coding, printing and marking equipment, has launched the EasyPrint Duo, the first in the company's line of thermal transfer equipment to offer intermittent and continuous operation in a single machine.

This new printer will provide flexibility on the packaging line by offering dual motion capability, and an easy to change clutch-less ribbon cassette for improved reliability.

The EasyPrint Duo utilizes the speed and power of the company's original 32bit EasyPrints, and provides variable data printing & coding directly onto substrates such as poly, film, foil and Tyvek.

Primera launches color label printer for short runs

The LX400 color label printer from Primera Technology is an inkjet-based printer designed to print short-run, full-color labels at up to 4800 dpi print resolution. The LX400 prints full-color photos, text, graphics and bar code labels. Printed labels are 'virtually scratchproof and waterproof', according to a statement.



Applications include short runs of primary product and box labels for specialty and gourmet foods, wine bottles, coffee bags, cosmetics and personal care products, water bottles, private label products, gift baskets and more.

Printer/applicator from Tharo Systems

Tharo Systems has introduced the new PA1200fa Front Apply Label Printer/Applicator. This new printer/applicator can print and apply labels to the leading side of a product moving down a conveyor. The PA1200fa was designed, engineered and built by Tharo Systems and is currently available using the Tharo H-Series thermal/thermal transfer printers with print resolutions of 203 or 300 dpi.

After a label is printed, it is stripped from the liner and held by suction on the applicator tamp pad. The tamp pad is mounted on a heavy-duty swing arm that extends over a conveyor and tamps the label to the product. Labels can be as small as 2 inches x 1 inch and up to 4.4 inches x 8 inches.

Size-variable web offset press from Muller Martini

The Alprinta-V series from Muller Martini utilizes a continuously size variable insert system. The insert remains in the press during a size change, since only the actual size parts – the blanket cylinder and the plate cylinder – are exchanged. The change is completed without tools and breaking the web is not necessary. The size parts are 'light and easy to handle', yet 'extremely stable', according to a statement. The press can be changed over to a new size 'in a matter of minutes'.

The Alprinta-V possesses a size variability that is 'comparable with flexo and gravure printing, making the press very well suited for labeling and packaging applications', the statement continued. 'The extensive range of applications stretches from self-adhesive labels to base material, to bottle labels made of paper or plastic film – produced in a single pass and delivered on rolls or in sheets. Cooling cylinders are available for UV curing, so that even temperature-sensitive materials such as shrink sleeves can be processed with ease.'

Automatic core cutter from Appleton

The A301 automatic core cutter with new PLC control package from Appleton Manufacturing 'quickly and automatically cuts batches of consistent cores with minimal operator labor', according to a statement. The new PLC-based control system with LCD panel provides immediate feedback on production runs and machine status. This programmable control also accommodates additional automation accessories, including automated parent and cut core handling, cut core counting, and a patented auto-indexing knife. Manually loaded and set, the A301 automatically cuts in excess of 60 cut cores per minute. Unlike power saw models, this quiet-operating, double-guarded, fixed blade model produces clean burnished cuts, improves operator safety, and generates almost no dust.



The A301 automatic core cutter from Appleton Manufacturing

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New Products

New temperature indicator from Cryolog

Cryolog has announced the launch of BreakPoint, a threshold-crossing indicator.

Certain vaccines, blood, and diagnosis kits must not be frozen. Taking the form of a self-adhesive label, BreakPoint changes color irreversibly (from white to red) if a product has been frozen.

BreakPoint comes in the form of rolls of self-adhesive labels. This form and the unit price mean that they can be used on individual units, in order to reveal any cases of exposure to negative temperatures.

The BreakPoint technology can be integrated into all types of packaging and placed on any support using a simple labeling gun.



New technology for quality control of sleeves and flexo plates

The digital direct imaging of sleeves and plates in the flexo printing industry brings new levels to the manufacturing process with regard to quality and precision. Consequently, this brings new demands for the quality control of these materials.

Sibress, a manufacturer based in Brixen, Italy, has introduced a new, small measuring instrument named E3. The E3 System is appropriate for measuring sleeves in all usual dimensions, flexoplates, metal-backed plates, film, and print. The Sibress team developed the new measuring device with an optimum level of ergonomics, automation as well as ease of use in mind.

The Sibress E3 is equipped with a 3.3 megapixel CCD color camera. The completely newly developed and integrated LED illumination enables the user to work also without a light table. To measure sleeves, the instrument uses an optionally available, and specially developed, sleeve adapter ring to measure a field of view of seven square millimeters. In the case of measuring normal plates or film, the system is equipped with an integrated optical view finder to place the instrument exactly on the region of interest. The fast manual focusing in the live video mode makes the precise measurement even faster.



