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LABELEXPO EUROPE 2009 REVIEW

New presses, digital launches and renewed optimism marked the biggest ever Brussels show

CONVERTERS LEAD THE WAY

WS Packaging's one-stop shop; Labelco reports on Caslon; ECS340 beta test

ASSOCIATIONS ON THE UP

TLMI technical conference report and FINAT president interview provide future industry roadmap

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L&L CONTENTS

FEATURES

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REGULARS

OPTIMISM GROWS AFTER LABELEXPO

You could almost hear the sigh of relief as the doors closed on Labelexpo Europe in Brussels in September. Converters did come to the show – attendance was down only slightly on the last show in 2007 – and most exhibitors and visitors noted an air of optimism from an industry emerging from the dark days of the worst global crisis in living memory.

Label printers were reporting the return of some big orders as end users finally re-stock their depleted warehouses. Manufacturers of printing presses and converting systems reported high levels of interest in new machinery, stimulated by the launch of a raft of new systems from some of the industry's biggest names.

A significant trend was label converters looking for systems which improve efficiency and reduce waste – for example rewinders which can be networked with press inspection systems, and MIS systems which integrate with digital presses, relaying orders to the machines and receiving back real-time production and cost data.

On a similar theme, the growing maturity of JDF as a data interchange standard is now allowing companies like EskoArtwork to build links with MIS suppliers fully to integrate graphics management servers with estimating, ordering and production planning systems. The well-deserved award for Patrick Wack's 5/7 Etiquette for the tight integration between his EskoArtwork system and a CERM MIS is a great example for our industry.

You could not mention Labelexpo Europe 2009 without talking about the accelerating pace of digital printing developments. It's clear that in terms of inkjet, production-ready 4-color digital presses are getting faster and resolutions are increasing, while the established 'top end' systems from Xeikon and HP continue to push back the prime label crossover point with conventional presses.

In this edition of L&L we have the most comprehensive review ever of a Labelexpo. If there is anything exciting which you saw, and we missed, then please let us know.

Finally, I would like to add my congratulations to the winners of the Label Industry Global Awards – Mike Fairley for Lifetime Achievement, EskoArtwork for Continuous Innovation, EFI-Jetrion for New Innovation award and Rako Group, European converter of the year.

ANDY THOMAS
GROUP MANAGING EDITOR
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L&L ISSUE 5

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INBOX

This month saw a very interesting discussion develop over whether digital label printing will become a commodity. **The question: what response does the label industry have?**

Reply 1: It is certainly true that every product tends towards commodity status if sold on price and not value. In turn, value can only be upheld if it is a unique value – something more than somebody else with the same equipment can offer within a reasonable time scale.

The key factor is service and knowledge of a customer's requirements and unique supply chain. This means more than using a digital press as a short run flexo press, although this may, of course, create useful internal efficiencies.I visit a lot of converters with digital presses, and the most successful ones have embedded themselves with their customers by offering services tailored to that customer's requirements.

Some examples – they have eliminated inventory by developing a true just-in-time delivery service; they work with the marketing department on developing new variants of products, producing samples on the final substrates for focus group testing (in some cases the production versions are then produced on the digital press); they have eliminated the necessity of cramming 12 languages onto a label and developed instead a series of 12 labels, each with a dedicated language; they have developed an authentication program based around variable elements on a label – numbers, color wheels, matrix codes.

Of course, once the product is in the market, anyone with a digital press can ring up the customer and offer the same service. But they are not embedded at the customer; they are not involving themselves as part of the customer's marketing and product development department, always working on the next project down the line. All this is particularly true at a time when the product market is in such flux. Consumers want local produce – they want to know where food products have come from. They are interested in trying new, bespoke brands whose products talk uniquely to their demographic. So there is a whole lot of untapped business for which digital is perfect, and where it can avoid becoming a commodity.

Andy Thomas, Editor L&L

Reply 2: With digital machines (color) making up about 4 percent of the worldwide machine base, there is definitely room for growth. With an initial investment of $500M and more for a digital press, printers are going to do cost, quality and capability analysis to justify the expenditure in today's flat economy. In many cases, separate converting equipment is required as well. We've have seen a huge growth in our short run business and are exploring how and where digital can fit in from a finished product standpoint. As long as shade matches, small fonts and opacity continue to be key components of the finished label, there will be challenges. In some of these cases, a hybrid of flexo or screen with digital may be necessary. In some instances, especially new applications, you deliver a digital part and don't bring attention to it. Until someone picks up their magnifier to look at it, they may never know. They got what they want at the price they wanted it and it passes the arm's length test which is the limitation of most human vision perception.

Scott Dowdell, Director R&D at Topflight Corporation

When will digital label printing become a commodity?

About a year and 1/2 ago!
Gregg Trebnick
CEO at Trebnick Systems, Inc.

It is a matter of time, which may not be too long, as volumes grow, economies of scale bring down the prices of inputs like ink, etc., and the equipment costs come down to justify an affordable per label cost...digital printing will become a commodity. The old guard in the printing industry will not be able to stem the tide.
Harveer Sahni,
Managing director at Weldon Celloplast Limited

Stratus Group has added a 7 color digital printing press with foil stamping and silk screen. 'This technology is certainly an up scale solution for many Pharmaceutical, Beauty Care and Wine primary or private label applications. Does anyone have need of such a solution for current or future smaller production runs of 25m or less pressure sensitive labels?'
Chris Curran,
Sales at Stratus Group, Inc.

I'd have to say that at this point, in the labeling industry, the converters that are making money on digital are selling the value that the technology can bring to the brand owner. Others that have committed to alternative models, say price comparison to flexo, have taken themselves out. The innate characteristics of digital printing can truely touch the modern consumer through packaging - in ways that packaging never could before. Digital printing will likely become a commodity at some point, history afterall does repeat itself, but I believe that we have some time. In taking account the current installed base and the forcasted numbers for 2013, the technology has some years of growth ahead. I'd even venture to say a good ten years depending on the speed the technology picks up in coming years.
Danielle Jerschefske
Senior reporter at Labels & Labeling

For extended versions of these threads, plus the chance to contribute, visit www.labelsandlabeling.com/blog.

NEWS

THE INSIDER

A ROUND-UP OF THE LATEST GLOBAL LABEL STORIES

AQUAFLEX ACQUIRED BY PCMC

Paper Converting Machine Company (PCMC), a division of the global giant Barry Wehmiller group, has acquired F.L. Smithe Machine Co., of Duncansville, Pennsylvania, US, owner of the Aqua ex press brand.

The acquisition establishes the combined company as a global provider of narrow, mid and wide web printing presses. 'With a history spanning more than 100 years, F.L. Smithe has been a leading supplier of state-of-the-art printing and converting systems that include its well-known Aqua ex narrow web printing presses and Champion envelope machines,' Timothy J. Sullivan, president and CEO of PCMC, said. 'We plan to continue that tradition of innovation as we carry forward the legacy of F.L. Smithe across its complete range of product offerings.'

F.L. Smithe purchased Aqua ex in 2004 and introduced the ELS-D variant to the ELS servo platform at Labelexpo Americas 2008. The ELS-D added sleeved technology and greater automation to the line. Last January, F.L Smithe reported that its Aqua ex division 2008 sales revenues increased 73 percent over 2007. The number of presses sold internationally in 2008 increased four-fold.

INDUSTRIAL INKJET EXPANDS TO SOUTH-CENTRAL AMERICAS

Konica Minolta integration specialist Industrial Inkjet (IIJ) has opened an office in Costa Rica to serve Central and South America, citing an increasing interest in digital printing in the region. The company operates as a single-pass print engine manufacturer and distributor and technical support center for Konica Minolta. IIJ has appointed Esteban Marin to head up the new operation.

Managing director John Corrall said: 'South America seems to have a real buzz about it at the moment. We have been getting a lot of enquiries from there and we consider it important to position a competent engineer in each region in which we are active.

'The Latin American market is increasingly significant to our future growth.'

INITIATIVES TARGET LINER WASTE

CHANNELED Resources and Avery launch recycling schemes

Major initiatives by Channeled Resources and Avery Dennison were announced at Labelexpo to tackle the contentious issue of release liner waste.

Channeled Resources' Calvin Front outlined the launch of an ambitious European liner recycling scheme. A new company, Cycle4Green, will produce de-siliconized pulp for the virgin base paper industry. The 'life cycle' project takes in the collection of spent liner, repulping and removal of silicone, and the sale of the pulp to selected base paper manufacturers.

And in a separate development, Avery Dennison announced its own recycling initiative in Europe for PET release liner, a joint project with the company's transportation contractors, recycled materials specialist Ecover, and accredited reprocessors in Europe. Avery Dennison will collect all end users' waste PET liner for recycling at no cost, provided some Fasson liner is included. For full story see p.15.

K&B TO MANUFACTURE SCREENS

KOCHER & Beck Tec screens will be available in January

Kocher & Beck is to enter the screen manufacturing business. The company's 'Tec Screen' is due to go on sale in January 2010. The company's Martin Stierle is confident of rapid uptake once testing is fully finished and supplies commence. The Tec Screen system will be fully Gallus compatible.

Kocher & Beck also announced an expansion of its UK die-making production facility with the installation of two new machines.

A CNC 3-axis milling machine, built by its parent company based near Stuttgart in Germany, has gone into production a month early. This 'generation 5' machine features fully automated camera recognition to speed up plate loading and increase accuracy.

Steve Horne, sales director, said: 'Kocher Beck recognizes the importance of offering same day dispatch as printers try harder to respond to stringent turn-round demands.

'The company has invested over £400,000 in the last 18 months in the latest technology from Kocher Beck GmbH. We can now produce more dies per machine cycle with shorter down times. Same day dispatch, a key target for 2009, has already tripled when compared to this time last year, we hope to further increase this facility, with our plant in 24 hour production, it is not unusual to dispatch in the middle of the night.' A new laser hardening machine will arrive later this calendar year, further increasing capacity.

AHLSTROM AND ARMOR STRATEGIC ALLIANCE

NEXT generation, thermal transfer project announced

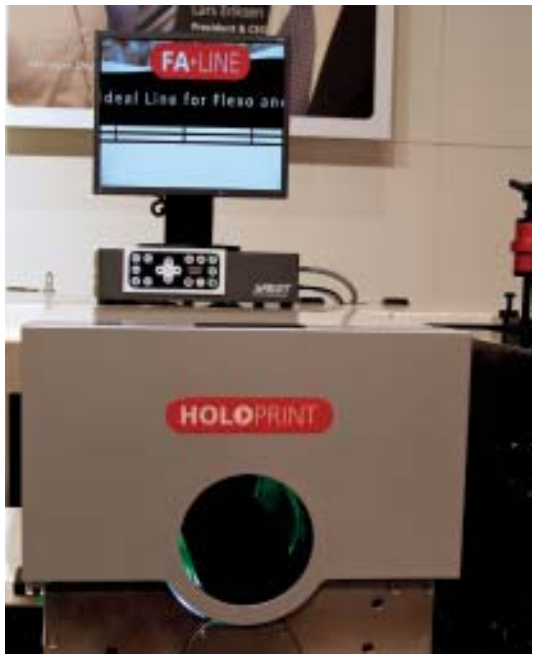
Ahlstrom and Armor have combined their technical expertise to develop 'next generation applications' for thermal transfer printing.

Ahlstrom specializes in high performance nonwovens and specialty papers and Armor in the manufacture of inked films for thermal transfer technology.

Thermal Transfer labels are required to resist aggressive environments such as heat, humidity, abrasion and solvents. The joint project looked at how to match these requirements and achieve the best printing results on a self-adhesive laminate. Factors taken into account included the interaction between paper and ink depending on speed, printer technology, paper quality and the nature of the ribbon.

The first Ahlstrom product to come out of the joint research project is Vellum TT, available in 73 and 80 gsm and claimed to exhibit 'highly improved thermal transfer performance' for a self-adhesive laminate.

Armor is now developing an expanded range of ribbons, with two new products – AWX FH and APX FH – now on the market.



NILPETER PRINTS IN-LINE HOLOGRAMS

Nilpeter has developed a hologram printing unit which can be integrated in-line with any Nilpeter platform press. The cassette-based HoloPrint module prints a 50,000 dpi holographic image in register and in a UV-cured varnish directly onto any web-fed paper or film substrate. The result is a security device which overcomes the storage and security issues surrounding conventional embossed foil holograms. HoloPrint offers print widths of 340mm (13.5 inches) and 420mm (16.5 inches). The HoloPrint module was shown as part of a six-color Nilpeter FA-Line UV flexo press, which also included the Caslon inkjet module.

In another development, Nilpeter USA has opened a new service and technology center adjacent to the company's 12,000 square foot facility in Cincinnati, Ohio. The new addition will house Nilpeter's print service and customer support groups.

GERHARDT AND RR ROTARY COMBINE OPERATIONS

SOLID die manufacturing operations to move to one location

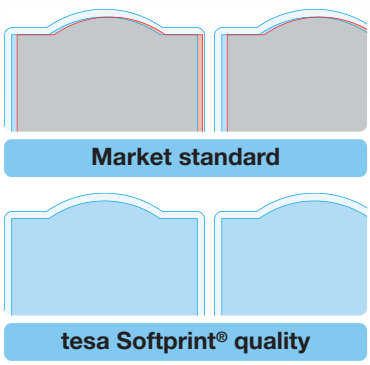
Rotary tooling specialist Gerhardt International and RR Rotary, a supplier of solid rotary dies, have merged their European facilities for the production of solid rotary dies. The new joint production will operate under the name GR Production.

Gerhardt's production of solid rotary dies, along with the company's headquarters, has been moved into RR Rotary's production facilities in Herlev, near Copenhagen, Denmark. This site will provide Gerhardt with its Gerhardt 7 star solid dies and high blade solid dies.

Although the two companies will maintain separate sales organizations, Gerhardt will market the RR Rotary range of solid rotary dies globally, while RR Rotary customers will have access to Gerhardt's full product range.

Said Klaus Damberg, group president and CEO of Gerhardt International: 'For Gerhardt this is a huge leap into new market segments, because we can now offer a full range of flexible and solid rotary dies, not only for narrow web applications, but now also to industries such as automotive, electronics, medical and small packaging.

Leaders in labelling



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NEW INITIATIVES TARGET LINER WASTE

WITH the pressure-sensitive industry under pressure to show movement on liner waste, Andy Thomas reports on two major new initiatives

At Labelexpo Europe, Channeled Resources' Calvin Front outlined the launch of an ambitious European liner recycling scheme. A new company, Cycle4Green has been launched along with Petri Tani, technology manager at UPM-Kymmene, to produce de-siliconized pulp for the virgin base paper industry. The 'life cycle' project takes in the collection of spent liner, repulping and removal of silicone, and the sale of the pulp to selected base paper manufacturers.

This will be the first commercial operation of its type on the continent and will end the practice of shipping spent liners to the Asia-Pacific region. At the same time, base paper manufacturers can develop more sustainable business models by supporting the complete life cycle of paper liners.

While the filtration technology to de-siliconise paper liners has been around for some time, the key issue has been collecting sufficient material to make business sense. To make the project viable, Calvin Frost estimates that some 30,000 tonnes a year has to be collected and processed.

To this end, Cycle4Green is setting up collection centers across Europe, initially in Spain, Italy and France, with the Netherlands to follow. 'The only cost to the end user will be transportation of the liner waste to these centers,' says Calvin Frost. 'This will be less than the cost of throwing it away or incinerating it.'

The processed pulp will be sold back to the liner manufacturers at the same price as virgin material and will perform to the same level, says Calvin Frost.

PILOT PROJECT

Currently a pilot project is under way with Morrissons supermarket chain, Dairy Crest, Procter & Gamble, Unilever and Sarah Lee.

Early results show the processed liner is 100 percent silicone free and with very little contamination. 'This is a much easier job than re-processing newsprint, for example, because we do not have to de-ink the pulp,' Frost points out. 'Liner papers also have long fibers and very little in the way of fillers, so are inherently clean.'

And in a separate development, Avery Dennison announced its own recycling initiative in Europe for PET release liner.

PET liner commands around 75 percent of total European demand for film release liner, and represents a fast-growing share of the European release liner market.

The Avery Dennison PET liner recycling scheme is a joint project with the company's transportation contractors, recycled materials specialist Ecover, and accredited reprocessors in Europe. It is centered round collections of PET liner waste from end users' premises.

The current cost to end users for landfill or recovery of waste materials is estimated at 25-100 per tonne. Avery Dennison will collect all end users' waste PET liner for recycling at no cost, provided some Fasson liner is included.

"This will be the first commercial operation of its type on the continent and will end the practice of shipping spent liners to the Asia-Pacific region"

End users' only responsibility is to separate PET liner from other waste and bag it up in industrial containers for collection by Avery Dennison transport. It will then be delivered to a reprocessor for re-granulation as rPET.

The regenerated raw material will be sold on the open market. Popular current uses for rPET are in the manufacture of fleece clothing, fashion handbags, street furniture, disposable cups and coat hangers.

Eelko Leeuwenburg, services marketing manager for Avery Dennison Roll Materials Europe, said, 'Participants will just need to call our transport company to arrange collection of bags: one simple contact action can solve their whole PET liner recycling issue.'

Avery Dennison will pilot this initiative in the Benelux, France, Germany and the UK till the end of 2009, and expects to launch it formally in January 2010. Additional countries might well be included at that point.

Brand owners and label converters interested in taking part in the pilot scheme can email linerrecycling@eu.averydennison.com.

HOT OFF THE PRESS

A ROUND-UP OF THE LATEST GLOBAL LABEL STORIES

UPM RAFLATAC EXPANDS IN TURKEY AND RUSSIA

UPM Ra atac is to open a new slitting and distribution terminal in Istanbul, Turkey, next year. The new terminal will supply the local labeling market with film and paper labelstock.

'Demand for our products has seen strong growth in Turkey in the past year, and we're committed to offering the local market a wide range of products with fast delivery,' said Tapio Kolunsarka, senior vice president of UPM Ra atac in Europe. 'This investment is also perfectly in line with our strategy of strengthening the service network and gradually growing our market share in Eastern Europe.'

At the same time, UPM Ra atac announced the opening of a new slitting and distribution terminal in St Petersburg, Russia, for both film and paper labelstock.