Acheson Electronic Materials has introduced water-based conductive printing ink technology

Water-based conductive ink from Acheson

Acheson Electronic Materials has introduced water-based conductive printing ink technology.

The new technology enables Acheson to provide products with a wider scope of processing capability, a critical requirement for RFID and other emerging applications in the printed electronics market space, according to Greg Gaitens, sales manager, Acheson Electronic Materials.

'These are environmentally friendly inks that do not require expensive solvent recovery equipment during processing,' said Gaitens.

Xeikon launches two new digital presses

Xeikon has launched two new digital color printing presses: the Xeikon 4000 and the Xeikon 5000plus.

The new Xeikon 4000 allows printing on a wide array of substrates and formats of 50cm wide. It boasts Xeikon's One-Pass-Duplex technology, which minimizes total run time and produces 'perfect prints in a single pass', according to a statement. The Xeikon 4000 incorporates the X-800 DFE (Digital Front End) that combines pre-press functionalities, including a fast RIP, with variable data processing and collation capabilities.

The Xeikon 5000 has been improved with numerous developments to create the Xeikon 5000plus. This enhanced digital press incorporates Xeikon's One-Pass-Duplex technology and DFE for high levels of productivity and quality. It also includes the Xeikon FA toner range for vibrant colors. The Xeikon 5000plus comes standard with a variable web input module, offering customers format and substrate flexibility.

RFID: a mission to the US

The UK government recently sent an expert team to review the state of RFID adoption in the US. **James Quirk** reports

The DTI (Department of Trade and Industry) Global Watch Mission visited the US to investigate the country's progress and developments with RFID technology.

DTI Global Watch Missions enable small groups of UK experts to visit leading technology organizations to learn vital lessons about innovation and its implementation of benefit to entire industries and individual organizations. Around 30 DTI Global Watch Missions take place every year.

This mission, in association with AIM UK, brought together a team of experts from a variety of backgrounds: David Armstrong, director, RFIP Ltd; Christopher Bullock, operations director, Xtag; Dr Ross Folland, head of product development, Safe Surgery Systems Ltd; Prof Anthony Furness, professor of RFID, University of Wolverhampton; David Jack, DTI International technology promoter; Prof Keith Osman, research co-ordinator, Technology Innovation Center; Ian Smith, CEO, AIM UK; James Stafford, head of RFID, Marks and Spencer; and Colin Thorne, sales director, Concept Labelling Solutions. Each member of the team gave a presentation at the seminar to discuss how RFID could have an impact in their given sector.

The team is keen to use the findings from the trip to urge the UK government to do more to position itself in the global RFID market. 'The UK government could be doing a lot more,' said Ian Smith of AIM UK. 'It merely is paying lip service to RFID in comparison to investment in other countries.' He cited that the government in Korea has allocated \$400 million for RFID research and implementation over the next few years.

The team visited leading RFID technology providers, including Texas Instruments, Sun Microsystems, Intelleflex, Savi, Alien, Impinj, and Intermec, to evaluate developments. Major users of RFID, including Wal-Mart, San Francisco International Airport and Ryder Systems, were also visited.

Standards, effect on the environment, and safety issues were all discussed, while Prof Anthony Furness of the University of Wolverhampton emphasized the need for greater collaboration between the US and Europe. The issue of recycling was also raised: 'We saw no evidence of Wal-Mart recycling tags, and

"DTI's report cited the need for increased European collaboration and support in effecting regulatory change, and the importance of RFID systems manufacturers complying with regulations and standards"

they throw millions of cases away each week,' said Colin Thorne of Concept Labelling.

DTI's report cited the need for increased European collaboration and support in effecting regulatory change, and the importance of RFID systems manufacturers complying with regulations and standards. The report also recognized the need for a major education program for both RFID users and consumers to overcome privacy concerns.

DTI International technology promoter David Jack, who accompanied the mission, said, 'Possibly the most interesting technology development we saw was the proposed use of Intelleflex battery-assisted smart passive tags for use by Boeing on the new Dreamliner 787. This technology is ideal for applications where parts traceability is mandatory, and the extended memory feature of Intelleflex tags will house critical information about the history of marked parts such as current part number, date of manufacture, serial number and country of origin, to be instantly available wherever and whenever needed.'

Ian Smith, chief executive of AIM UK, added, 'Wal-Mart is leading RFID deployment in the retail sector in the US using electronic product code (EPC) standards, and many other users are likely to follow suit. However the UK also has strengths in other, non-EPC applications such as the use of RFID in healthcare and for pet passports. Users should evaluate the most appropriate technology for their application.' ■

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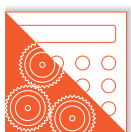


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A smarter future

Smart Label Summit Europe, organized by the Labelexpo Global Series, took place in November in Amsterdam. **James Quirk** reports

Smart Label Summit Europe, a table-top exhibition with a conference running alongside, welcomed 191 converters and suppliers interested in finding new business opportunities through these exciting technologies.

The conference attracted expert speakers from all aspects of the industry. The keynote speech was given by Stephane Pique, European director EPC/RFID, GS1 Europe, who addressed the importance of global RFID standards. 'Creating global standards will reduce complexity both within and between organizations,' he said. 'It will reduce costs and allow companies to focus on how to use the information gathered.'

He cited the example of cell phone company Nokia, which left competitors in its wake as it used universally-consistent standards to become the global leader in the industry.

Pique also told how EPCGlobal now offers certification services for increased customer confidence.

Rene Bakker, logistics director of leading Dutch retailer Schuitema, spoke about deploying RFID in the supermarket supply chain. Schuitema owns the second biggest Dutch supermarket chain, C1000, which has hundreds of outlets throughout the country.

'We had three objectives for our RFID implementation,' said Bakker. 'We wanted to improve the quality of our freshly-cut produce; to improve shelf availability; and to reduce losses further down the supply chain.'

This was the first European project to test RFID throughout the whole chain of freshly cut produce, and Bakker was refreshingly candid about the obstacles that had to be overcome. The project began in May 2005, but it was not until September 2006 that it was up and running.

The main problems cited by Bakker included the six month delay in the release of Gen 2 tags; the necessity for multiple tag positions on the crates; and the fact that the first antenna design did not work.

The project gave an in-depth insight into both the technological possibilities and limitations of RFID, he said. But he concluded the company's implementation of RFID had been a success: 'The successful use of RFID within the chain provides transparency and ensures that information can be shared throughout the chain allowing for better operational control,' he said.

David Albin, IT RFID consultant for leading UK retailer Marks & Spencer, spoke about the chain's use of RFID to improve customer service and business efficiency in clothing and foods.

M&S' implementation of RFID is often cited as one of the most successful from a perspective of consumer privacy. The retailer gained approval from CASPIAN, a US-based consumer privacy group, by ensuring that its customers were fully educated about how it was using the technology.



'We worked very closely with the privacy groups,' said Albin. 'We informed our customers by putting leaflets about RFID in all our stores.'

'A key benefit has been improving our customer service,' he continued. 'The technology works – we are still getting 100 per cent read accuracy and our customers have noticed improved levels of availability.'

Jan Vink, IT director for Boekhandels Groep Nederland (BGN), which owns Selexyz, the largest chain of bookstores in Holland, spoke about how the company created the world's first item-level tagged store.

BGN tagged its books with RFID to improve customer service and increase sales. 'As well as stock organization,' said Vink, 'it has compiled valuable information about which types of books are being sold.'

'268,000 tags are now being used in our stores,' he continued. 'But we have 55 million books – so the future is massive.'

A fascinating presentation was given by Dr Paul Butler, who discussed the opportunities for better communication through smart packaging. Dr Butler is an academic visitor in the department of materials at the University of Oxford in the UK, and an experienced industry consultant on smart materials and smart consumer packaging.

'Communication can be improved through smart labels,' he said. 'We need to improve the customer experience with more information, less hassle, and packaging that opens more easily.'

'Use-by dates are a waste of time,' he continued. 'They are wrong – food doesn't go off because of time, but because of temperature and exposure to oxygen. We need to replace them with smart labels.' He cited the example of supermarkets in France, where temperature indicators are the norm in some chains, and predicted that by 2010 use-by dates would be electronic and self-adjusting.

Another highlight of an excellent conference program was a panel session by three RFID inlay manufacturers and industry expert and conference chairman Mike Fairley.

Andrew Berger of Alien, Stan Drobac of Avery Dennison and Jarkko Miettinen of Confidex all spoke about their experiences in manufacturing RFID inlays. Issues discussed included inlay costs, the need for standards, advantages of HF and UHF, ROI for converters, and privacy concerns.

'Increased competition will drive down the cost of chips,' maintained Andrew Berger, international vice president of Alien. 'In my opinion, we will see at least a halving of chip price in the next six months.'