'We're very excited to be the first pressure sensitive manufacturer to open our own distribution facility in Russia,' said Tapio Kolunsarka, senior vice president of UPM Ra atac in Europe. 'This investment signals our commitment to the Russian market, where it will significantly improve our service capabilities. Our customers can now enjoy shorter delivery times, smaller order sizes and a wider range of products – each being essential to success in today's challenging economic climate.'

ALLIANCE OFFERS VARIABLE PRINT ON HEAT SEALS

Lake Image Systems and Domino have collaborated to offer technology for printing competition numbers on heat-shrunk seals, such as soft drink bottles, cans or other containers. The development combines inkjet printing from Domino with Lake Image's inspection systems.

The technology is currently in place for competition numbering with a large shrink sleeve label and packaging company for a consumer competition contract where security, integrity and traceability are key requirements, running at line speeds of more than 200 meters per minute producing in excess of 1,400 products per minute.

Heat-shrunk substrates are transparent, yet light-re ective, which poses reading challenges for cameras. As a result Lake Image's systems include specialist lighting designed to remove specularized re ections, and therefore improve reading performance.

Martin Keats, UK managing director of Lake Image, said: 'We are delighted to have cracked this technical challenge with Domino's help and plenty of testing with the end user.'

THE GLOBAL LABEL WORLD came together at Labelexpo Europe to honor Mike Fairley with a Lifetime Achievement award and unveil the winners of awards for the most innovative suppliers and converters in the industry. Andy Thomas reports

Mike Fairley honor leads global awards ceremony

Mike Fairley has been presented with the R. Stanton Avery Lifetime Achievement Award during a ceremony at Labelexpo Europe in Brussels. The other nominees for the award were Jeffrey Arippol from Brazilian converter Novelprint, Noel Mitchell from UPM Raflatac and EskoArtwork's Guido van der Schueren. The gala evening also recognized the most innovative suppliers to the label industry and the European converter of the Year.

The Global Label Awards judging panel was chaired by Helmut Schreiner, CEO of Schreiner Etiketten, and included Andrea Vimercati, president of FINAT, John Hickey, former chairman of the board TLMI, Andy Thomas, editor of *Labels & Labeling* and Tony White, editor of *NarroWebTech*.

Calling upon Mike Fairley to accept the award, Helmut Schreiner said: 'Mike, we would now like to officially congratulate you. You have really influenced our industry for decades. The ten books and encyclopedias you have written are read around the world. You have been building bridges for several decades between suppliers and converters, between countries and their people, and between the present and the future to new market segments, niches and technical materials. You have truly become the Guru of our industry.

'In doing so, you have supported our industry, and have promoted it immensely. What is most impressive, is that you have always done all of this with pleasure and passion. Through this you have made so many friends and touched the hearts of us all. The applause now is an expression of our thanks to you.'

Fairley received tributes from a number of speakers, including Dean Scarborough, CEO of Avery Dennison, which sponsors the Lifetime Achievement award. Scarborough told the packed theater: 'Mike saw the future of labeling more clearly than anyone else. He spotted emerging trends such as the use of film, long before we did. In fact, Chuck Miller used to say that Mike's forecasts for filmstocks growth in the late 80s and early 90s were more accurate than ours.'

Scarborough presented Fairley with a special Avery Dennison award recognizing his long relationship with the company, 'during which time he interviewed, advised and befriended every one of our CEOs, including Stan Avery, with whom Mike had what Stan called wonderful conversations.'

Clive Smith, founder of Labelexpo and Mike Fairley's long standing colleague, paid tribute to Fairley's early skills as an industry strategist. 'On a trans-atlantic flight we would discuss where the industry needed to go and how we could bring that about. After a few glasses of red wine I would wake up in the US and Mike had written a business plan!'

FINAT president Andrea Vimercati, speaking on behalf of the global label associations, called Fairley an inspirational

force in the world of labels who had always been exceptionally generous sharing his knowledge and contacts for the advancement of the industry as a whole.

Mike Fairley has been writing and talking about labels for more than 30 years. As both the founder of *Labels & Labeling* and the Cowise International Publishing Group and a successful industry consultant, he has consistently been at the forefront of introducing the latest innovations in label materials, technology, markets and applications.

In his award acceptance speech, Fairley said: 'I feel really honored to be the recipient of the R. Stanton Avery Lifetime Achievement Award, but also very humbled to be seen in the company of previous esteemed winners, such as Stan Avery. Much of what I have been able to achieve is also due to other people that supported and encouraged me from the very beginning in the foundation of Label & Labeling back in 1978, through the building of the Labelexpo/Cowise Group and then into its acquisition by Tarsus – people like Ron Spring, Clive Smith and, more recently, Roger Pellow, as well as my wife who organized and ran all the office side of the business for over 20 years.

'Apart from Labels & Labeling, I have always aimed to put back into the industry; through organizing and running

(L-R): Clive Smith, founder of Labelexpo; Dean Scarborough, CEO Avery Dennison, award sponsor; Mike Fairley, founder of Labels & Labeling; Helmut Schreiner, owner Schreiner Etiketten; Andrea Vimercati, president of FINAT

KEN STACK, general manager EFI Jetrion (R), accepts the New Innovation award from L&L editor Andy Thomas

ARMAND Gougay, VP sales & marketing EMEALA EskoArtwork (center) accepts the Continuous Innovation award from Jack Kenney, editor Label & Narrow Web (L) and Tony White, editor of NarroWebTech

AN AVERY DENNISON SPECIAL AWARD, presented by CEO Dean Scarborough, recognizes Mike Fairley's personal friendship with R. Stanton Avery – himself a Lifetime Achievement Award winner

workshops, seminars and conferences, through market research, through writing reports, through market strategy and acquisition projects, through writing text and reference books, through speaking at label industry association events all over the world, and through one-to-one conversations with people in the industry. It really has been a pleasure to work with the label industry and to have so many friends around the world.'

INDUSTRY INNOVATION

The awards judging panel also recognized the most innovative supplier companies to the labels industry with two key awards. The Label Industry Award for Continuous Innovation - sponsored by industry magazines *Labels & Labeling*, *NarroWebTech* and *Label & Narrow Web* – recognizes a long-established supplier or converter company within the label industry with a long history of innovation and creativity.

This year's winner was EskoArtwork. The judges said the company had been 'dedicated to continuously advancing the science and technology of the label industry in both hardware and software for many years.' Although the name EskoArtwork is relatively recent, the company traces its origins to pioneering companies like Barco Graphics, Purup-Eskofot and Artwork Systems, who have pushed boundaries in label pre-press over many years. EskoArtwork has continued this work, and today retains core competencies in digital flexo, color management, specific pre-press software for labels and tags, workflow automation and digital printing workflow. The judges noted that the company 'continues to bring innovation to its portfolio of offerings across a wide range of categories.' Other nominees in the category were Codimag and Flint Group Narrow Web.

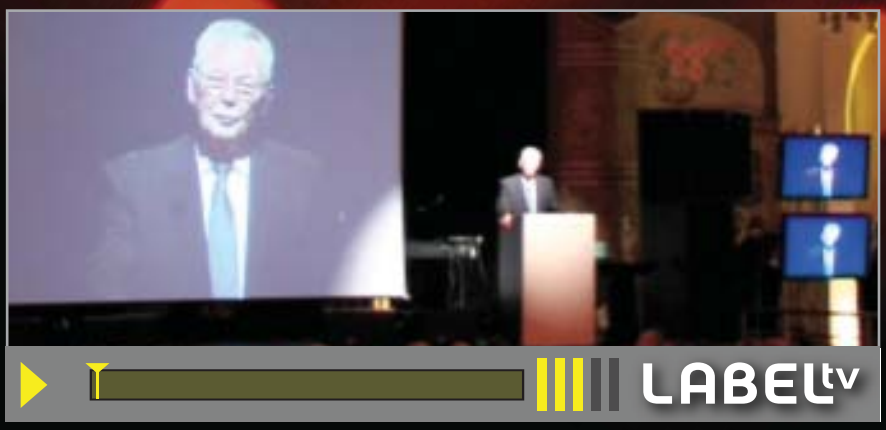
The Label Industry Award for New Innovation, sponsored by *Labels & Labeling*, recognizes a converter company or supplier to the label industry which has introduced innovation in new products or services in recent years. The judges' choice was narrow web inkjet specialist EFI Jetrion. The judges commented, 'EFI's Jetrion 4000 UV inkjet system has evolved into a full-color narrow web alternative to toner-based digital printers for label runs of up to 50,000 labels. It combines EFI's core strengths of workflow, RIP technology, ink development and machine manufacturing to offer converters an affordable route into short run, variable data printing.'

PATRICK WACK, md 5/7 Etiquette (center), becomes the first label converter to be awarded CIP4's CIPPI award for a JDF-based integration of MIS and graphics management systems.

Other nominees in this category were Erhardt + Leimer and Kodak.

The European Converter of the Year Award, sponsored by Flint Group Narrow Web, went to the Rako Group. This award goes to a converter which, in the words of the nomination, 'has a long record of continuous innovation and has developed pan-European product sales in their chosen market, or has become a global supplier in specialist or niche areas of operation.

The Rako Group was founded in 1969 by Ralph



TO see Mike Fairley accepting the R. Stanton Avery Lifetime Achievement Award, go to www.labelsandlabeling.com

Koopmann, and today runs more than 90 presses and employs 1,000 people. Besides several locations in Germany, the Rako Group is expanding its international business with production sites in Europe and Asia, recently opening a new production site in Hangzhou, China. Rako has been a technology pioneer in the labels sector. It was the first German label producer with Indigo digital offset printing capabilities in Europe and has pioneered internet connectivity to its customers. The company also runs a Security Label division which specializes in electronic theft-protection.

Other nominees were Marzek Etiketten and Pago Group.

A new Green Award, which recognizes environmentally sustainable technology, was given to GEW for its energy efficient UV systems. The award was Judged by a panel chaired by L&L's Mike Fairley and North American editor Danielle Jerschefske, and was sponsored by Xeikon (for a full report, see p.101).

A surprise award went to French label printer 5/7 Etiquettes. Bestowed by CIP4 (Cooperation of Press, Pre-press and Post-Press), this was the first time its CIPPI award for JDF-based plant integration had gone to a label converter (see *JDF breakthrough* in L&L4 2009, p.54).

Summing up the event, which attracted over 600 label converters, suppliers and end users. Helmut Schreiner commended all the award entrants: 'The quality of entries for the Awards continues at the highest level and makes an ongoing challenge for the judges. Each winner has made a significant contribution to the growth of the industry and I would like to congratulate them all on their awards.'

The Label Industry Global Awards take place at Labelexpo Europe and Labelexpo Americas. The next awards will take place in Chicago in September 2010.

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ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS

HECTOR'S dolphin Image courtesy of Will Rayment

NZ CONVERTER JOINS DOLPHIN CAMPAIGN

RAPID Labels joins race to save world's smallest marine mammal

New Zealand converter Rapid Labels has joined a community effort to raise awareness and funds for an endangered dolphin.

Unique to New Zealand's coast, Hector's Dolphins are one of the world's smallest marine mammals, weighing just 50kg. Numbers have plummeted from 30,000 in the early 1970s to 7,200 today, while scientists estimate three are killed each week in commercial fishing nets.

The 'Message in a Bottle' campaign aims to raise NZ$50,000 for the World Wildlife Fund's work to save them.

The campaign began last year with a donation of three tons of Pinot Gris grapes from Central Otago wineries. Rapid Labels agreed to print the label for no charge, with other businesses offering free design, artwork, bottles and packaging.

The labels are printed on Rapid's 'Limestone' laid wine stock using two colors and a gloss highbuild varnish plus moisture protection.

'Rapid Labels considers it a privilege to be involved in the Message in a Bottle campaign,' said general manager Greg Howell. 'We are unconditional supporters and hope to b e producing labels for future bottlings.'

Bottles, released for sale on 21 September, cost NZ$30 ($21). 'We are hoping that the success of the initial Pinot Gris release will grow into something with momentum,' Howell added. The wine can be ordered online from https://supersecure.co.nz/users/63/order.htm

CONTITECH CLAIMS REDUCED IMPACT OF PRINTING BLANKETS

ContiTech Elastomer Coatings is claiming to be the world's first manufacturer to have a carbon footprint drawn up for printing blankets. According to the study, the production of ContiTech's printing blankets generates up to 70 percent less climatically detrimental CO2 emissions compared to standard printing blankets. These are the reported findings of a scientific analysis carried out by the University of East Westphalia-Lippe. The reduced climate footprint is said to be made possible by the calendaring process ContiTech has used to produce printing blankets for several years. The rubber is formed into a slab of the required thickness using steel rollers, so solvents need no longer be added. A further advantage is that it uses less energy than the coating process, in which a solvent is added to the rubber so that the rubber solution can be applied uniformly to a fabric to create the printing blanket. The solvent in this process is then recovered, which requires further energy.

ENVIRO NEWS

A ROUND-UP OF THE LATEST ENVIRONMENTAL LABEL STORIES

PAPETERIE ZUBER RIEDER LAUNCHES 'ECO-FRIENDLY' PAPER RANGE

Bagasse is a new 'eco-friendly' paper grade – claimed fully recyclable – from Papeterie Zuber Rieder aimed at labels, luxury packaging, greetings cards, business cards, invitations, annual reports and advertising purposes. The new range was shown at Labelexpo Europe in Brussels.

The company says that the Bagasse range is the result of its eco-design approach stretching from growing the raw material to disposal of the product.

Bagasse is produced using by-products from sugar cane production, linen and hemp grown on fallow land. As Bagasse does not include the use of trees in its manufacturing, it is a low-energy consumption product in terms of both production and for transformation, and is also fully recyclable, says the company. Linen and hemp are also natural crops, which require the use of very little pesticide or weed-killer, as well as little fertilizer and irrigation.

The Bagasse range of papers includes Meringue, Meringue Crystal 1 and 2 Face, Cassonade, and Cassonade Crystal 1 and 2 Face, and in weights from 90gsm-320gsm. It is also available as a 120gsm envelope in Meringue, Meringue Crystal 1 Face, Cassonade and Cassonade Crystal 1 Face.

Bagasse is suitable for offset, letterpress, engraving, embossing, hot-foil stamping, laser engraving, thermography, silkscreen and die-cutting applications, including all desktop printing, such as laser, inkjet and photocopier.

TOPFLIGHT LAUNCHES GREEN CAMPAIGN

Top ight Corporation in the US has launched a campaign to raise customers' awareness of practical solutions to environmental issues.

Essentially, green is about looking for ways to do more with less, says the company statement. The same can be said for lean. 'It's no surprise that the solutions that make a company more sustainable also make it more responsive and profitable. Reducing any waste saves money, which is why Top ight focuses on eliminating inventory with Operation Eliminate. Streamlining your supply chain can save energy and materials while it increases your cash oat. '

Another area targeted by the campaign is shipping, where companies like Wal-Mart, DuPont, and Kellogg's are already employing a number of strategies.

ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS

ENVIRO NEWS

TWO SIDES LAUNCHES UK AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

Two Sides has launched an awareness campaign across the UK to promote the sustainability of print and paper as 'Renewable, Recyclable and Powerful'. The Two Sides initiative involves almost 100 companies and associations spanning the graphic communications supply chain, whose goal is to promote the responsible production and use of print and paper.

Over the next 12 months more than 20,000 media specifiers will receive information about print and paper in order to dispel myths surrounding their environmental impact. 'Our aim is to start to change perceptions about the production and use of print and paper,' explained Martyn Eustace, Two Sides director. 'We're determined to see that print and paper remains an essential part of today's media mix. The initiative is designed to wake people up to the fact that print and paper is a powerful and sustainable medium and encourage them to visit the Two Sides website to discover even more so they can make informed decisions about the best medium for their communication programs.'

SMYTH COMPANIES AND I.D. IMAGES EARN L.I.F.E. CERTIFICATION

Smyth Companies' Bedford, Virginia, label printing facility has been certified under the Tag and Label Manufacturers Institute's (TLMI) Project L.I.F.E. program. Project L.I.F.E. (Label Initiative for the Environment) was developed to enable TLMI members to find cost-effective ways of reducing their impact on the environment.

Initiative participants are encouraged to set their own goals that are ambitious but feasible, and to demonstrate continuous improvement on priorities based on regional, market or business issues. Smyth-Bedford has been pursuing certification for over a year, along with Smyth's plants in Minneapolis, Minnesota and Austin, Minnesota. These two facilities are expected to be L.I.F.E. certified within the next few months.

Dave Buchholz, VP of continuous improvement for Smyth said: 'Manufacturing plant teams organized and implemented environmental practices which have provided benefits for our customers, employees, suppliers and the community. We now have environmentally preferred products for customers, and we utilize raw materials and manufacturing supplies that are friendly to the environment. Our waste items, like metal drums, plastic ink buckets, metal printing plates and paper trim are recycled or reused. The new business practices we have implemented are providing positive results throughout the entire supply chain.'

I.D. Images, a converter of VIP labels, has also been awarded certification for TLMI's L.I.F.E. project. I.D. Images production manager Tammy Bivins said, 'TLMI needs to be commended for their leadership position in building awareness and challenging our Industry to make improvements in environmental responsibility. Project L.I.F.E. is a great mechanism to share best practices and elevate our involvement to the next level, as we have experienced significant improvements as a result.'

LABEL PARTNER SOUGHT FOR DEGRADABLE PET BOTTLE PROJECT

A company that manufactures bottles it says are both recyclable and biodegradable in a land fill or compost is looking for partners to extend its technology to PET labels.

Enso Bottles use an additive introduced in the feeder system (similar to adding a colorant) which identifies the polymer as a food source to microbes, which consume the entire chain.

Tests by independent labs, Enso claims, show the bottles treated with the additive, known as EcoPure, biodegrade 99% faster than standard PET bottles. Enso says this means it will take their bottles 1-5 years to fully degrade in a land fill, while scientists estimate untreated bottles take around 500 years.

Enso was founded last year, and its first bottles entered the market in July with the launch of Aquamatra. The company's next mission is to find label stock to incorporate the additive, so it can offer brands an entirely biodegradable product. Max Clark, marketing director, said: 'We're looking for manufacturers to take this technology and apply it to the different types of label plastics because there's a huge demand for it.'

'There's no technological hurdle with producing it with labels, it's just such a new technology that it hasn't been used in that application,' added co-founder Teresa Clark. 'It all goes back to that environmental mission of making the product available to our customers.

'We don't do exclusives with companies because we want to make sure that the material is widely available - If somebody wants a label or a bottle that's biodegradable they can get it.'