HP Indigo

During Smart Label Summit Europe, HP Indigo hosted a conference designed for brand-owners to learn about the potential of digital technology. Presentations on topics such as the effects of digital printing on the supply chain, security through printing, and how digital printing can help designers, were given by representatives from HP, as well as customers such as Volkers, Bopack and Eshuis.

'We received very positive feedback about the content of the conference program,' said Christian Menegon, business development manager for Europe for HP Indigo. 'We wanted to open the eyes of the brand owners to the possibilities available through digital printing.'

Stan Drobac, vice president RFID applications and strategy for Avery Dennison, disagreed: 'Manufacturing price reductions rarely translate into reduced prices for the customers,' he said.

Mike Fairley commented that due to the low number of converters printing RFID labels around the world, they are unable to apply pressure to reduce inlay costs. 'As growth continues, however, the dynamic will change,' he said.

'The challenge facing converters,' he continued, 'is the question of whether you gear up to become a mass producer of RFID, but before the market really exists, or do you start small and risk the market racing ahead of you?'

Standards were also discussed. 'Knowing there's a standard means the customer has security in his investment,' said Andrew Berger.

Mike Fairley added: 'Converters are used to having standards for inks, for example. But they look at RFID and because of varying standards the products are often different.'

Discussing the use of HF or UHF frequencies, Andrew Berger said: 'The debate between HF and UHF raises its head every six months. But if HF was the answer to all RFID problems, surely it would be more prevalent? There is no perfect solution.'

'HF and UHF will both be used in different applications,' said Stan Drobac. 'Either one can work; Avery has a preference for UHF.'

One converter asked how it was possible to make money out of RFID if it takes two years 'to get comfortable' with the technology.

When asked by panel chairman Andy Thomas, editor of *Labels & Labeling*, about privacy issue surrounding RFID, Jarkko Miettinen was dismissive of concerns: 'Everyone carries

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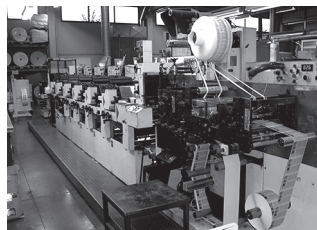


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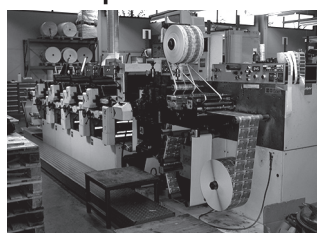
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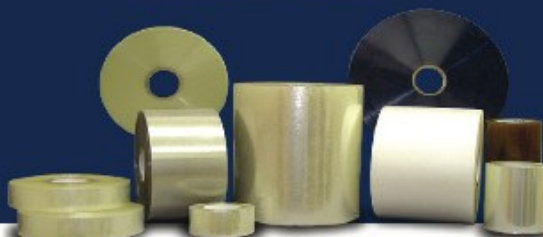
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Exhibitor feedback

The companies who exhibited at Smart Label Summit Europe reported a high level of interest from the numerous delegates who attended the event from all over Europe, *as James Quirk and Danielle Jerschefske found out.*

Avery Dennison was promoting its 'RFID 101' training scheme, which answers the underlying questions concerning the technology and its possible applications. RFID 101 combines a live narrator with animations, photos and video to walk the viewer through the history of RFID; technology basics; applications & markets; system components; RFID label converting; and tag testing & quality.

'We've had a lot of interest in RFID 101 training,' said Angeline Ramos, sales and marketing specialist for Avery Dennison Deutschland's European RFID division. 'We have made contact with the right customers.'

'We have had very good quality visitors,' said Julian Alden, project coordinator of Domino's Integrated Solutions Group. The company showcased its range of track and trace technologies. 'Many of the things that people are hoping will happen with RFID, item-level tagging for example, are possible already with different technologies,' he said.

German company Schober was promoting the STP – its latest entry-level machine for manufacturing packaging labels with RFID. 'The delegates we have seen at the show have been of a very high profile,' said Gerald Glaas, international sales manager.

UK-based Fantastika reported interest from Dutch and Belgian printers. 'Before 9am on the first morning I had two enquiries,' said MD Mark Obeney. The company, just three years old, is a manufacturer of synthetic films and self-adhesive materials. Obeney himself used to be a printer, which he says gives him a 'good perspective' on the industry.

Another young company, Finland-based antenna manufacturer Intune, benefited from its attendance at the show: 'There have been very good networking opportunities,' said vice president Lauri Huhtasalo. 'We have met many suppliers and some potential customers.'

The company was founded in 2005, but its progress has already been quick: 'Although we are young we already sell into the three main markets around the world: Europe, the US, and Asia,' said Huhtasalo.

Germany-based Kinzel was promoting its screen printing and processing machines. 'Many people requested information from us,' said salesman Björn Mickley. 'We had a lot of interest in our machines.'

Mark Andy was promoting its RFID insertion systems. John Ainley, northern area sales manager for the UK, reported positive interest from delegates: 'People are seeing what can be achieved,' he said. 'Being at a show like this is important to build relationships for the future. Our ethos is why we've increased our UK market share this year.'

a mobile phone,' he pointed out, 'so that already traces you.'

The final presentation of the two-day conference was a forward look at the advances that will lead on from smart technologies in the future. Label expert Mike Fairley's presentation provided an overview of some of the key new advances in nano and micro technology that will provide even newer smart opportunities for the label and packaging industries in the years ahead.

Nano technology is the manipulation of particles so tiny that they cannot be seen – except by using electron microscopes and other atomic probes. It goes down to measurements in one-billionth of a meter.

'Nano technology will change up to 25 per cent of the food packaging and label business over the next decade,' said Fairley. He discussed the potential of new technologies such as nano materials, smart dust, nano sensors, and microfibers.

The conference contained a number of other fascinating presentations: Peter Melander, a consultant for Scandinavian airlines, discussed the potential for the use of RFID for tracking and tracing airline equipment; while Gregg Edds, manager of HP global logistics for Hewlett Packard, spoke about the effectiveness of RFID in the global supply chain. A panel session, made up by Nigel Bagley, head of customer e-business for Unilver, John Garrett, RFID architect for Tesco, and Martin Swerdlow, CEO of Integrated Product Alliance, discussed future developments of RFID and smart labels from an end-user's perspective; and Simon King, director of Domino's Integrated Solutions Group, spoke about providing secure and reliable product traceability. Timestrip's joint CEO Reuben Isbitsky talked about the company's latest developments (see page 87), and Peter Ronnow, MD of Vitsab, spoke about the benefits of smart labels in the chilled goods market. Jarkko Miettinen of Confidex advised delegates about how to become a successful RFID converter, and James Bevan, MD of Vandagraf, talked about the opportunities available to the converter through RFID. Sipi Savolainen of UPM Raflatac spoke about the business benefits of item-level tagging. ■

China Label Summit

With worldwide interest growing in the potential of the Chinese label market, *L&L* sponsored a major summit in South China.

Andy Thomas reports from the capital of Guangzhou province

Demand for labels in China today is being driven by the exponential growth of a modern and sophisticated retail sector, with the leading global brands fighting ferociously for the loyalty of the increasingly affluent Chinese consumer.

At the same time, the Chinese labels industry remains slow to adopt the most modern narrow web print and converting technologies.

This was a central theme to emerge from the *Labels & Labeling*-sponsored Label Summit South China, the latest in the Tarsus Group/Labelexpo series of global label summits, which attracted 485 delegates to Guangzhou, capital city of Guangdong province. This region vies with Shanghai as the most important for general and label printing in China. It is home to over 15,000 printing-related enterprises employing almost half a million people, and accounts for 20 per cent of China's overall printing industry – a figure set to grow with the government's commitment to making it an international printing center.

In his keynote presentation, Haixiang Shen, chairman and executive director of the Kodak Graphics Communications Group Greater China Region, noted that the labels industry in China is still a long way behind the developed economies in terms of technology and products.

'If we take self-adhesive labels, for example, most printing factories can only produce some simple labels by using intermittent flatbed printing machines, while more demanding jobs are beyond their capacity.' This situation had forced end users to turn to better equipped foreign label converters.

Although over 80 per cent of self-adhesive labels are produced domestically, 'most enterprises still cannot produce top-grade labels,' said Shen.

Letterpress remains the dominant technology for converting self-adhesive labels, accounting for 70 per cent of PS labels printed in China. Offset and flexo both have a 10-15 per cent share of the market. Shen estimated that in China today there are just 40-50 modern narrow web flexo printing lines, all of which are very profitable. (See chart).

'China's label market is far below the level of developed countries as well as the world average in terms of overall volume and consumption per capita,' said Shen. 'Product structure is also at an elementary level, all of which indicates a great potential volume for development and rapid growth rate.'

Shen pointed out that self-adhesive label consumption per capita in China is only 0.5 to 0.6 sqm, compared to 17-18 sqm in the US. Paper labels account for almost 85 per cent of the market, with only around eight per cent self-adhesive, although the market share of self-adhesive labels has been increasing at a rate of some 20 per cent a year.