Adding EcoPure to the bottles costs 'a few cents,' Clark added. 'For labels it's going to be less because there's less material there. It's hard to quantify but you're probably going to be talking fractions of a penny for a label.'

Teresa Clark said the technology applies to other types of bottles, and that it will start to be used in the cosmetics industry by the end of the year.

Aquamantra founder Alexandra Teklak said her search for a biodegradable bottle was not straight forward. 'The issue I had with biodegradable plastic was discoloration because the organic additive inside the bottle creates a milky foggy discoloration in the bottle, and because ours have beautiful graphics and are very colorful I really needed it to aesthetically work with my product.

'Enso showed me their third generation, which was clear. With my bottles now you can't see any difference.'

LEFT TO RIGHT are: Roger Pellow, Alfredo Pollici, President of GIPEA, Mike Fairley, Andrea Vimercati, President of FINAT, Vittorio Ratto, GIPEA, Valter Visardi, GIPEA

FINAT President looks to a changing association role

ON a recent visit to Italy Mike Fairley met up with the FINAT and GIPEA Presidents at the GIPEA headquarters in Milan to talk about their ideas for the future importance and growth of label industry associations in Europe and worldwide

Looking back some 30 years it was the then president of FINAT, Leonardo Bucchi, who was one of the very first to acknowledge the launch of a global magazine for the label industry. An Italian who had worked for Binda for many years, he was already forward thinking in his development of the world of labels into a global industry. He saw *Labels & Labeling* as part of that global world.

It was also fortunate that many of the companies that were instrumental in the early years of FINAT were also internationally and expansion orientated. Even then, there were member companies as far afield as North America, Australia and Japan.

During his years as FINAT president Mr Bucchi not only successfully expanded FINAT membership but also initiated the beginnings of an ongoing relationship with TLMI – which still extends to this day – and developed good experience of Asian and Middle East business. He also helped in bringing converters and suppliers together in the FINAT association. All of this was quite advanced for the time.

Today, another Italian is the current president of FINAT at a time when the label industry is becoming ever more global and facing national, regional and global issues. For Andrea Vimercati, who was elected FINAT president earlier this year, one of the many challenges he faces is how to create and expand a European association structure that bonds national associations closer together and yet also strengthens industry global links.

'Many of the existing national associations in Europe were born in the late 1970s and through the 1980s' explains Vimercati. 'Associations such as UNFEA (France), GIPEA (Italy), VskE (Germany). Their aim being to look at national issues facing their members. Today, many of these national association members operate in more than one country in Europe, or even have plants outside of Europe. They are therefore looking for a strong organisational structure, linked in to FINAT, that helps them with the various business and industry issues that they face across not only national borders but also across international borders. Issues such as the environment, training and knowledge resources, global performance and profitability. A strong association structure across the world is also seen as speeding up industry innovation and growth.

'Hence I see the need to develop and build an enhanced European and international association network and structure. A structure where all label companies and individuals can all become friends and which can aid the development and further innovation of label and label industry solutions – wherever they are in the world. It's quite a challenge.'

'The national associations in Europe undoubtedly still have an important role to play in the industry. They can look at local and national requirements in a unique and important way. That's not FINAT's role. However, where there are European-wide issues, such as environmental legislation emanating from the EU, or industry-wide standards, then FINAT can take the lead. Essentially, I see FINAT as a strong, overall, platform organisation that in turn provides a platform for encompassing all the national associations in Europe. Together, we can develop an even stronger industry and have a powerful voice in both national and EU issues.'

A close relationship between Andrea Vimercati and GIPEA (the Italian label association) president, Alfredo Pollici, is already examining how best to evolve the national and pan-European association structures, as Mr Pollici explains:

'In GIPEA, we want to be a catalyst for change in Italy, to provide information and resources that will benefit our converter members, to negotiate with the unions, to have our own Italian-focussed congresses, and develop local standard employment contracts and local industry printing standards. Being part of the Italian graphics association is also of benefit. It means we can share the technical secretariat and use their facilities, as well as be involved in the wider Italian printing industry. We certainly want to be a platform for growing the Italian label industry and to grow country-wide relationships.

'A strong GIPEA can then also work linked to the FINAT network, both feeding in to the wider European structure, yet benefitting from the pan-European – and global – relationships and activities of FINAT. If we can get our national model right it may also help to serve as a guide for some of the other national label industry associations in Europe.'

Both Andrea and Alfredo are also keen to develop the role of the recently formed FINAT Young Manager's Club. With the current Vice Chairman of the Club being another Italian (Nicola Motetta of Euroadhesive, near Milan), it may help further in trying to build the national and pan-European label association structures and relationships. With over 55 members already in the Young Manager's Club it would seem certain that the future of the European label industry will be in safe hands.

But what of a global label industry association structure? Well, interestingly, the President of the Tag & Label Manufacturers Association (TLMI) in North America – Frank Sablone – is also of Italian heritage. 'With some of the leading US label converters now having operations in Europe and globally the need for closer ties between FINAT and TLMI perhaps becomes ever more important' adds Andrea. 'Particularly in looking at global issues facing the industry: again the environment, and global standards that global converters can work to.

'Both associations are also sponsors of Labelexpo shows and the need to continue a close relationship with the show organisers and further development show activities for the benefit of the industry is also imperative, especially in looking at how to get closer to the industry's customers: the brand owners, retails and label users.

'The same probably applies to a future possible global label association structure in which the presidents/chairman of all the major worldwide label associations – American, Australian, Finat, Japanese, Indian, New Zealand, China, etc, could meet from time to time to explore global industry challenges and issues and agree a way forward. It's an interesting opportunity that I'd like to take forward during my presidency.

'The label industry is undoubtedly going through a new period of change and evolution; it's becoming more global, the environment is making a growing impact, digital printing is revolutionising the industry, newer label technologies are growing fast. If I can play a part through FINAT in helping to establish a new world order and association structure for the future benefit and growth of the label industry my presidency will have been more than worthwhile.'

HD FLEXO AT INCI.FLEX

A CDI SPARK 5080 with HD Flexo and inline UV exposure technology more than doubles flexo plate production output

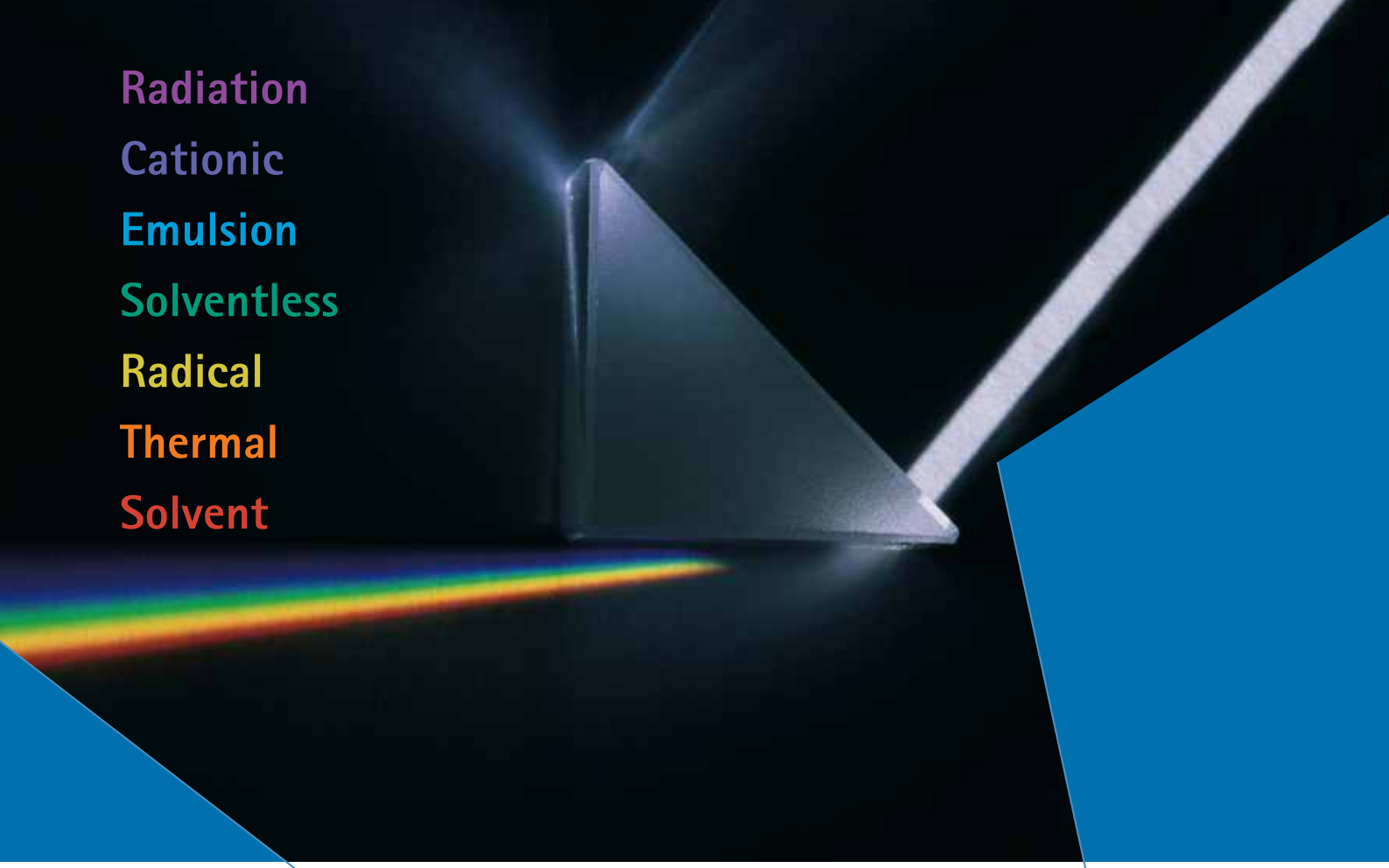
Installed at Inci.Flex, the EskoArtwork CDI Spark 5080 is the first CDI unit equipped with HD Flexo technology in production in Italy. The installation has enabled the company to expand its business from Campania to the international market. Inci.Flex has been operational in the Salerno area since 1997 and specialises in flexo plates.

Inline UV Main Exposure allows digital flexo plates to receive the UV main exposure within the same device where they are imaged, rather than requiring a separate exposure step on an offline unit. The CDI Spark 5080 installed at Inci.Flex is also equipped with HD Flexo, a system that combines the performance of 4000 dpi HD optics along with an exclusive screening technology, achieving sharper and more accurate imaging as well as attaining over 60-line printing, a characteristic required by the label market.

'We believe the HD Flexo technology is a real step forward in quality for the flexographic industry – it significantly narrows the gap in quality with other kinds of printing, like gravure and offset,' says Rossella Salvatore, sales manager at Inci.Flex.

According to the company, the screening technology included in HD Flexo produces clearly defined, better shaped dots and screen management. The convex structure of the top of the digital dot means considerably lower dot percentages can be obtained during printing, together with higher line counts. This translates to uniform ink transfer on highlights and in crucial areas like fade-outs to zero.

LEFT TO RIGHT: Michele Bisogno, digital engraving manager; Rossella Salvatore, sales manager; and Christian Morelli, marketing.



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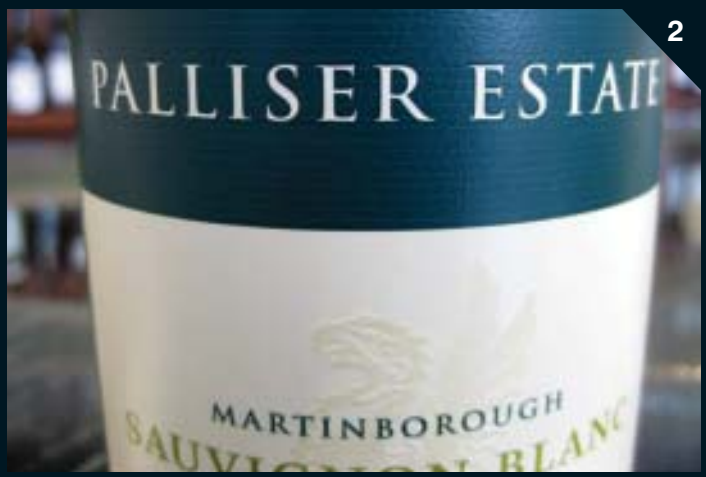
LABELEXPOSURE

1. HOPSHACKLE BREWERY London-based converter Baker Self Adhesive Label helped Hopshackle Brewery switch from barrels to bottled beer.'The brief was to produce a cost effective label with a gold border to denote the individual character and quality of the beer,' says Neil Marchant, digital and repro manager at Baker. 'The metallic effect was achieved through the use of digital printing on a silver substrate using magenta and yellow inks to create the gold. A spot white was used on the non metallic part of the job which was finished with UV varnish and consecutive numbering for each label.' Nigel Wright of Hopshackle Brewery says: 'We are planning to launch a new range of specialist beers, initially in small quantities, so digital printing with its short run capability will give us the flexibility to promote the quality of each brand cost effectively.'



2. PALLISER ESTATE Rapid Label's new 'sharkskin varnish' has been used by Palliser Estate winery. The technique uses a flexo print station to produce a texture similar to the feel of a shark's rough skin. It can be used all over or as a spot varnish, has moisture protection and a non-scuff finish. 'We expect this varnish to be selected by producers like Palliser with long runs, who do not wish to incur the cost of laid stocks,' says Greg Howell general manager of New Zealand-based Rapid Labels.

In the bottle shown, horizontal lines are printed in green and then treated with a gloss varnish to bring out the brand name, followed by sharkskin varnish.

3. ELYSSIA This new range of premium cava by Spanish wine house Freixenet combines a small label with a silk ribbon. The label is printed on sparkling Fedrigoni Constellation (Rasta e33) using a combination of opaque metallic inks and lacquers with a gloss UV varnish and embossing. Andrew Doyle, chairman of UK designers Holmes & Marchant says: 'The idea that runs throughout the design is one of preciousness – the small label and rich materials mimic the idea of jewels, and mean that a consumer needs to pick up and handle the product, looking at the detail on the label and physically feeling the fine materials in the process.'

4. JUPIK Czech Hoop Kofola has re-packaged its leading children's drink, Jupik, to focus on interactivity with child consumers. A website featuring the brand's new 'Jupik Team' characters will include an online game, targeting at 7-15 year olds. Each of the 10 million bottles will include a thermochromic peal-off label on the inner sleeve. Placed on the computer screen, the heat reveals a code for online gamers to pass to the next level. The project presented a technological challenge for Sleever International. The group proposed an SI-PET-TG/050 film, because of its finish and shrink properties – the bottle's complex shape required a shrink rate in excess of 75%. The sleeve was printed in 8-color helioengraving, including a base white. Micro-perforated access was added to peal-off the label on the inner side of the sleeve.

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THE VOICE OF THE END USER

HOW TO INNOVATE (part 2)

INNOVATION happens at the intersection of 'what is possible' and 'what is needed'. In part two, Procter & Gamble's Paul France addresses' the 'what is needed' side of the innovation equation.

Everybody knows that the customer is king. At Procter and Gamble (P&G) we translate this through our mantra: 'the consumer is boss'. P&G is generally credited with being the first major consumer products company to create the function of product and market research to thoroughly understand the consumers' needs. P&G people have an insatiable appetite for understanding and getting feedback from the consumer. This means we spend days living with consumers all over the world: from the hutongs in Beijing, the slums in India, the kasbahs in Morocco to the apartments in NY and London. P&G pioneered in-situ research, in which researchers go into the consumer's home to observe them directly as they go about their daily lives. In stores we shop along with consumers and verify if we win at the first critical moment of truth: does the consumer choose a P&G product over all others in the store?

As a member of the labels and labeling (L&L) industry ask yourself the following questions: Do I really know the needs of the end user, the customer? Do I understand that the customer must be at the center of the innovation process from beginning to end? Do I spend enough time with the customer, in their tech centers or in their plants? Could I establish an immersion program with the end user to bridge the gap in customer understanding? Now is the time to observe, to talk and listen to your customer. The customer's needs typically fall into four categories as shown in Figure 1 below and can be simply described as: cheaper, faster, better, and greener. Let's take a closer look at those innovation needs and their relevance to the L&L industry.

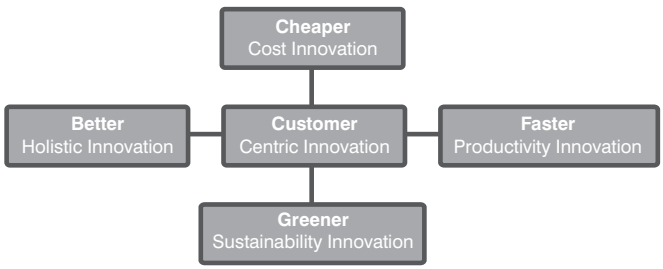
1) CHEAPER : COST INNOVATION

What could be possibly more important for the end user in times of a recession than having the right cost structure and value proposition? Most industry members have implemented the necessary lean processes and are acutely aware of continuous process improvement opportunities. But are you pushing the boundaries of cost innovation? For instance, have we truly reached the limits of thin gauging the label? An emerging method of full-color printing is six or seven color process printing (think of Unilever's Rainbow system or Pantone's Hexachrome) and several companies have claimed significant savings by reducing the color palette. You get the picture - cost innovation is an obvious and well-known need, but it must get your full attention.

2) FASTER: PRODUCTIVITY INNOVATION

While drupa 2008 was dubbed by many the 'digital printing drupa' we have only started to dip our toes into the digital printing revolution. The quick turn around combined with the on-demand capability, creates a competitive speed advantage. Pre-press software is continuing to evolve and together with other supply chain complexity reduction efforts, we are getting faster and faster in responding to continuing sku proliferation. Have a laser-like focus on your customers and explore some new digital capabilities to translate their need for increased productivity into new business opportunities.

FIGURE 1: END USER NEEDS OF CHEAPER, FASTER, BETTER, GREENER



3) BETTER: HOLISTIC INNOVATION

Gain understanding of how your label can win at the first moment of truth. When the consumer is at the store shelf: does he or she recognize the unique features of your label? Co-develop with your customer the needed in-store and at-shelf insights through physical observation and explore more advanced techniques such as eye tracking. Measure and validate which design features on your label can create the right value.

4) GREENER: SUSTAINABILITY INNOVATION

Nowadays sustainability is an essential part of any innovation strategy. The first step is to educate your customer on how your company is progressing on the 5 R's: reduce, reuse, recycle, remove and replace. Green is hot; it is an uncontrolled chain reaction with everybody jumping on the bandwagon but with no global industry standards or measurement tools in place. I'll elaborate more on the need to create sustainable solutions in future columns.