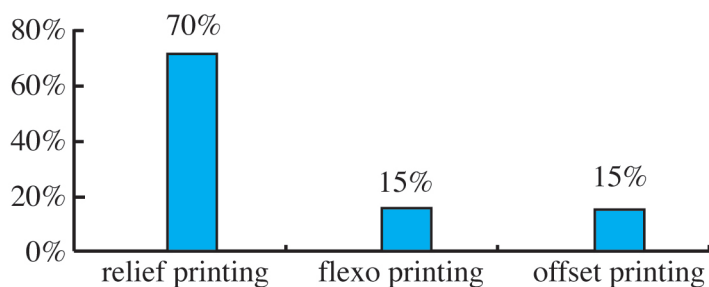
'If the situation remains robust, self-adhesive labels will account for 60 per cent of the whole market in ten years. The technical evolution which took 20 years in the rest of the world might be achieved in China in only four years or so.'

This rapid evolution will also revolutionize the structure of China's label printing industry. China today is characterized by big regional between the developed coastal regions, developing

central and the remote regions which still lag far behind. Shen estimates there are around 3,000 label printers scattered around the country. Most of them are medium and small sized, with very few professional large-sized printing factories, and no truly dominant players. Technical capacity also varies greatly. 'Equipment is mostly basic, with very little sophisticated equipment.'

Shen points out that there are a growing number of privately owned label printing plants which can now

Proportions of self-adhesive label printing methods in China



afford to introduce advanced rotary letterpress or flexo equipment. 'Many such factories with an annual turnover of over 10 million RMB Yuan are emerging in Shanghai, Beijing, Tianjin, Suzhou, Wenzhou and Guangzhou.'

In recent years, a number of foreign-invested label printing factories have sprung up in China, bringing in advanced printing machines and technologies and modern management techniques. Their annual revenue has increased to over 100 billion RMB Yuan (12.84Bn \$), says Shen. 'Statistics show that currently there are dozens of foreign-invested label printing factories in the Shanghai region – including Suzhou – alone.'

In addition, large state-owned enterprises (SOEs) are turning their attention to the labels sector, which has become a new growth business for many enterprises.

Profits rates have remained strong for Chinese self-adhesive label printers, says Shen, despite increasing competition from foreign invested enterprises. 'From 1996 to 2000, net profit of self-adhesive label printing in China was somewhere between 18- 22 per cent. After 2001, restrictions were lifted for foreign investment in the field of self-adhesive label printing, leading to even more fierce competition and triggered a price war. But even so, most factories are still able to keep their profit rate between 10-15 per cent.'

Shen concluded that a combination of China's economic development and economic globalization and global sourcing will see rapid increases in label consumption for the domestic market.

Shen's message was reinforced by Junqiao Tan, advisor to the Printing and Printing Equipment Industries Association of China (PEIAC), vice chairman Executive of the sub-association of Label Printing. Tan estimated that there are 4,000 label converters in China, of whom 84 per cent are still at the 'entry level', 10 per cent at the mid-level, and just five per cent at the highest level, with one per cent of top companies operated as

"In recent years, a number of foreign-invested label printing factories have sprung up in China, bringing in advanced printing machines and technologies and modern management techniques"

joint ventures.

Tan said that the 10 per cent of companies in the mid range had the highest potential for higher growth, but to compete with the top end converters, and particularly the joint ventures, 'they have to reduce costs and prices'. The Chinese labels industry faces a big challenge to adopt the latest narrow web technology to increase added value, innovate and compete globally, Tan said. Part of this process will require mergers and acquisitions, 'but to compete globally, Chinese converters need to be aware of innovations in the West, including new products such as clear-on-clear film, wraparound, IML and shrink sleeves'.

Chinese converters should also be aiming to digitize their operations. Tan reported on a recent visit to the US where he had observed the move to innovative digital printing technologies amongst US converters, including personalised labels. 'Smart labels will be very important for Chinese printers, particularly RFID,' Tan said.

The technical challenges identified by these speakers was taken up by a panel representing some of the world's leading narrow web press manufacturers: Mark Andy China, Stork Prints, the Basch Group – distributing offset and letterpress technology – Gallus, Omet, and Nilpeter.



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“Xu estimated that mainland China and Hong Kong consume 1-1.1 billion square meters, split 50/50 between high and low end applications, and growing at around 15 per cent”

In response to questions from the audience, the panel identified a range of factors holding back the development of flexo in China. These include the high overall cost of flexography compared to offset and letterpress – particularly the cost of plates, aniloxes and inks – as well as a shortage of operators trained in multi-process label converting.