Finally, look beyond what your customers say they want. Dig into their attitudes and behaviors for any hints that might reveal a 'problem' that the customer doesn't know she or he has. Understand the customer's reality but also understand their dreams. Henry Ford is famously quoted as saying: 'If I had asked people what they wanted, they would have said faster horses.' Partner your customer when it comes to innovation and you will stay ahead of the pack.

To see Paul France speaking in the 'Beyond the Recession' seminar at Labelexpo, visit www.labelsandlabeling.com

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Paul France has been 17 years with P&G. Since 2006 he has had global responsibility for printing and decoration innovation for all P&G brands. Within P&G, France is also a Technology Entrepreneur: constantly on the outlook for new technologies and new products. This column represents a personal view and not that of Procter & Gamble

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Understanding Private Equity investors

WITH PRIVATE EQUITY investors emerging as a major force in the labels industry, M&A expert Bob Cronin explains what drives their investments and whether it's right for you

If there's a common theme resounding across the industry, it's that 'Competition is fierce.' Faced with shrinking client budgets, increasing global pressures, and the overarching push to adopt expensive (and often, financially unrecoverable) sustainability measures, label companies are up against some tough hurdles. And this doesn't even include the pricing battles you're having with the guy down the block. Indeed, every advantage today is essential for survival. Yet, carving your competitive edge isn't just about delivering beyond your rivals' weaknesses, it's about understanding what they have going for them and determining how you can tap it as well.

Over the past few years, private equity has emerged as a significant influence in the label segment. W/S Packaging, Fort Dearborn, York Label, and many of the other big-name players are all now owned by private equity firms. Indeed, just about every major industry transaction since 2004 has seen some involvement by private equity, and the interest in top-performing companies in growth-driven segments remains as strong as ever.

What this means to Joe or Jane Label company owner is that it is no longer sufficient to dismiss these investments as a passing fad; you must truly understand how this force affects the competitive field – and perhaps somewhere down the road consider if it's an alternative for you.

First, let's discuss the private equity model and vision it has for our industry. Despite confusion with 'private investors' or 'venture capital,' it is similar in name only and must be viewed by different measures.

Private equity is a unique method of investing which pension funds, banks, high-wealth investors, and others use to make an above-market return on the money they have available. Namely, private equity firms manage funds that have raised money around a particular value thesis that they believe will allow them to bring a significant return for the ownership risk they incur. Moreover, they are interested in companies, market segments, and innovations that they believe provide multiple opportunities for growth.

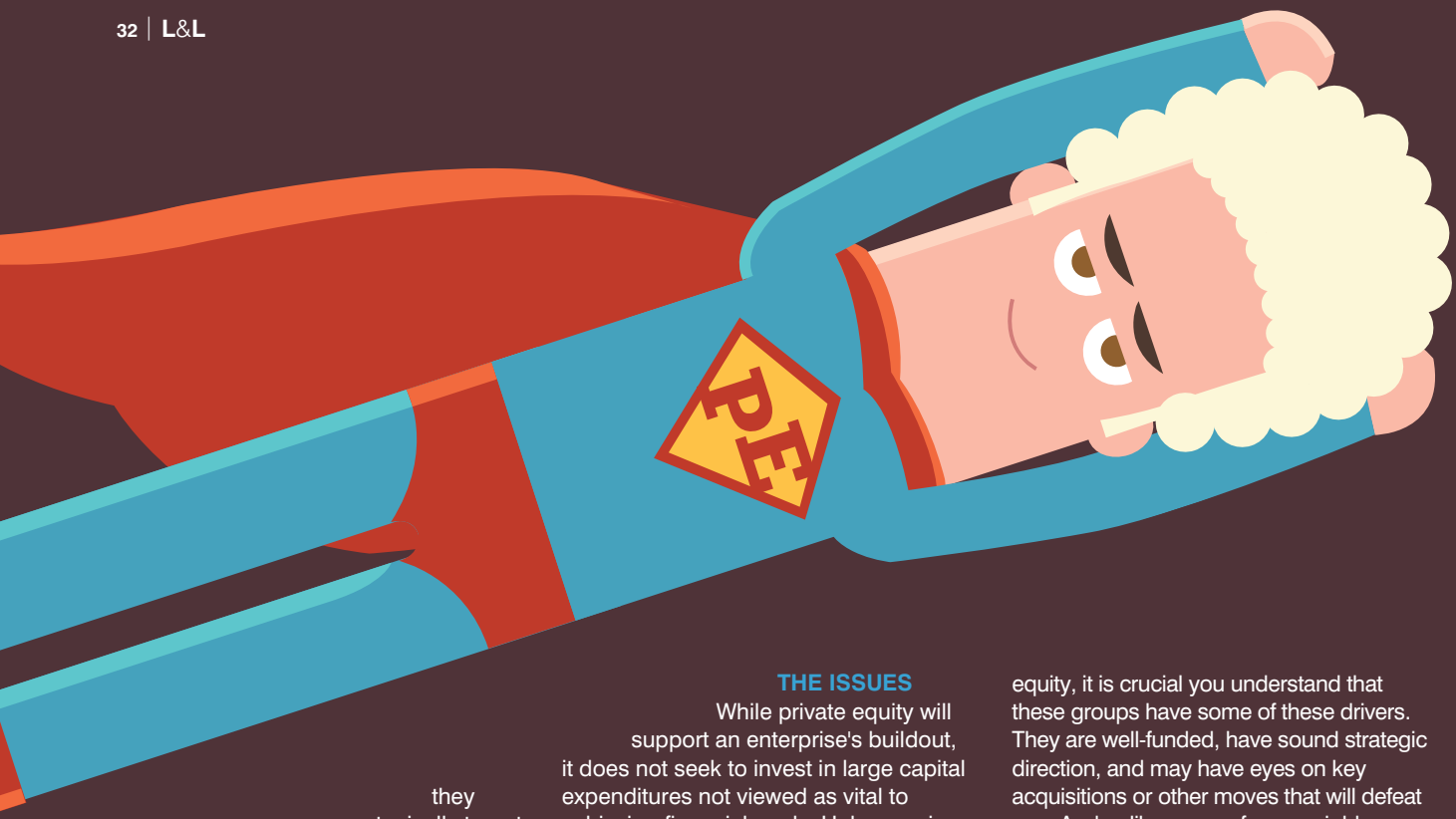
Private equity firms study, research, and scrutinize every investment, carefully selecting only those they believe to have superior potential. Because of the level of constituencies (and investment funds) they serve, they are held to extremely high standards and expectations. Their findings are used to help them raise the necessary funds to provide the investment platform. While not every private equity firm is investing in the space, a significant number are. Their interest in labels has been based on:

- Fragmented market; lack of dominant player
- Numerous acquisition targets
- Core business growth beyond GDP
- End-customer value proposition
- Long-term customer relationships and opportunities
- Stability and resistance to economic swings

Such factors are noteworthy, as they provide a vote of confidence in our ability to grow profitability – despite today's hurdles. Their interest also may offer you an exit consideration should you wish to leave your business some day.

THE OPPORTUNITIES

Private equity investors do not have a set time frame for holding, but



they typically target a liquidity event within 3 to 7 years of initial ownership. Time frames vary based on market conditions, with ownership transfer timed for maximum return on investment. In labels, the model has been to purchase a strong performer as a 'cornerstone' and build out its vision through acquisitions that provide the expertise, capabilities, customers, sales channels, and other assets that rapidly accelerate growth and profitability.

Company owners sell the majority of their properties to the private equity investor (thus, being able to diversify their finances), and retain a small stake in the company to participate in its future. Private equity typically maintains current company leadership – enabling owners and management teams to continue on in their positions. The firm's partners then support label management as advisors on strategy, financing, business focus, M&A opportunities, and mutually beneficial investment exit plans.

Companies serving as cornerstones, are thus able to build out their strategic vision quicker, with less risk, tapping the financial strength and business savvy of a committed partner.

Private equity deals are also more flexible, with owners of attractive properties being able to carve out provisions and terms that meet their objectives.

Certain views of private equity align very well with those of label entrepreneurs. They want the market to succeed and to find a method for their investment to prosper greater than the competition.

THE ISSUES

While private equity will support an enterprise's buildout, it does not seek to invest in large capital expenditures not viewed as vital to achieving financial goals. Unless a piece of equipment significantly enhances operations – say, doubles capacity while reducing overheads, at a 25% ROI – it is not likely to be seen favorably.

"Ownership exit, business driver, or competitor, private equity remains firmly planted in the label landscape. Even if you are not looking to exit anytime soon, it does provide an intriguing choice for later on"

Additionally, under private equity ownership, you now have a 'boss' (partners and a Board of Directors) to answer to. And because of high expectations for above-margin returns, you will likely need to step it up a notch. For some lifelong owners/managers, such a transition may be difficult. Or, should the owner wish to exit, remaining management teams must be able to perform to these high expectations. If you do not have a strong depth in your management team, selling to private equity may simply not be an option.

All the same, private equity has allowed some owners to exit but take on a role on the Board rather than in day-to-day management. Again, the talents of your ongoing operational leadership are key.

On the flip side, if you compete largely against companies owned by private equity, it is crucial you understand that these groups have some of these drivers. They are well-funded, have sound strategic direction, and may have eyes on key acquisitions or other moves that will defeat you. And unlike some of your neighbors that you may be hoping succumb to the economy, your private equity competitors are probably pretty solid.

These basics of private equity are important for every label company to understand. (For a better understanding or information on particular investment opportunities, I welcome your inquiries anytime.) Ownership exit, business driver, or competitor, private equity remains firmly planted in the label landscape. Even if you are not looking to exit anytime soon, it does provide an intriguing choice for later on. Indeed, private equity continues on its quest to capture the potential of our great industry. Whether it becomes an opportunity or issue is up to you.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Bob Cronin is managing partner of The Open Approach, an investment banking/M&A firm focused exclusively on the world of print. The firm's proven results have made it the exclusive member-recommended firm of PIA/GATF and IPW. For more information, visit www.theopenapproach.net, email Bob Cronin at bobrcronin@aol.com, or call +1 630 323 9700.

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JOHN McDermott is the president and CEO of Label World

Q&A

JOHN MCDERMOTT is the president and CEO of Label World, headquartered in Rochester, New York. McDermott spent much of his career working for Kodak in exotic locations around the world, before joining the company three years ago. In this short time, he has made a splash in the North American label industry. As chairman of TLMI's Best Practices Committee, a sub-group of the Environmental Committee, McDermott helped spearhead the creation of the environmental certification program Project L.I.F.E. Label World was also the 2008 Best of Show winner for TLMI's annual label award competition. The converter's win marked the first time in the competition's 31-year history that a digitally printed label earned the highest recognition. McDermott told L&L's Danielle Jerschefske about the importance of environmental benchmarking and his strategy for ensuring Label World's success as economic pressures begin to lift.

L&L: What is the value of TLMI's Project L.I.F.E. (Label Initiative For the Environment - a set of environmental metrics based on ISO 14001 that has been tailored for label printers)?

John: Well, the benefits are threefold. First of all, it improves the relationship between management and associates. Most people want to be employed by a company that has a working CSR program in place. Our company's initiatives have come from the bottom up which has allowed us to recently submit for L.I.F.E certification.

Second, as concerns about rising costs continue to increase, Project L.I.F.E. is really about good business. The program forces a company to look at why and where they are spending their money. Those already certified have realized significant cost savings; it's really an extension of Lean Manufacturing. In just one year, it's possible to save reasonable amounts of money and to see the pay off of going through the process.

Obtaining certification is the smart thing to do. For instance, at Label World we switched to reduced energy

lighting in our plant and have achieved a 75 percent reduction in our lighting cost. There are many ways to increase the bottom line, but many are overlooked without going through the detailed process of L.I.F.E.

Third, customers are looking for it. 50 percent of labels become waste and this statistic must be lowered. Once Consumer product groups (CPGs) wake up and realize that packaging takes up one third of US landfills, they're going to demand change – and soon enough require it.

Customers are looking for 'enlightened suppliers' that help them achieve the goals of their sustainability programs and those of the global retailers. Smart converters will get ahead of the curve.

L&L: What are your thoughts on the multiple standards that are available in the current market?
John: I believe that many of the current certification programs – SFI, SPC, FSC and more – will eventually consolidate. Those that provide the most value will survive.

L&L: Is there a plan to expand the L.I.F.E. program into other associations around the world?
John: We'd love to have FINAT license the program out for its members' benefit. And as the program begins to pick up pace, we will look to roll L.I.F.E. out to the other label associations around the world.

L&L: How did you build the metrics for the program?
John: We started by evaluating other programs such as the SPC (Sustainable Packaging Coalition) and by reviewing what certification programs are offered in Europe – we didn't necessarily want to start from scratch, but there was nothing that was specific enough to the particular challenges that label converters face.

We designed the L.I.F.E. metrics to align with the SPC and ISO 14001. But the key was not to make the program too narrow. Because the majority of label converters are small independent companies that are not ISO certified, Project L.I.F.E. gives them a place to start with significantly less cost.

L&L: You said that you've just submitted for certification. For your team, what was the most difficult part with pulling your metrics together?
John: The most difficult part was correctly tracking metrics that we had never looked at before. For example, we looked at the pounds of ink that were used in a given time and then converted that number into the amount of VOCs that our productions emitted. Also, we had never before tracked our electricity, gas or water consumption so it took us about 12 months to pull all of these variables into a rolling total.

L&L: So now that you've submitted your scorecard, what is Label World's next step?
John: Well, there are 31 total metrics within the L.I.F.E. program. We have plans to focus on the 2-3 areas our company will reap the most benefits from, possibly sustainable materials or alternative energy sources. We have already moved to turning our waste into energy. This incurred a small price increase, but was worth while when looking at the big picture.

L&L: Despite the 2009 economic climate, Label World has made some significant capital investments this year. Can you tell me about these?
John: Our first investment was the purchase of an AB Graphic Digicon Series 2 complete with spot UV capability, embossing and the first flatbed die cutting equipment in a machine for ABG. This greatly reduces the cost of digital finishing and has allowed us to further penetrate the wine market. We've also acquired a new KTI turret. Our purchase of a 12-color Ko-Pack combination press with lamination, corona treating and three die cutting stations can handle multiple webs which will move us into the health & beauty and flexible packaging markets.

L&L: How do these investments tie into Project L.I.F.E.?
John: As our business continues to grow and we pursue further investments, our electrical and consumables consumption will increase. Once we evaluate the data from this I will go back with the TLMI Environmental Committee to discuss the metrics of L.I.F.E. so we can ensure that they are realistic.

L&L: How do you feel about the current business climate?
John: Business is definitely picking up. While our top seven customers are still experiencing a slow down, with our team of six salesmen, we are making up the difference by acquiring new business.

L&L: Can you give an example of some the new business that you've attained?
John: We're doing a number of things that we've never done before, most specifically with our HP Indigo ws4050. We can print 1mil film and 14pt board on the same machine. All of our reps sell the technology within our sales portfolio. Digital is always used as part of a full solution for our customers. We encourage our team to seek out large buckets of SKUs. For instance, we worked with a customer that required over 800 SKUs in a five day schedule.

L&L: What is your general business strategy moving forward?
John: You can expect to see us invest in more capital equipment. If there's one thing that I've learned about this industry, it's that it's capital intensive and in order to be innovative, you have to keep reinvesting.

LABEL WORLD was 2008 Best of Show winner for TLMI's annual label award competition with this digitally printed label

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Optimizing carbon mask plate production

WITHOUT stable, repeatable platemaking, the pressroom has no chance of achieving a stable process. Malcolm G. Keif, Cal Poly State University, outlines an eight point program to ensure consistent results from digital platemaking

If your company has invested in digital platemaking, you are certainly interested in making high-quality plates and you have no doubt run characterization targets on press, looking for ways to ensure consistent results in platemaking. To achieve balanced grays, match a proof, or hold a drop shadow, you must ensure that your equipment is optimized and your process is stable and repeatable.

When making a carbon mask plate, you should use an eight-step process to make sure your platemaking is repeatable. The stability of your process depends on how often each of these steps is completed. Start by completing these steps at least once per shift and then you can back off to daily, or less frequently, depending on how stable the process is. Monitoring these steps with continual data collection and plotting will help you better understand your process and ensure consistent results every time. You'll need a transmission densitometer for reliable measurements.

STEP ONE

Before you image anything, validate your plate's carbon mask density. You want to ensure your plate can adequately mask out all UV light during the exposure process. Zero your transmission densitometer on 'air'. Then measure all four corners of your plate (without the protective layer). You should expect a black density above 3.5 density units.

STEP TWO

Calibrate your laser's focus. You want to ensure that your laser optics provide the best focus on the plate and subsequently the sharpest reproduction. This is particularly important when you are trying to do fine highlights for high-line screens or micron-level features for security or printable electronics. Follow your manufacturer's procedure to complete a focus search. Select the sharpest area and input the appropriate information into your imaging software.

STEP THREE

Check your stain level. When imaging the carbon mask, you want to be certain that you are completely ablating the carbon. The best way to check this is to ablate a solid area and then check that against the bare plate's opacity after manually removing the carbon. The laser-ablated area should be comparable in transparency to the manually removed carbon. Use some high-tack tape to 'peal away' the carbon. Zero your transmission densitometer on the manually removed area and then check the ablated area. You are looking for a difference of less than 0.07 density units.

STEP FOUR

Next, ensure that you are imaging an accurate midtone dot. Again you can measure this with your transmission densitometer but you must first zero your densitometer on the plate with no mask, preferably the ablated solid from the stain level test. You target may vary but to start,

look for a density of 0.30, ± 0.02 density units. If you are above or below that you will want to adjust your speed and/or your laser wattage.

STEP FIVE

Find the minimum dot – sometimes called a 'dot-fail test' – you can uniformly and consistently image using a tone scale with dot gain compensation applied. Map that dot to your highlight for a given screen using your curve software. For example, if you can reliably hold and print 20μ round dots and nothing smaller, you can use that as your minimum dot on the plate (though you may not be able to reliably hold that small feature as an isolated highlight dot). That 20μ spot will map as your minimum highlight in the file to a 1.2 percent dot in a 150 lpi file or to a 0.79 percent dot in a 100 lpi file. The goal is to maximize your tonal range and therefore extend your highlights to as fine a dot as you can reliably hold on your plate and press.