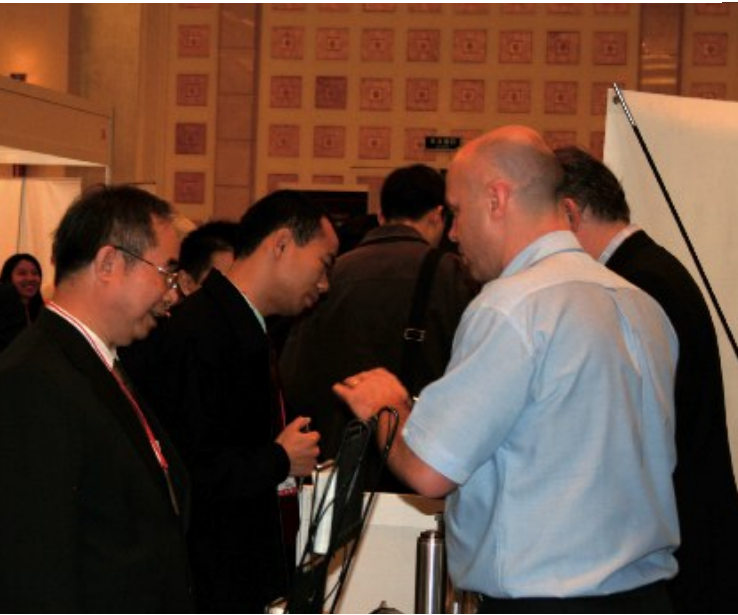
A paper delivered on behalf of Gidue's Federico d'Annunzio looked in more depth at why letterpress remains the dominant narrow web press technology in China. 'Platemaking in-house is easily affordable, presses are inexpensive and the printing process and consumables are cheaper.'

However, flexo does have key advantages: higher printing speeds, faster job change and better control of printing quality. 'As the Chinese market becomes more demanding in terms of quality and flexibility, this will push the move to flexo. Flexo pre-press services and solutions are spreading and wider consumables availability will also help the process.'

d'Annunzio sees UV rotary offset as a key technology for China as global brands push for standardization. 'Offset already has a standardized, digital workflow, cheaper plates and can achieve high quality at a lower cost.' At the same time, flexo

In-house manufacture

Francois Bayzelon, president of ETI, reported that Chinese converters displayed an interest in his company's equipment for manufacturing and printing their own specialist laminates in-line. The ETI Cohesio system is already in use producing clear labels for major beer brands which operate in China and has been recommended by L'Oreal to produce a new generation of double-sided labels using a common release liner.



has advantages in the printing of pantones, solids and varnishes, in the easy interchange between printing technologies such as foil, screen and lamination, and in its low set-up waste, fast set-up and color change. So combinations between UV offset and flexo represent the best solution.'

The critical need for operator training was taken up by Johnson Lai, managing director of GRE Digital Ltd, who is closely involved in setting up a technical training center in South China. Lai pointed out that more advanced combination printing technologies have been introduced to China recently, with converting lines using combinations of UV offset, UV flexo, UV screen and gravure. 'Press operators must also understand and manage the cost implications of set-up times, press speeds etc,' said Lai.

Trends in PS labels in China were examined by David Xu, sales and marketing director of Avery Dennison, China. Xu estimated that mainland China and Hong Kong consume 1-1.1 billion square meters, split 50/50 between high and low end applications, and growing at around 15 per cent.

Xu stressed that multi-national corporations entering China with their regional and global sourcing operations were driving quality expectations upwards and transferring advanced packaging technology transferred to China. 'Some of the requirements are already higher than international standards.'

The main areas of PS growth in China come from the replacement of direct screen printing and from the fast growth of

"As the Chinese market becomes more demanding in terms of quality and flexibility, this will push the move to flexo" said Gidue's d'Annunzio

filmic materials – particularly for super-transparent and squeezable applications.

David Xu agreed with earlier speakers that the label converter market in China is at an early stage of development, with few converters specialized in particular industries. Interestingly, he sees big converters losing share to medium and small companies as they seek out new growth opportunities. 'Private converters are playing more and more important roles, taking market share from Taiwanese, Hongkongese and foreign converters, updating facilities, improving skills and implementing a more flexible business model,' said Xu, though he conceded that their internal management does still need improvement.