There is a problem though with carbon mask plates. Simply making a 1 percent opening in the mask will not result in a 1 percent dot on the plate. Instead we must build a transformation in the RIP called a bump curve to compensate for light transmission through the mask. Bump curves are necessary whenever an imaging technology does not expose linearly throughout the tonal range, as is the case with carbon mask plates. With carbon mask plates we must open highlight dots proportionally more than midtones or shadows on the mask to allow additional light through to fully image the highlight dot. This is screen-dependent so you'll need to have a different bump curve for different screens. For example, a 133 lpi bump curve may convert a 1 percent dot in the file to a 5 percent dot in the mask, which will result in a 1 percent dot on the finished plate. It is simply a means to an end and the result is full tonal range. Of course, that 1 percent dot on the plate may print as a 10 percent dot or more on the substrate, depending on the characteristics of the substrate.

STEP SIX

Develop a standard way to handle your plates. Use care in storage and handling of your plates to ensure that no scratches occur and that they are kept in a temperature and light-controlled environment. Keep boxes closed and flat and support the plate during transfer. Minimize the plate's exposure to dust, light and heat. Consider using a positive air filtration system and other means to cut down on dust.

STEP SEVEN

Make sure you are using consistent exposure practices. Be sure that you have the optimal exposure times for back, main, detack, and light finishing. It is easy to cut corners or to over-expose but the optimal exposure is the minimum exposure necessary to fully polymerize the desired part of the plate. Work with your plate manufacturer to do a comprehensive step test for each exposure. Assuming you don't have a light integrator (and most bank light sources don't), you'll need to be certain your bulbs are warmed up before making exposures. Get in the habit of warming your bulbs up for at least two minutes if they have gone cold for more than 30 minutes. Use a consistent process and measure your relief for every back exposure so you can monitor your repeatability constantly. A great practice is to simply put a small white board above your micrometer and plot your exposures throughout the day – easy to see, easy to interpret.

STEP EIGHT

Calibrate your processing. Likeall other potential variation, processing must be calibrated and controlled. Work with your plate manufacturer to ensure you have the minimum processing time, pressure, temperature, etc to fully process your plate. Make sure you are visually inspecting plates that come out of the processor as well as measuring relief. Ensure you have dried your plates completely before proceeding.

If you follow these eight steps, you will have great success in controlling your platemaking. After all, without stable repeatable platemaking, the pressroom has no chance of achieving a stable process. Develop standardized procedures that can be easily followed and easily observed so that there is no room for error or a lack of repeatability.

PLATE NEWS

WATER-WASH PLATES STORM FORWARD

Water-washable plates continue to make advances in terms of print quality and ease of use. Asahi Photoproducts has introduced its first solvent-free plate system. This water washable AWP plate is claimed 'to outperform the best digital flexo plates currently available for the label printing industry', both in terms of quality, 'nearly matching litho', but also in terms longevity, 'as it can print much longer than a normal plate, consequently reducing waste,' according to the manufacturer.

A special water processor, developed specifically for this technology, incorporates an in-line water distillation and reuse system. Processing times are claimed one third of that required for a solvent plate, saving time, energy and of course preventing VOC emissions.

Toyobo's Cosmolight water washable flexo plates and Printight water washable letterpress plates are also receiving a favorable reception. Cosmolight plates are produced in less than one hour, will hold a 1 percent dot at 175 lpi and are compatible with water-based, solvent-based and UV inks. Three different levels of thickness allow use with a variety of substrates.

Jet Europe has launched the UVW-114 CtP digital flexo plate which can be washed out with tap water. Following CtP exposure, the plate requires just 20 minutes' processing time to be press ready. Jet says the UVW-114 achieves rasters of 60 lpc, with clean and smoothly blended halftones, without break-outs in the 0% area of the tonal range. The plate can be used with UV inks.

Also water-washable is Flint Group Flexographic Products' nyloprint WS 230 S digital stencil plate for letterpress security printing applications. This allows conventional film processing to be replaced by digital mask ablation.

SCREEN MOVES EAST

Screen has appointed Yam International as its exclusive distributor in Russia and Ukraine for its range of flexo CTP products, which includes the new PlateRite FX870II, PlateRite FX870 and PlateRite FX1524.

Yam International supplies the graphic arts sector in Russia, Ukraine and other Commonwealth of Independent States countries. It was founded in 1989 and created a specialist department to service the label and packaging markets in 2001.

Andrey Dynkin, head of the flexo sales department at Yam International, said: 'When a new generation of Toyobo CTP plates was announced in 2008, we started looking for a supplier of high-quality flexo platesetters. After some research it became clear that Screen was the best with its quality, stability and reputation.'

HELL ADDS FLEXO PLATE PROCESSOR

Hell Gravure introduced the new PremiumSetter S1300 at Labelexpo – a manual version of the highly automated PremiumSetter S1600. Equipped with a manual rotatable hood and bearing blocks for manual cylinder loading, the Premiumsetter S1300 can laser flexo plates up to 1350 mm x 950 mm. The S1300 system has the same functional characteristics as the S1600, including the same high-resolution fiber laser and PremiumProfiler for 3D-shaping.

Hell's FastForward system makes laser ablation mask (LAMS) imaging more efficient using two modules - PassiveFastForward skips solid areas of a printing form, in a similar way to an LAMS-laser, while the new ActiveFastForward module controls the mechanical processing of non-printing areas of a printing form. Before laser engraving, the definable areas at the edges as well as the non-printing areas of the form are processed using a fixed cutting tool. The cutter is advanced automatically and strips the form's unlasered material surface to a relief depth of 1mm with the sleeve rotating. FastForward results in an average time saving of more than 20 percent - and with some plate types up to 80 percent, according to Hell.

ASAHI OPENS US CENTER

Asahi Photoproducts, a Japan-headquartered supplier of photopolymer printing plates, has opened its Atlanta Technology Center (ATC) in Georgia, USA. The new facility completes Asahi's global technical network, adding to facilities already operational in Asia and Europe.

The facility will be equipped with a full installation of platemaking equipment for producing flexographic plates, including the new Asahi Water Washable Plate (AWP). This digitally imaged flexo plate offers environmental compliancy as it is washed out with water, digitally imaged, and processed in less than an hour. AWP is suitable for all types of inks (solvent-based, UV-curing and water-based), exhibiting excellent printing performance, ink transfer and plate durability, says the company.

Get Smart

WITH THE US ECONOMY hopefully set to emerge from recession, Danielle Jerschefske reports from the annual TLMI Technical Conference on solutions to help converters maximize their profits and find opportunities for new growth

Opened this year by Frank Gerace, CEO of Multi-Color Corporation and chairman of the TLMI board of directors, the annual TLMI Technical Conference looks to provide attendees with ideas and solutions that will help them become more productive and profitable. Surely this has never been more critical, as the economy starts to emerge from the worst crisis in living memory.

This year's Technical Conference co-chairs were Paul Brauss of Mark Andy, Tom Spina of Luminer Converting Group and Terie Syme of Prestige Label.

IMPROVED PRE-PRESS PRODUCTIVITY

To kick off proceedings, a panel of pre-press professionals gave advice on implementing a digital workflow.

'Be sure to analyze your needs and to pick the best workflow for your business,' advised Nicole Ross from Meyers Printing. 'And get the operators involved. Will the system take you into new areas or will you stay in the same market?' Steve Miller of Eastman Kodak advised converters to ask for references 'and benchmark vendors as a value proposition.' A pre-press team must know what a press is capable of before a job is accepted. 'You have to preflight to catch issues early on.'

Is a new RIP required for CTP? 'Audit your current process first,' Ross advised. 'The (existing) RIP could be used with the new system, but it's not usually recommended. You have to make sure that the RIPs support the PDFs because you have to be able to support what the designers do.'

When is the right time to implement an in-house digital workflow? Michael Naughton, EskoArtworks, replied: 'With the economy as it is, it's smart to invest now to reap the benefits of tax breaks.' Ken Norris from Labelad reminded converters that a full digital workflow is an ongoing investment. 'A budget must be kept to continue support.'

'You can't have enough budget for software,' added Richard Black, All Printing Resources.

MAXIMIZE PROFITS IN LEAN TIMES

Waste reduction and reduced down time are two great ways to increase profits. Craig Thompson from Martin Automatic discussed the cost savings potential of an in-line automatic splicer and automatic rewinder on a press. The main advantages of automating roll changes include elimination of material waste, reduction in core waste and the ability to efficiently use butt rolls, although the ROI for this type of machinery depends on a number of factors such as waste, run lengths and change over times. 'It's possible to save as much as 15 percent on waste reduction alone', said Thompson.

Consistency and repeatability are important means to maximizing profits, and both require standardization. Dave McSherry of Acpo said: 'Standardized work is current, organized, visual, and allows observers the ability to easily verify that instructions are being followed. The benefit is that standardized work is understood and executed properly to produce consistent results.'

Tim Daisy from Prism discussed the 'mass balance' approach to process improvement, which states that profits are maximized when the amount of materials moving into a plant equals the amount shipped out. He showed flow charts of major suppliers who have found success with this strategy. A case study showed that a 5 percent reduction in waste is possible.

Retrofitting older equipment for more capability and efficiency is a means of increasing profits at a lower cost point. Vince Genovese of Nireco stressed the importance of proper tension control. He said: 'If you're having trouble holding register, especially on thin or extensible materials, reconfigure the press to properly transport the web under stable conditions.' Genovese suggests adjustments to base roll diameters to suit current web needs. Making the speed nips variable to accommodate the range of web thicknesses can also help. 'Update tension controls using closed loop feedback and apply control automation.'

DIGITAL PRINTING

Joel Carmany from Consolidated Label outlined four factors in his company's success in implementing digital printing. The company built its own digital quote system, designed a more efficient workflow, trained new operators for the press and dedicated an artist specifically for digital work.

Lori Campbell from The Label Printers has experience in digital technologies, including electron beam imaging, digital 'liquid toner' offset, and inkjet. While her company has found success with these options, Campbell is looking for more portability, faster speeds, wider widths and expanded repeats, reliable output and data integrity, reliable proofing, and more color capabilities. All are needs that the entire panel agreed are necessary.

From Lightning Labels, Peter Renton told converters that they must evaluate the possibility of coating materials in-house. Renton also stressed the importance of finding the right finishing system – flexible dies versus flatbed – depending on each individual's business needs and markets served. 'Leverage the resources of

your vendors to guide you through the decision-making process.'

Renton believes that the biggest opportunity for digital printing is its variable data capability, but says converters must educate brand owners on what is possible with the technology.

David Blatt from ColorAd spoke on value added selling. He asked the crowd: 'Do you have the right sales force to sell a differentiated value proposition?' Blatt reminded the audience that the price/value proposition is different with more SKUs and variable imaging than it is in commodity markets.

In general, the panel is looking for more automation with web-to-print front-end applications and all panelists are eager to have better integration with finishing systems once an in-line or off-line solution has been chosen.

PROCESS COMPARISONS

Chuck Sims of CL&D Graphics evaluated the differences between printing technologies and reviewed the types of inks required for each. 'Flexographic inks tend to be more fluid and are water- or solvent-based or UV and EB curable. Offset uses paste inks including heat-set, cold-set, UV and EB curable. And with digital, there are fluid inks, heat process (toner) or UV curable options.'

Don Rees of Northern Label discussed opportunities in the flexible packaging market. 'Understand what section of the packaging industry has the open opportunity,' Rees said. 'Test markets that the wider set presses can't afford to work in. Look at spray can wraps and the beverage shrink sleeve market. It is very important to understand at which level narrow web printing can be advantageous in the flexible packaging market.'

Steve Lee of RotoMetrics presented comparison factors between solid and flexible dies. Lee explained: 'Flexible dies have come a long way since their introduction. Initially only good for use on PS materials, flexible dies can now cut films, tags, folding cartons and IML material in a variety of shapes and sizes, and they can be used in semi-rotary finishing systems and servo presses.' Advantages of flexible dies include lower cost, easier storage, lower shipping costs and extended die life because of recent technology advances.

On the other hand, the cost of purchasing the initial magnetic cylinder is higher; repeat lengths must be seriously considered when analyzing the cost benefit of investment; and flexible dies still have difficulty in cutting through thicker substrates. 'It's important to understand the core practices of your facility and the capital considerations before making a decision about die investments,' Lee advised.

INSIDE PRINTED ELECTRONICS

Mark Andy's Kevin Manes provided the audience with a general market overview of printed circuit applications. The convergence of microelectronics and the graphic arts community will open up huge growth opportunities from applications like displays & lighting, circuits, and energy harvesting, said Manes.

Daniel Gamota from Printovate explained that the inherent attributes of printed electronics – low cost, low profile, drop resistance, easily integrated – combined with technology breakthroughs in functional inks is driving the market forward. But there still is work to be done before the label industry can capitalize on the possibilities of converting electronic labels and tags. Gamota said: 'Even more research must be conducted to increase the performance of current inks, to manufacture finer printed channels in gravure cylinders, and to create a higher density circuit design which will make printed electronics a mainstay in the marketplace sooner.'

Jeff Parker from Henkel Corp. spoke in more detail about the advancement of electrically conductive inks. He said: 'Inks have improved so that you can put the product precisely where you need it; and anilox rolls have improved to be more receptive to these inks.'

When printed electronics was first introduced it was thought that one printing technology would output the most successful work. But to optimize performance and cost, most printed electronics manufacturers use a variety of printing technologies for the various layers in a given device.

Each speaker drove home the message that real success will be found in printed electronics once the label industry establishes working relationships with the intelligence experts. Collaboration is key.

QUALITY & CONSISTENCY

Jay Sperry of the Sonoco Institute at Clemson University discussed how the 'G7' standard will impact the flexo world. G7 grew out of GRACol – General Requirements and Applications for Commercial offset lithography. 'G7 simplifies CMYK printing, enhances color management throughout the supply chain, better manages customer expectations and aligns multiple print processes and substrates,' said Sperry.

G7 is based on Near Neutral Calibration, calibrating the CMY curves to dot gain curves while maintaining the gray balance throughout the tone range. Because G7 certification is dependent on ISO spec inks, ISO 2846-5 compliant inks must be used.

To implement G7 an ISO report must first be completed to certify the chosen ink set. Next, all flexo plates, the press system and solid CMYK printed values must be optimized. Prepress should then be calibrated to hit NPDC (Neutral Print Density Curve); the NPDC is then verified and an ICC press profile is created.

A color management workflow must be developed to find success with G7. Target colors and tolerances should be published, measurement protocol made standard, and production reports evaluated regularly.

Bill Paulson from Harper explained the importance of anilox standardization in the G7 calibration process, where anilox volumes must be set based on a controlled anilox inventory.

DO MORE WITH YOUR PRESS

Clark Brown of Valco Melton promoted the benefits of creating pressure sensitive materials in line. 'There's the opportunity to save money, control quality and increase business – and you'll reduce inventory and can provide just-in-time delivery.'

Mike Cooper from UK company Catchpoint promoted linerless labels: 'The savings in material cost will provide a value-added return and you will give your customer a significant hedge against future material cost inflation.' Cooper also explained how the on-line application process worked, with cutting and label application part of the same process step.

Tom Kirtz Telstar told converters to 'pimp your press' by retrofitting added-value capabilities. 'It is a lower cost of entry to new markets and brings more flexibility to existing equipment.'

The manufacture of shrink sleeves was addressed by Will Schretzman of Verst Group Logistics. Schretzman said that rather than investing in the equipment needed to produce high quality shrink

sleeves, it may be better to contract the work out to a contract packager that has the experience and the capital.

ZEST FOR L.I.F.E – SUSTAINABILITY

Project L.I.F.E. is a certification process developed by the TLMI that encourages narrow web printers to focus on developing sustainability in their businesses.The goals are not only to meet local environmental requirements, but to maximize value and implement metrics to measure progress. Participants send an updated scorecard each year, with a full audit conducted bi-annually.

Katherine O'Dea of GreenBlue – an organization which works with the Sustainable Packaging Coalition (SPC) and has close ties to brand owners – explained how the L.I.F.E. metrics follow what the SPC is asking of its members.

Jay Jogodinski of Green Bay Packaging discussed how his company had benefited from reducing air, water, and waste discharges – and how this was a great model for converters to follow. Cindy White of CRG explained how retailers' expectations have evolved and what suppliers and converters can do to change their process impacts. White pointed out that converters have control over inks, matrix waste and liner. She said: 'Explore matrix opportunities, get your customers to recycle their release liner, be conscious of your left over inks, and recycle as much as you can.'

Currently there are only matrix pelletization operations in northern Wisconsin and Massachusetts, but there are plans to open eight more throughout North America over the next five years where all PS waste – except vinyls – will be accepted.

Recycling is a valid option for release liner, White said. 'Used, bleached release liner on cores over 6in can be re-used, and any size used, bleached release liner off cores can be recycled and made into new paper. Clear PET liner can be reground and made into new plastic.'

Larry Gibson from Unilever went through the changes made at the company's Raeford plant to reduce energy usage and increase recycled content use up to 90 percent. 'A nominated Green team within the plant started a program called BRAG – Building Raeford Around Green. Since its start, the plant has reduced water usage by creating a single loop cooling system, eliminating a longer process of three separate systems that lost water and used more energy. Waste has been reduced through new packaging procedures, and with the replacement of multiple wooden pallets with plastic ones.'

Wet and solid waste is turned into energy using the services of Vexor Technology, which designs processing equipment that creates a homogenous fuel. Reusable pallets and boxes are stored to be sent back to suppliers and reusable cardboard boxes are stacked and set aside for re-use.

LEARNING FROM THE CHAMPIONS

Frank Gerace of Multi-Color Corporation asked a converter panel to share their experiences in getting through the economic recession. The panel included Craig Moreland – Coast Label; Joel Carmany – Consolidated Label; Andrew Farquharson – Dow Industries and Bob Zaccone – GSI.

Joel Carmany says that he's managed his material costs more closely. Farquharson described the climate over the last nine months as 'painful, but healthy', citing a reduction in 401k matching and cost management as good moves he's made. Zaccone explained how his company has had 'to do a lot more with less'.

To maintain profitability, Moreland says that he's 'paying suppliers sooner to obtain discounts for accountability', while Carmany gave the widely admired tip of using bonus structured credit cards to make purchases. He said that he's been able to save up to $250,000 by using credit. Carmany has also reduced inventory, made investments in systems development to streamline the company's workflow and has more closely watched lean manufacturing initiatives, paying more attention to things such as error reduction.