Chinese label converters are already facing a tough competitive environment, as margins are squeezed by rising raw

Information on the composition of the Chinese label industry supplied by Mr Haixang Shen

Level	Annual revenue (RMB10,000)	Number of enterprises	Equipment level	Products
Level I (upper)	>5000	Approx. 30	Flexo printing machine for long plate jobs Relief printing machine for short plate jobs	much fixed job (high quality job), most are repeated
Level II (medium)	1000 -- 5000	Approx. 100	3 to 5 relief printing machines	with sufficient source of orders
Level III (lower)	<1000	Over 2000	one or two relief printing machines	most jobs are simple labels with one or two colours

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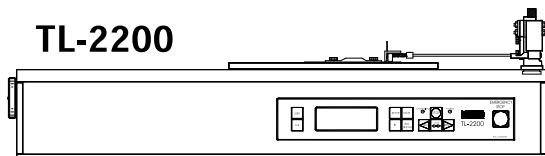
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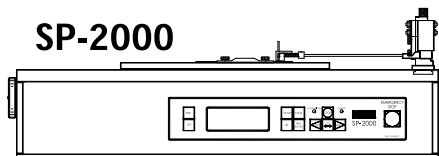
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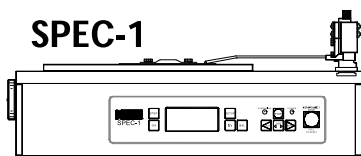
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David Xu, sales and marketing manager, Avery Dennison China

materials costs, price pressure from end users and the increasing numbers of companies and new press capacity entering the market.

The result has been a price war, but in the longer term, the converters which will succeed will be those best able to deal with new challenges: end users looking for more cost effective PS label materials such as thinner films; foreign investors seeking opportunities to enter the Chinese market; a more professional business environment, with issues such as tax control and environmental protection coming to the fore.

Asked to pick out key supplier trends for the future, Xu focused on the cost savings which can be generated from longer rolls, splice free, net width and stronger liners for higher speed application lines.

Smart future

The development of RFID will be of great importance to Chinese label converters. Current applications for RFID are mainly concerned with supply chain management – and China is at the hub of global sourcing and distribution strategies – while Liu Hong, business development manager, Asia RFID business at UPM Raflatac, noted that government support and promotion is driving RFID development hard.

An example of a successful RFID supply chain implementation was given by Dr Jae Myung Ahn, CEO of Retailtech, who recounted his experiences setting up an RFID project at the Samsung Tesco store chain in Korea, including working with EPCglobal Network to improve stock management in stores.

Rico Lau, information system manager at Hong Kong-based knitwear company Lawsgroup, explained how RFID has been used to create a lean manufacturing process since deployment in 2002 at two of its knit production sites. Lau said the company had shortened production lead time by 27 per cent and improved

“Chinese label converters are already facing a tough competitive environment, as margins are squeezed by rising raw materials costs, price pressure from end users and the increasing numbers of companies”

production planning accuracy by almost 30 per cent. Tags operating at 13.56Mhz replaced a paper-based tracking system. The system is now implemented in 80 per cent of the group's facilities, and will be rolled out to encompass regional logistics partners.

Airport baggage handling has long been seen as a key application for RFID, and Paul Wu, head of technical services and procurement at the Hong Kong Airport Authority, told delegates how RFID labels have significantly reduced the incidence of mislaid baggage compared to bar codes. The Gen2 tags, operating in the 920-925 Mhz UHF frequency band, deliver encoding accuracy rates at 99+ per cent and read rates of 96+ per cent – compared to between 70-90 per cent read rates for barcodes. Future developments will include using chips with bigger, 512bit, memories, which will allow flight data, baggage routing information, security information and passenger name to be encoded.

An RFID converter panel brought together Angela Wong, CEO, RFID System & Supplies, and Newyork Liu, marketing manager at the Shanghai Wing Hung printing company, who shared experiences on how to set up an RFID project – including converting options for RFID labels.

Wong said there are four key steps in successfully converting RFID labels: inlay/materials sourcing; understanding the impact of the operational environment on inlay performance; providing secure, reliable product traceability; and meeting end user quality and performance demands.

RFID is not the only 'smart' technology which will impact Chinese converters, as global brand owners seek to guarantee the integrity of their products in the face of well organized counterfeiting attacks. Hannu Hiekkaranta, vice president consumer packaging at IBP Packaging Services, M-real Corporation, gave as an example the work M-Real had carried out with 3M on protecting its Thinsulate garment labels from counterfeit attack, which had involved five levels of security and resulted in the capture of millions of illegal labels from a private printer in East China's ZheJiang province. ■

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