The panelists stated that their supplier base have been helpful with inventory control, providing JIT delivery and discounts for early payments.

Each of the panelists had maintained bonus structures despite the difficulties incurred over the last few quarters. Zaccone talked about the relationship between incentive programs and productivity. 'We have to be productive, especially in times like these,' he said.

Turning to sales, Joel Carmany expressed some concerns about finding outstanding sales people. One tip for finding a good salesman is by asking your customers. Someone might be a great seller but didn't have a great portfolio to sell.

Andrew Farquharson explained that his sales people receive a higher commission for new business than for repeat sales. New business is considered to be a new label in this case.

The panel then looked at where to look for growth. Zaccone explained that 'it takes double the time and double the money you expect to spend when you're trying to get into new markets.' Carmany's agreed: 'you have to be committed at least three years for expensive investment.'

When the panelists were asked about training, Carmany explained how he has implemented 'roaming' trainers. 'They work together with our staff to ensure that the press doesn't go down and they support our operations teams to be more effective.' There is one roaming trainer scheduled per shift.

JOEL Carmany, Bob Zaccone, Frank Gerace, Craig Moreland, Andy Farquharson

PRESS manufacturer's panel

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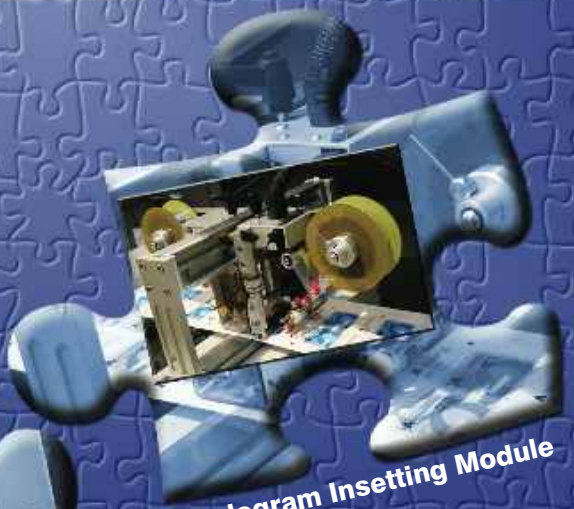
Flat Bed Hot Foil/Emboss Module



Hologram Insetting Module

Pharma Inspection Module

Overlaminating/ Cold Foil/Super Varnish Module

Booklet Feeder Module

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CUT & STACK

1. Color Process - Prime: Multi-Color Corporation, Ohio, US, for Gain - Soothing Sensations

DIGITAL PRINTING

2. Food & Beverage Products: CL & D Digital, Wisconsin, US, for Blue Diamond Almonds: Lime 'n Chili Bags

3. Germark, S.A., Barcelona, Spain, for Oli Espal

4. Health & Beauty Products: Prestige Label, An Atlantic Corporation Company, North Carolina, US, for Multi BabyLove Gift Set

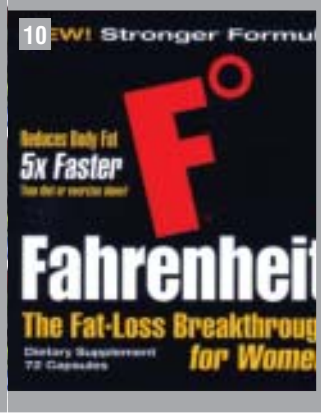
5. Household Goods: Consolidated Label Co, Florida, US, for Organica

6. Wine & Spirits (Beer): TAPP Technologies Inc, British Columbia, for Newfoundlander's Rum

7. All Other: Dow Industries, Massachusetts, US, for Dart Case Label

EDP LABEL

8. Amherst Label, Inc., New Hampshire, US, for Proud To Be An American



FLEXOGRAPHY

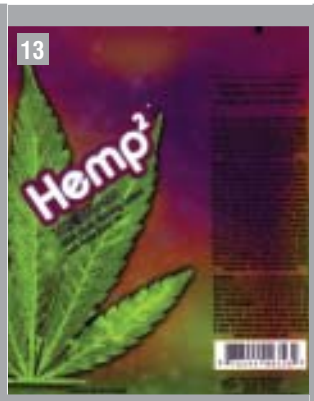
9. Color Process - Prime: Hub Labels Inc, Maryland, US, for Marvel
10. Line - Prime: McDowell Label & Screen Printing, Texas, US, for Fahrenheit
11 Line & Screen/Tone - Prime: Label Technology Inc, California, US, for Earth & Vine Blood Orange

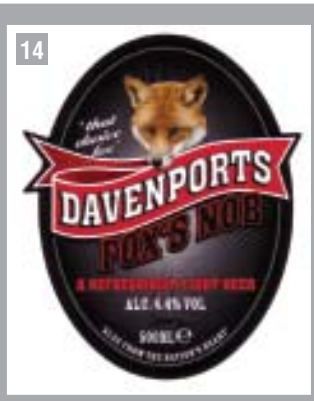
GRAVURE

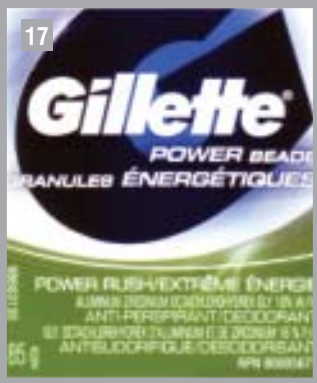
12 Line & Screen/Tone - Prime: Spear, Ohio, US, for Bud Light

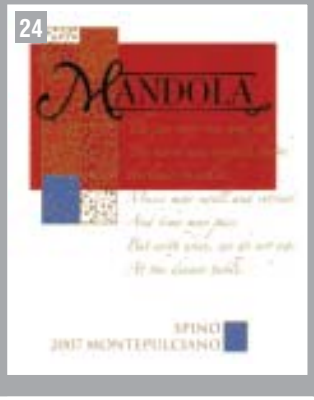
TLMI Winners

WINNERS of the 2009 TLMI label awards









MULTI-PROCESS

13. Color Process - Prime: McDowell Label & Screen Printing, Texas, US, for Hemp² and

14. The Label Makers Ltd, West Yorkshire, UK, for Davenports Fox's Nob

15 Line - Non-Prime: KimBells pack inc, Quezon City, Philippines, for Fern-Chidden Label (I&V) with stamp cut

16. Line & Screen/Tone - Non-Prime: Whitlam Label Company, Michigan, US, for 111th Congress Visitor Pass/ Access Badge

17. Line & Screen/Tone - Prime: Dow Industries, Massachusetts, US, for Gillette and

18. KimBells pack inc., Quezon City, Philippines, for Cefaclor Xelent 105mL with Magic Flash

PROMOTIONAL

19. Logmatix, Georgia, US, for Red Rain Decals – Best of Show

ROLL TO ROLL

20. Color Process - Prime: ASL Group-All Stick Label Limited, North Carolina, for Print Me Magazine Cover

21. Line - Prime: Label Technology Inc, California, US, for Juicy Couture Body Bronzer

22. Line & Screen/Tone - Prime: Multi-Color Corporation, Ohio, US, for Tradewinds – Lemon

23. Line & Screen/Tone - Prime: KimBells pack inc, Quezon City, Philippines, for Royalè L-GlutaPOWER Whitening Soap POB

ROTARY SCREEN PRINTING

24. Line - Prime: McDowell Label & Screen Printing, Texas, US, for 2007 Montepulciano

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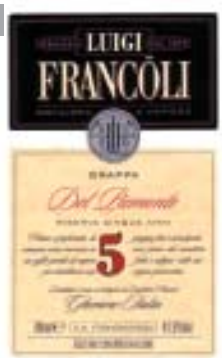

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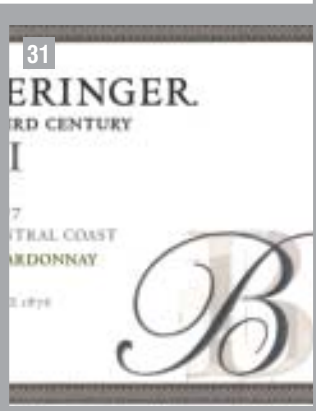

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TAGS

25. Merchandising: Valley Forge Tape & Label Co., Inc., Pennsylvania, US, for One-A-Day Energy Advantage20

WINE & SPIRITS - FLEXOGRAPHY/ LETTERPRESS

26. Color Process - Prime: McDowell Label & Screen Printing, Texas, US, for Soquel Sangiovese

27. Line - Prime: Taylor Made Labels Inc., Oregon, US, for Daedalus Cellars Syrah 2006

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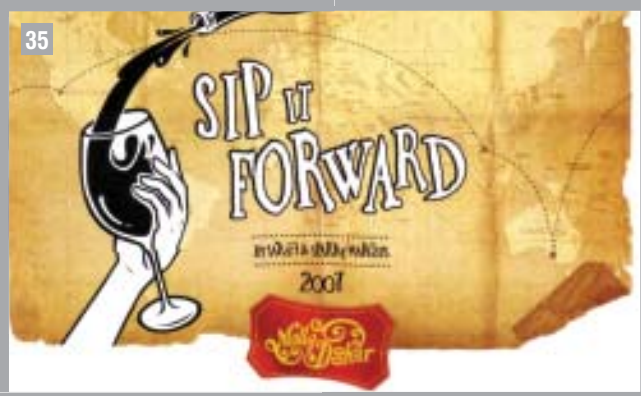

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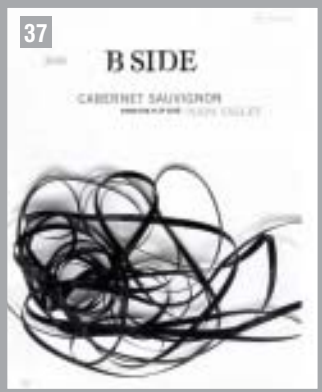

28. Color Process - Prime: Labelgraphics (Glasgow) Ltd, Glasgow, UK, for Angostura Caribbean Rum 70cl

29. Line - Prime: Pilot Italia S.P.A., Milan, Italy, for Grappa 5 Anni

30. Line & Screen/Tone - Non-Prime: McDowell Label & Screen Printing, Texas, US, for Barrel Proof

31. Line & Screen/Tone - Prime: TAPP Technologies Inc., British Columbia, for Beringer Third Century Chardonnay

32. Line & Screen/Tone - Prime: Labelgraphics (Glasgow) Ltd, Glasgow, UK, for Greenall's Gin 70cl

WINE & SPIRITS – OFFSET

33. Color Process - Non-Prime: Collotype Labels International Holdings Pty Ltd, Australia, for Robert Oatley

34. Color Process - Prime: Collotype Labels USA Inc., California, US, for Zinopolis

35. Color Process - Prime: Collotype Labels International Holdings Pty Ltd, Australia, for Sip It Forward

36. Line - Prime: Collotype Labels International Holdings Pty Ltd, Australia, for dai gum san

37. Line & Screen/Tone - Prime: Collotype Labels USA Inc., California, US, for B Side

P E O P L E T O P E O P L E

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Targeting the 'granite' press

THE GALLUS ECS 340 PRESS launched at Labelexpo saw Gallus take a radical departure both in building materials – the first use of granite by a narrow web machine builder – and in targeting commodity labels. Andy Thomas reports

Labelexpo Europe 2009 saw the Gallus Group launch a press designed for the cost-effective manufacture of commodity labels. The Gallus ECS 340 press is based on a core of technical granite.

Building the press frame from granite enables an operator-friendly, cantilevered design of the print units, as well as reducing vibration and eliminating static. 'Thanks to its extremely high load-bearing capacity, technical granite is ideal for use in machine construction,' says Stefan Heiniger, Gallus Group vice-president research and development. 'The printing units are suspended on the granite structure, allowing the printer easy access.'

Gallus also claims that granite has a better CO2 emissions profile than steel, which may be of interest to printers under pressure to show a 'green' profile. The granite can be recycled once the press reaches the end of its life cycle.

Apart from the granite design, what sits at the heart of Gallus' marketing concept for the Gallus ECS 340 is commodity label production. Gallus defines 'commodity' labels as those with limited finishing requirements, meaning the press will be offered with cold foil, but without options for screen or hot foil units.

'The Gallus ECS 340 is available at a very competitive price,' explains Klaus Bachstein, CEO of the Gallus Group. 'This is due to the fact that the press has been tailored precisely to the needs of the target application segment and only includes essential functions, without compromising on quality or cost-efficiency.'

While deliberately limiting the flexibility of the press, Gallus has concentrated hard on maximizing press efficiency, since substrates can account for up to half the total cost of a commodity label.

The Gallus ECS 340 has a very short web path, measuring just over 11 meters for an 8-color machine, meaning the print must be dry over a distance of just 20cm. This is achieved using a newly designed, more energy efficient UV system combined with a water-cooled impression cylinder.

"The Gallus ECS 340 has a very short web path, measuring just over 11 meters for an 8-color machine, meaning the print must be dry over a distance of just 20cm"

For rapid design and color changes, the press makes use of both print cylinder sleeves and anilox sleeves, along with a chambered doctor blade system.

The press is fully servo driven, allowing register pre-setting. Indeed, JDF-driven integration of the press into factory-wide management information systems (MIS) - introduced at Labelexpo on the offset Gallus RCS press - looks to be a key focus for Gallus. The bi-directional system both sends set-up data to the press and retrieves production data for the MIS.

The Gallus ECS 340 is extremely quiet in operation. This is due both to the granite frame absorbing vibration, and to a new system of fully encapsulated and watercooled UV dryers developed by GEW which no longer require air extraction. The control cabinets are also water-cooled. A further neat touch - the press is fitted with a heat exchanger, fed from the water outfeed, which can be used to heat the factory.

ECS IN ACTION

Two early beta sites for the Gallus ECS 340 demonstrate where the press will likely be most effective.

A Gallus ECS 340 has been in action at Barthel GmbH in Essen since mid-2009. Barthel specializes in the target 'commodity' food label sector, and the converter's experience with the machine has been positive. Production manager Herr Esser commented: 'It is remarkable just how quickly the press gets into register and, above all, stays there – without any register control whatsoever. Our paper waste has been cut dramatically.'

Dynamic print pressure adjustment means the print image is not altered when speeds are changed. 'We now trust the press' register accuracy to the extent that printers can focus on preparing the next job without having to continuously check the quality of the print results – even at top speeds,' adds Esser.

The beta installation at UK converter Olympus Labels presents a different case. Founded 15 years ago by former Jarvis Porter managers Steve Cartwright and Adrian Brown, Olympus operates primarily in the high-end personal care, household, wines and spirits sectors.

Around 18 months ago Olympus was looking for a new press and was approached by Gallus to beta test the Gallus ECS 340. Comments managing director Adrian Brown: 'We were looking for a fast changeover, fully servo-driven flexo press with sleeves –not common specifications at the time. We were all surprised to be told the press was made of granite – but like all label printers we are very adaptable! We were also

THE GALLUS ECS 340 PRESS


ECS print unit


ECS sleeve system


ECS chambered doctor system'


ECS print cylinder sleeve

ECS Anilox sleeve. For a video demonstration of the press in action, visit www.labelsandlabeling.com

"What sits at the heart of Gallus, marketing concept for the Gallus ECS 340 is commodity label production"

surprised the press did not have screen or hot foil units.'

The press was installed at the end of last year and was printing commercial labels in March. 'We felt then that the press needed further development,' says Adrian Brown. 'Gallus did listen, and rebuilt the printing units from steel and not alloy. The second generation heads are much more stable and the registration of the modified machine has surprised everyone, to the extent that the press does not need a register control system.' Brown believes that some fine tuning is still needed, 'but you can certainly see the potential of the press.'

Brown also likes the short web path and compact footprint of the ECS: 'I think the electrical cabinets could be even smaller and I understand the new GEW E-Brick power units will be half the current size,' he adds.

The press has converted a wide range of substrates including papers, PEs and clear-on-clear OPP. Olympus has also trialed 30 micron unsupported OPP at Gallus' Frankfurt production center. 'This job was spliced directly from a paper reel and the unsupported film went onto the press without any need for register control,' says Adrian Brown.

The press has been running 6-9 color jobs at speeds around 70-80 m/min. 'If you ran faster you would certainly need 100 percent inspection,' says Brown.

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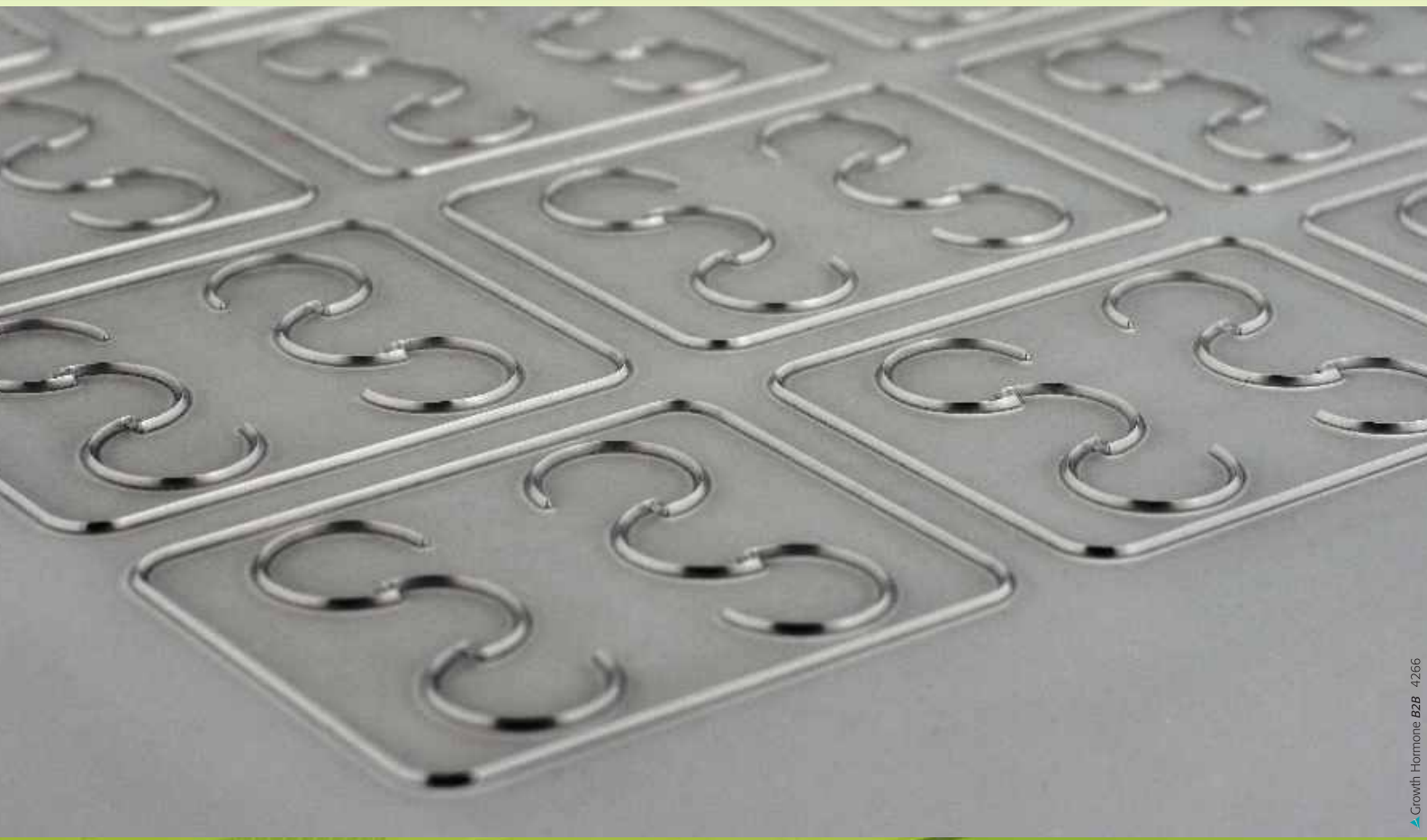

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One stop shop

HAVE IT ALL DONE IN ONE PLACE. Save your time. Save your money. WS Packaging Group brings one-stop packaging solutions to a location near you. Danielle Jerschefske reports.

The merger between Wisconsin Label Corporation and Superior Label Systems officially created WS Packaging Group on October 31, 2000. With combined sales of $130 million in 2000, the company has expanded to $430 million sales annually.

The company's strategic plan was to become a one-stop-shop for brand owners in the same way that today's national supermarkets have for consumers. Terry Fulwiler, CEO, says, 'Direct mail, folding cartons, point-of-purchase needs, and eye-catching labels, as well as the machinery to apply them; we can service multiple needs within one packaging firm. We want our customers to be able to buy much more than just labels. This is what separates us from the competition.'

WS Packaging has grown organically and through acquisitions to accomplish the geographic breadth and expanded product portfolio needed to carry out this objective. 'We strive to be located where customers can participate in press approvals,' Fulwiler says. 'Our goal is to give customers proximity so that they can feasibly drive to one of our plants in a day. Such convenience not only saves time but also saves on the shipping costs of their final order.'

SMALL STEPS BIG REWARDS

Fulwiler parallels the recent development of the label industry to that of the supermarket throughout the twentieth century. 'Labels have evolved in the same way,' Fulwiler says. 'Bigger companies can achieve so much more. They're able to deflect cost increases and take advantage of huge purchasing power; they have the capacity and speed that enables them to take care of business in the way that the large corporate purchasing groups expect. There will always be the mom-and-pop shops that survive but with a half dozen or so big companies remaining on top.'

The effects of this evolution are seen in the purchasing practices of the big brand owners. 'Buyers have realized that when they buy more goods from one company, they're able to get a better price. So they have made the move from having a slew of suppliers evaluated on price to leveraging quantity in order to meet their cost objectives.'

Wisconsin Label was an average-sized label converter in 1986 – $4m sales – when it took its first step outside of the Great Lakes region. It opened a green field site in Columbus, Ohio to support the increased requests of direct mail houses and then acquired Fulwiler's Uncle Stan's company, Voxcom, in Peachtree City, Georgia when he retired. These steps were quickly followed by a new location in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

In terms of portfolio expansion, important acquisitions included Victory Graphics and American Creative Packaging that now produce at a combined location in Oak Creek, Wisconsin. Victory had specialized in direct mail production with point of purchase enhancements; American Creative Packaging was an expert in overwrapping. 'These acquisitions were our first step towards becoming the one-stop-shop for our customers,' Fulwiler explains. 'It was critical to winning more business from one of the largest national food companies, who began putting coded tickets in its packages. We wanted the ability to capture their entire line of business – we wanted to be noted as a full-service supplier that can perform all of the company's needs.'

WISCONSIN MEETS SUPERIOR

Predominantly by organic growth, sales reached near $100M by the late 1990s. 'With such rapid growth in a short period of time, the banks wanted us to leverage out, essentially forcing us to make the decision to either put more money into the company or stop growing,' Fulwiler explains.

At this time a merger between Wisconsin Label and Superior Label was ideal for both parties. The opportunity traces its roots to TLMI meetings where Fulwiler mingled with other North American converters, most specifically Ken Kidd of Superior Label, based in Cincinnati, Ohio.

Fulwiler and Kidd shared an interest in joining forces since both companies had reached similar growth limitations. But before negotiations could start, Kidd's partners sold over half of the business to a group of private equity firms.

Yet this equity was precisely what Wisconsin needed in order to proceed with its expansion plans. The new WS Packaging Group established ambitious goals for the future. 'We set out to double the size of the company to $250 million in sales within five years.'

BIG FISH IN THE BIG SEA

WS Packaging surpassed this goal to become one of the largest label companies in North America and in the global industry. About 70 percent of the company's business is in the food & beverage and health & beauty markets. Since 2000 WS Packaging Group has acquired nine companies across the US and in Mexico that added value to its ever-strengthening product portfolio. Fulwiler explains: 'The main key is the synergies between the companies – the ability to

BRIEF HISTORY

WS Packaging Group, Inc. began in 1966 as Wisconsin Label Corporation in Algoma, Wisconsin, a small town due east of Green Bay on Lake Michigan. In a small 20 x 20 sq ft area, the converter produced labels on a central impression Mark Andy three-color press. By 1972 the company was on a $5,000 per week sales budget for total annual sales of $260,000.

By the mid 1980s the company grew to have about 25 employees with $4 million in annual sales. Most of the company's business at this point was conducted in the local regions of northern and eastern Wisconsin and Chicago, Illinois. Terry Fulwiler, CEO, says: 'At this point my father and his partner were ready to retire, and I was ready to drive continued growth. But in order to do this, geographic expansion was necessary.'

Ken Kidd is an expert on the production side of the converting business. He founded Superior Label in 1970 with three partners. Kidd has served for many years on the TLMI Environmental Committee and is the current chairman of its Recycling Solutions sub-committee.

BEN'S Insect Repellent

MEGUIER'S Tire Spray

WINE label

offer more to the whole, broadening our platform and diversifying our capabilities to give the sales teams more to offer. Our aptitude simply cannot be matched by the local mom-and-pop shop.

'We can give our customers personal attention with national backing or provide national service with a local feel,' Fulwiler says. 'We have a solution for everyone's needs.'

SENECASALEM

The conglomerate's most recent acquisition of SenecaSalem in 2007 brought shrink sleeve production into the product mix. Randy Hicks, VP operations, says: 'We also brought the value of 20 years experience in in-mold label (IML) production. Our plants have the history, knowledge base, and technology to support IML.'

The acquisition also brought roll-on, shrink-on (ROSO) capabilities into the mix, expanding the company further into the beverage market and adding some industrial label business. Regular investments are being made to increase the production capacity for these product lines at the main plant in Pennsylvania, which has expansion potential for another 50,000 square feet. WS Packaging uses 6 – 8 color Heidelberg presses and Comco/Mark Andy equipment at this location.

CLEVER PEOPLE

WS Packaging has 18 manufacturing locations, which are currently being linked by Radius Solutions PECAS Vision computer software. Four of these locations include art hubs, all with computer-to-plate (CTP) digital technology. The largest plant is 200,000 square feet and has over 360 employees.

At all plants, WS Packaging operations management reviews shift production statistics daily: waste, on-time delivery, quality, internal savings, and safety. Lean Manufacturing is a critical part of WS Packaging's success. Karen Naze, VP operations says: 'We are very metric driven. If there is a problem, then it gets solved immediately. We find the source of the issue right away – training, equipment, etc. – and close the loop.'

Combining the rewind operator and press operator into one line is a core concept that's been implemented in several of the production facilities. Last year the beta press room experienced a 40 percent reduction in lead times with this improved configuration. WS Packaging is in the process of systematically reformatting fourteen more finishing machines to create inline configurations on specific presses.

'This format opens up a culture of change that our associates have been highly accepting of,' Brian Van de Water, general manager of the Algoma plant, says. 'Once our operators became engaged, open communication between the rewind/shipping staff and the press operator significantly increased. The teams were pleased to have another person on press available for feedback and analysis and to keep an eye on quality, catching any defects at a much earlier stage.'

WS Packaging management believes in empowering its employees, in giving them ownership in their work. Van de Water says: 'The workforce that we have is phenomenal. We have a high experience rate, outstanding dedication, and a dynamite work ethic.'

The creation of a high-performance, team-based culture has seen operators rise to the challenge of solving problems – immediately – on the floor, informing upper management after valuable, decisive action has successfully taken place. 'This is what we're seeing more of from our people,' Van de Water says. 'Action like this is becoming a deeper and deeper part of the culture.'

WS Packaging has a profit sharing program to reward this type of work ethic. There is also an annual recognition and awards program in place. Each department is given goals at year start. At the close of the year, the team with the lowest error rate in terms of number of jobs completed earns an extra vacation day. This system creates a team focus that holds the various shifts within each department accountable.

WS PACKAGING ACQUISITIONS 2000 - 2007

February 2001 - Label Art, specializing in short-run label production

February 2002 - Blake Printery, California, high-end prestige label manufacturing

July 2002 - IdentiGraphics, Oregon, digital printer for short to medium runs

June 2003 - Gorilla Label, Arizona, exo printer with a solid regional client base

October 2003 – Concept Packaging, Nevada, manufacturer of high-speed label applicators

August 2004 - Promo Edge Company, Wisconsin, manufacturer of promotional, gaming, and sweepstakes products

September 2005 – Ampersand Label, California, manufacturer of patented extended text products

*December 2005 - Renaissance Mark Narrow Web Division, California and Mexico, exographic facilities

October 2007 - SenecaSalem, Pennsylvania and Ohio, exo and litho printer specializing in shrink sleeve labels

*First international venture

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KOCHER + BECK

BRIAN VAN DE WATER, Terry Fulwiler, Karen Naze

SUPERMARKET HISTORY

1930	First supermarket in outskirts of NYC, focus on volume and better pricing
1940s	Mass consolidation of chain grocery stores but with increased sales
1960s	Consumers expect a bigger selection and better pricing
1962	The first Wal-Mart opens

CAPITAL EQUIPMENT

Technology varies throughout the multiple plants and across the company. The main facility has a fleet of narrow web Mark Andy flexo presses that are UV and water-base ink capable, with one press wholly dedicated to slot machine ticket production. There are two Nilpeter MO flexo/offset presses with foil stamp and embossing inline, a few Comcos, and a 26-inch Mark Andy XP5000 for printing unsupported film.

The company has HP Indigo digital technology in Algoma, WI, Portland, OR, and Wilton, NH, in addition to inkjet and dry toner technologies at two other locations. The group's sales team sells digital as part of an entire solution. 'We feel that digital has really strengthened our position in the market,' explains Kidd.

WS Packaging has also made a worthwhile investment in a pull-and-pick automatic die station system that systematically tracks and traces the location of dies in storage and next to the press. Naze says: 'This is a fantastic inventory control tool. The barcode system is so efficient, basically 100 percent. We're never having a press down while looking for a die.' The converter boasts 97 percent average on-time delivery.

ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSE

WS Packaging has established a formal Environmental Management System (EMS) in compliance with, or exceeding, federal, state, and local requirements. Its goals are to provide environmentally compatible products to its customers and to support those customers in achieving their own environmental objectives. The converter can complete work on certified or recycled materials and can offer its proprietary MultiVision extended text labels, which have assisted companies like Anacin in adhering to packaging reduction and strict labeling requirements on OTC goods.

As part of its internal sustainable packaging program, production and office processes are evaluated daily by management to reduce waste and ensure recycling. Several plants send their matrix waste to be pelletized for energy re-use. The company has also reduced VOC emissions by investing in CTP technology for its plate-making and by switching to water-based inks for the majority of print orders.

These efforts were recognized by the Tag and Label Manufacturers Institute (TLMI) when it awarded WS Packaging the 2004 Environmental Award for Process Improvement. More recently it was awarded the 2009 Business Friend of the Environment Award for Environmental Innovation in the large company category by the Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce organization.

FUTURE MOVES

Future capital investments will likely include additional digital presses, servo-driven technology, and updates in artwork and prepress software. 'We believe all of these things will allow us to stay on the cutting edge of service,' Fulwiler says. WS Packaging will look at gaining strength in more geographic territories and market segments where there's opportunity. Fulwiler says: 'The customer dictates their needs and, consequently, where our company will move and how it will evolve.' For the time being, WS Packaging is focused on expanding sales, acquiring new customers looking for a full-service solution, and enhancing customer service.

'There is a lot of longevity within the corporation,' he says. 'We have the advantages to do many different things due to size and breadth, good ideas, and talented people.'

With the capability of marketing its strengths as local or national, WS Packaging is eager to share innovative solutions with more brand owners by providing full service, plant proximity, and environmentally conscious products. WS Packaging - one place.

LABELCO recently moved to a spectacular new building with plenty of space for expansion

Caslon makes its mark

DANISH converter Labelco was one of the first to install Nilpeter's Caslon hybrid flexo/digital press. Andy Thomas reports on the company's experience after one year operating the machine

'We started out 18 years ago with a clear vision, a Nilpeter press, four people and no customers!' jokes Erik Mikkelsen, joint owner of Danish converter Labelco. That Nilpeter press, a 7-color F2400 flexo/letterpress machine, is still running, and Labelco is today a highly successful label converting operation, employing 33 staff and housed in a smart new production facility.

The company has also pioneered hybrid digital-flexo printing with one of the first global installations of the Nilpeter Caslon. This is an interesting model for digital printing – essentially treating the digital unit as one in-line module on a flexo press. How did Labelco come to the decision to adopt this approach, and how has it worked out?

Labelco's joint owners Erik Mikkelsen and Birthe Kjaerholm were working together at Danish label printer Flexikett when they decided to set up their own company. 'We planned to concentrate on the Danish food industry, adding value,' says Kjaerholm. 'We do not sell labels – we help customers sell products.'

Labelco would concentrate on medium and larger-sized customers. This proved a sensible strategy as consolidation began hitting the Danish food industry. As an example, where 12 years ago there were ten slaughter houses in Denmark, today there are just two.

Labelco has reaped the rewards of sticking to this plan. The factory has been rebuilt five times in the last 18 years to accommodate the company's continued expansion to six Nilpeter flexo presses and the Caslon, culminating in the construction of an impressive, purpose-built, 2,000 sq meter plant which contains plenty of room for further expansion.

GOING DIGITAL

Labelco's interest in digital printing started ten years ago when they visited digital pioneer Simpson Label in Dalkeith, Scotland. 'We were convinced for many years we had to go digital but we could not afford the investment, given that most of our customers had very long runs of labels,' says Erik Mikkelsen.

'Then we both saw the Caslon at Labelexpo Brussels and looked at each other and said "let's have a coffee" and we signed up for it. Birthe is the technician and I have ideas, and we were both clear this was the right machine.'

'We can run all our materials on this press and the inks are finally very stable,' continues Kjaerholm 'The fantastic quality of UV inkjet is the key. We are experts in pre-press so we can make the most of the possibilities of the machine and we have forced it to be better, using new screening and anti-aliasing technologies.' Already, Labelco is achieving commercial designs with 1 point text reversed out of 4-colors.

That quality was not achieved without a lot of work. Labelco has been working with the press for a year, but is still not at the top of its learning curve. 'We are still not getting the results we want and there is a lot more work to be done, but the quality we are seeing is already astonishing,' says Kjaerholm. 'Ramping up and down the press speed has no effect on the registration, for example.'

The main variable for Labelco is the inkjet inks, which are calibrated and supplied by FFEI, one the Caslon development partners, which sources them from Sun Chemical. The first generation of inks were essentially the same as those used in the large format inkjet market. Comments Kjaerholm: 'We are now on the second generation and the third generation is

ERIK MIKKELSEN and Birthe Kjaerholm, joint owners of Labelco next to the 4-color inkjet unit of the Caslon press

coming. Each new ink generation means we have to recalibrate the press, but on the positive side we hope they will become more and more stable.'

White inkjet inks of sufficient opacity for printing films are not yet available, so Labelco uses one or two hits of UV flexo white. 'These have become much better over the last two years, particularly with new anilox technologies,' says Kjaerholm.

Because the density and pigmentation of inkjet inks is greater than flexo, color gamut is wider than with conventional printing. 'We are achieving pantones you could not match with 4-color offset,' says Erik Mikkelsen. Labelco has printed its own color swatch books for the digital press, and these will now have to be re-done for the new generation inks.

Interestingly, Labelco does not varnish its digital labels. 'Varnish lowers the natural gloss of the inks, and the rub resistance and light fastness at 6-8 wool scale is perfectly good without a protective varnish,' says Mikkelsen. 'We only varnish when we want a matt effect.' Inkjet also gives a raised 'screen-type' effect.

In terms of materials, 'we find the press will print on almost anything without a special coating,' says Mikkelsen. 'If we find materials we cannot print, we can always find a suitable alternative. We have most experience on uncoated materials, and we only require corona treating for films.'

The Caslon has printed successfully on metalized papers and trials are under way to print on cold foils. 'This will open up a whole new range of special effects,' says Mikkelsen.

The company is already printing on cold foil on thermal papers on its flexo presses, but only using water-based inks. The UV inks are too thick to go easily through thermal printers.

The Caslon is operating at speeds up to 24 meters/minute at resolutions of 360 x 360 dpi and eight gray levels, but can go to 50 m/min at lower resolutions of 180 x 160 dpi, still at eight gray levels. Medium pressure 600W inter-station UV lamps 'pin' the ink to the substrate before final UV curing, further improving print quality. New is an automated cleaning system for the inkjet nozzles and the printing head.

The Caslon press is both taking shorter runs from the flexo presses – generally the cut-off is around 2,000 meters - and also allowing existing customers to implement new ideas based around short runs and special promotions. Looking ahead to Adobe's next generation PDF format, Nilpeter aims to make available a new variable data printing module which could make it easier for label converters to offer this service.

What of the future? 'For the time being, digital and flexo will run side by side. But there will be big changes in digital – for example in the cost of inkjet consumables,' says Erik Mikkelsen. 'In ten years time there will only be combination digital machines with flexo units for solid colors and coatings.'

Of course Labelco would like to see inkjet technology develop: 'We would like to see more speed, cheaper and more consistent inks – then we would never again buy a conventional UV flexo press.' Clearly inkjet technology is on the march.

SELLING SERVICE – NOT LABELS

Labelco places a high value on dialogue with its customers and offers a design service for companies which do not use external agencies. 'We will print sample labels onto customers' products so they can see how the artwork looks when it is printed', says Birthe Kjaerholm. Labelco will also bring professional design agencies into the plant to troubleshoot potential issues before a new label design is committed to final artwork.

'For this approach to work, it is important to get past the label buyer to the people who manage the brand in terms of marketing and logistics,' says Kjaerholm. 'Also, we can support him or her and at the same time save them a lot of work. We go into the customers' labeling plants and ask what are their issues and what can we do with the labels to make them work better in the supply chain.'

This customer-focused approach has been key to the success of the Caslon digital/flexo press, as digital is, above all, a service-based operation.

Labelexpo Asia preview

ANDY THOMAS previews Labelexpo Asia, Shanghai, Asia-Pacific's biggest exhibition targeted exclusively at label converters

Labelexpo Asia, held at the Shanghai New Exhibition Center between 1-4 December, will be the place to catch up on latest developments in the Chinese label supply industry – everything from presses, UV systems and aniloxes to self-adhesive, shrink and thermal materials. It is also the prime venue for Western suppliers looking to do business with the Chinese label converting industry – an industry still growing at a healthy rate by global standards.

Among Chinese press manufacturers is Rujan Hexiang, which will introduce its RY320-5B flexo press and D-II-320 two-head die cutting machine. The RY320-5B machine incorporates a full servo-driven inking system, photocell second pass system, computer-controlled web tension, and automated splicing on the unwind. The UV system is designed to run cool with centralized temperature control to avoid heat damage to the web.

Guangzhou Nickel Printing Machinery Co.Ltd shows its F series intermittent letterpress, which already operates across a wide range of end use applications. The company also runs its own print training academy.

Chinese suppliers are also turning out increasingly high quality press ancillaries. Shanghai UV Light, for example, will demonstrate its range of UV curing systems. The company already supplies systems for world class offset presses including Heidelberg, Roland and KBA, as well as flexo presses built in China. Shanghai Auclean Printing Machine Co Ltd will demonstrate its range of laser-engraved ceramic anilox rolls, chambered doctor blade system, anilox cleaning machine, magnetic cylinders and other flexo ancillaries.

Among Western companies showing ancillary systems is Italian company Re, which demonstrates its full range of tension regulation and web alignment systems, as well as the entry level Giotto camera system, shown with optional touch screen. The company's fastest growing subsidiaries are Re Latina in San Paolo and Re China based in Shanghai.

Martin Automatic Inc already has a successful business in China and will exhibit non-stop roll changing technology, including live demonstrations of an MBS automatic butt splicer and LRD automatic transfer rewinder. David Ho, manager of Martin Automatic Asia-Pacific, comments: 'The MBS/LRD splicer/rewinder combination is consistently one of Martin's most popular products. We are very excited that this is the first time we have shown this impressive splicer and rewinder in Asia.'

Meech will be showing its new ShearClean non-contact web cleaning system along with static measurement and control equipment, while tesa demonstrates its plate mounting, splicing, anti slip and UV measurement systems.

On the digital and RFID front, HP Indigo will have a major presence at the show. Primera Asia Pacific will be showing for the first time in Asia the CX1200 Digital Label Press, featuring 1200 dpi and printing at almost five meters per minute. Primera's label applicator, label dispenser and unwinder/rewinder products will also be demonstrated.

Mühlbauer introduces its CL 60000 RFID converting solution, suitable for a variety of output products: wet inlays, self-adhesive labels, tickets, hang tags and baggage tags.

MATERIAL FACTORS

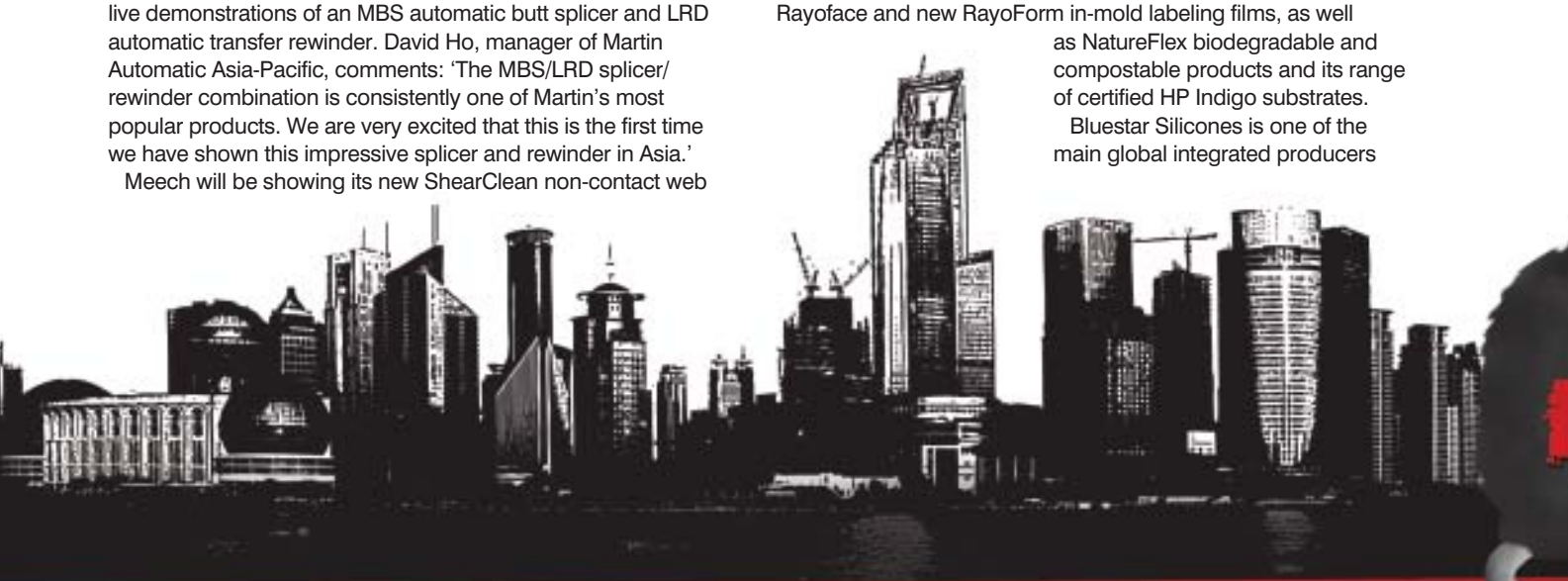
The global giants Avery Dennison and UPM Raflatac will both look to make a major impact at Labelexpo Asia, highlighting their huge investments in coating and slitting facilities throughout the country. Avery will focus on new solutions in pressure-sensitive beer and wine labels, ultra-removable solutions and new products such as Air-Egress films, peel-back re-sealable food pack labels; clear-on-clear beverage labels and eco-friendly labels, answering the growing move towards environmental awareness in China.

UPM will show its full range of label face and base papers for pressure sensitive and conventional labeling. The range includes glassine liners as well as supercalandered and clay coated kraft liners for label bases. One side coated, woodfree coated and uncoated papers complete the range for label face materials.

Other major Western suppliers at the show include Ritrama, which will now supply its products to China from it's a 25,000 sqm coating and slitting plant in Hefei, capital of Anhui Province. The plant manufactures Ritrama's global product line of self-adhesive paper and film, covering a wide range of applications including battery, beverage and body care to the standards of global end-user brands. The plant operates in accordance with Ritrama's Italian engineering specifications.

Innovia meanwhile, shows its full range of BOPP films including Rayoface and new RayoForm in-mold labeling films, as well as NatureFlex biodegradable and compostable products and its range of certified HP Indigo substrates.

Bluestar Silicones is one of the main global integrated producers



of silicones present worldwide, with a strong industrial base in Europe and China. Its two major intermediates production sites for upstream applications are in Roussillon, France and in Xinghuo, China.

Arjobex shows its Polyart synthetic paper, an expanded HDPE film which resists water, tearing, grease and chemicals. Polyart is widely used for self-adhesive labels, durable tags, tamper evident, IML labels, and has now a special range for wet glue labels. Arjobex has a sales office in Guanghzou, China.

Evonik demonstrates its UV silicones range which cure by irradiation with UV light at ambient temperature. This low temperature cure is key to producing label stock based on cost-effective and fully recyclable BOPP liner. The Films Business of ExxonMobil Chemical meanwhile shows the company's new Label-Lyte 60LH537 and 50LL537 films specifically designed for use in pressure sensitive labeling applications. The company says these white and clear films offer 'excellent printability, ink adhesion, a broad range of adhesive anchorage, and a greatly reduced risk of ink mottling.'

For converters looking to manufacture their own laminates, ETI Converting Equipment demonstrates its patented technology of in-line silicone and adhesive coating for label printers. At Labelexpo Asia 2009, the company will show its ETI-Flex system.

Canadian company Milliken Specialty Paper Ltd will display the products from its venture with Welon (China) Ltd which is based in Jiangmen, and includes multi-functional pilot coaters. Materials convered include semi-gloss, thermal transfer, direct thermal, garment label, laser label, BOPP and PVC. Products have SGS & EU RoHS environmental protection inspection certificates. Welon has also been appointed as an authorized distributor of US corporation R Tape's products in GuangDong Province.

Among other Chinese materials suppliers, Guangdong Huaye Packing Materials Co Ltd – a major government supported enterprise set up in 2001 - will demonstrate its range of OPS thermal shrink film and labels, PETG thermal shrink film, BOPP film and CPP films. Shenzhen MOMA Technology Co Ltd , meanwhile, will show its range of self-adhesive materials, including thermal grades, security materials and customized products.

Materials specialist Faxinzhongxin is to show its high-end adhesive materials. The company's multi-functional coating equipment integrates silicon coating and adhesive coating in a clean room environment. The company's new products include a high-temperature polyamide, anti-static materials and a clear PET/clear substrate combination.

Fudan-Techsun shows its authentication labels and films, incorporating easy identification, high security features and tamper resistance. The company's anti-counterfeit seals can be combined with RFID transponders, enabling each bottle to combine visual authentication, electronic authentication and logistics traceability.

Auto ID is a critical industry in China with the massive growth of the logistics and retail industries. Armor will launch its APXFH wax/resin ribbon at the show, claimed to give outstanding print quality and durability on a wide range of label materials.

Hangzhou Todaytec Digital Co Ltd is a leading Chinese manufacturer of thermal transfer ribbons. The company runs 15 coating lines and 20 slitting machines. Production is to jumbo roll and finished ribbons and the company has a monthly capacity of 30 million sq meters.

Euro Plus is presenting its NiceLabel suite of professional labeling software products that provide a complete bar code printing solution to desktop and enterprise users. The latest development is NiceWatch Enterprise Business Connector, which links with enterprises driven by ERP, WMS, HIS, and other solutions, with tight

Open Data will be demonstrating its hand-held labelers and applicators.

XAVIER Boutevillain, front end director at CCL Moussy, with the Stork rotaLEN 5511 rotary screen engraver

CCL reaps benefits from digital screen production

CCL'S Home and Personal Care Division is investing in Stork Prints' rotaLEN 5511 direct laser engraving system at four plants, for the imaging of RotaMesh rotary screens. Andy Thomas reports on the experiences of Paris, France-based CCL Moussy

When the go-ahead was given by CCL's headquarters to invest in direct laser engraving technology, the team at Moussy jumped at the opportunity: 'We could never imagine returning to analogue now,' says Xavier Boutevillain, front end director at CCL. 'The switchover has reduced scrap materials, improved quality levels, and given us a faster, more productive workflow.'

Until December last year, CCL relied on the conventional UV exposure method for all its screen imaging needs. Although it had managed reasonably well, this method presented a number of problems. The conventional imaging method was a cumbersome process. Furthermore, quality consistency was extremely difficult to achieve. This was due mainly to the high level of manual input needed.

DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

Direct laser engraving, the process on which Stork Prints' rotaLEN system is based, involves the thermal decomposition of emulsion covering the positive area, leaving behind the stencil's open areas. The emulsion is burned away by a 250W laser. The screen spins at high rotation, moving steadily, under the laser beam's path.

Once the image is created, the screen is ready for the press.

The process is both eco-friendlier and less costly. It eliminates the exposure and drying processes, and does away with many consumable costs for items such as film, chemicals and UV-light. As a result, the screen imaging cycle is up to 20 minutes faster. This alleviates much pressure on the pre-production schedule. The time-savings mount up dramatically, especially since CCL Moussy is engraving between 15 and 20 RotaMesh screens daily.

A major challenge facing CCL was how to maintain high quality presentation, and meet the demand for more information on a label. Because of legislation and consumer demand, packaging has to provide more information on health, safety and dietary guidelines and ingredients, increasingly in multiple language versions. With restricted space, the best solution is to improve graphics clarity, so that text can remain legible if printed in a smaller size.

The laser engraver meets this challenge, delivering sharp negative images and extremely fine raster work. The resulting high contrast enables CCL to print as low as 5-point text size, as well as sharp, easy-to-scan barcodes.

IMPROVED REGISTRATION

Another problem solved is the risk of poor screen registration, originally due to the difficulty in positioning film on to the screen by hand. Most of CCL's jobs use two or three screen positions, alongside other processes like offset, flexo or hot-foil on the company's six Nilpeter MO3300 presses. Registration is also made harder to achieve because of the trend towards smaller labels.

Xavier Boutevillain comments: 'We used to work to a tolerance of 0.3mm, which, although satisfactory according to FINAT quality standards, was not sufficient for delivering quality on special effects. Now, there's no film to worry about, the screen is fixed into the precise engraving position with ease, and the system does the rest. So, the most complex half-tones and shadows, as seen on the L'Oréal logo for instance, which can be ruined by the slightest deviation in tolerance during the imaging stage, are achieved with ease.'

The problem of dust has also been eliminated. During the process, any particles are filtered into a chamber by an exhaust fume system for easy disposal, keeping the environment pure. As a result there is no need for the screen to undergo retouching after imaging.

INTEGRATED WORKFLOW

The laser engraver has an open platform – it works with all DTP and RIP software packages available on the market. At CCL, the rotaLEN system links seamlessly with the Artwork Systems' ArtPro imaging software and Nexus Flow RIPping / trapping software. Files are sent to the engraver and easily converted to PDF format, the format of choice for Xavier's team because of its user-friendliness. Each screen position is represented by layers within the file. This is a speedier alternative to PostScript, which required a separate file to be created for every screen position.

Perhaps the most important time-saving feature to impress the team is the ability to perform on-the-fly rastering, in which all dot parameters can be adjusted during the engraving process itself.

The new rotaLEN system is helping CCL to reduce its carbon footprint. Like many printing houses, CCL adheres to Imprim'Vert, the national environmental standard for the French printing industry. Doing away with the imagesetter, a major consumer of UV light, reduced CCL's emissions considerably, cutting out 70 liters of developer and fixer per month.

Currently, two staff at any one time are using the rotaLEN system regularly each day, with a further two on standby. Boutevillain adds: 'The interface was user-friendly, and easy to follow for anyone familiar with conventional desktop software programs. After two days of training all operators were using the unit confidently and effectively.'

Later this year, CCL will be increasing output, as it acquires new presses and enters into new markets. The company will be increasing its work schedule to a 24-hour, three-shift operation, from September. With the rotaLEN, the team feels confident to take on the extra workload.

Three other CCL converting factories in the Home and Personal Care division, are installing Stork's rotaLen 5511 engravers, in part due to the improvements that CCL Moussy has experienced. Installations are now taking place at Castleford (UK), the USA and Bangkok, Thailand.

Concludes Xavier Boutevillain: 'Stork's laser engraving technology has improved our quality consistency and eco-friendliness. Our productivity in the pre-production stage is much improved and our consumable costs are in better control. This means a major improvement to our bottom line, so I would certainly recommend my CCL colleagues to consider this route.'

Flint Award ink excellence

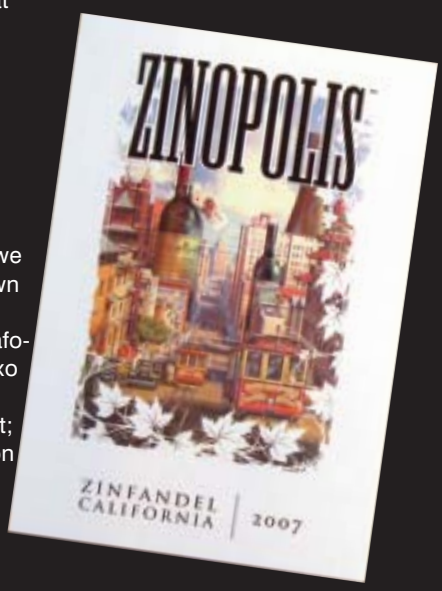
WORLDWIDE converters show how to use ink with impact

Flint Group Narrow Web hosted its 5th Annual Narrow Web Print awards at its booth to close the second day of the show. Converters worldwide were encouraged to submit labels to be evaluated by a team of elite judges. This year the judges focused on the creative use of inks as well as registration, smoothness of dot/vignette, overall print quality and degree of difficulty.

Niklas Olsson, brand manager at Flint Group Packaging & Narrow Web commented:

'We are of the firm belief that the right use of colors (i.e. inks) is an essential part of the overall marketing that the label or pack has to do. We know that the right inks can make a product "stand out? on any crowded shelf - and we would like to reward this in our own competition.'

Winners included Alaska Poligrafo-formceinie of Russia in the UV flexo paper and UV shrink categories; Collotype in Australia for UV offset; Skanem Poland in the combination print and UV flexo film categories; Russian converter Aleithe-Spb in the UV flexo film category; US converter Labelcrafters in the water-based flexo category, and another Russian converter, Neoprint, in the coupon label category. There were honorable citations for Steinhauser from the US; PPV Comex and WDH from Poland; Komplex Media from Russia and Kimoha from Dubai.



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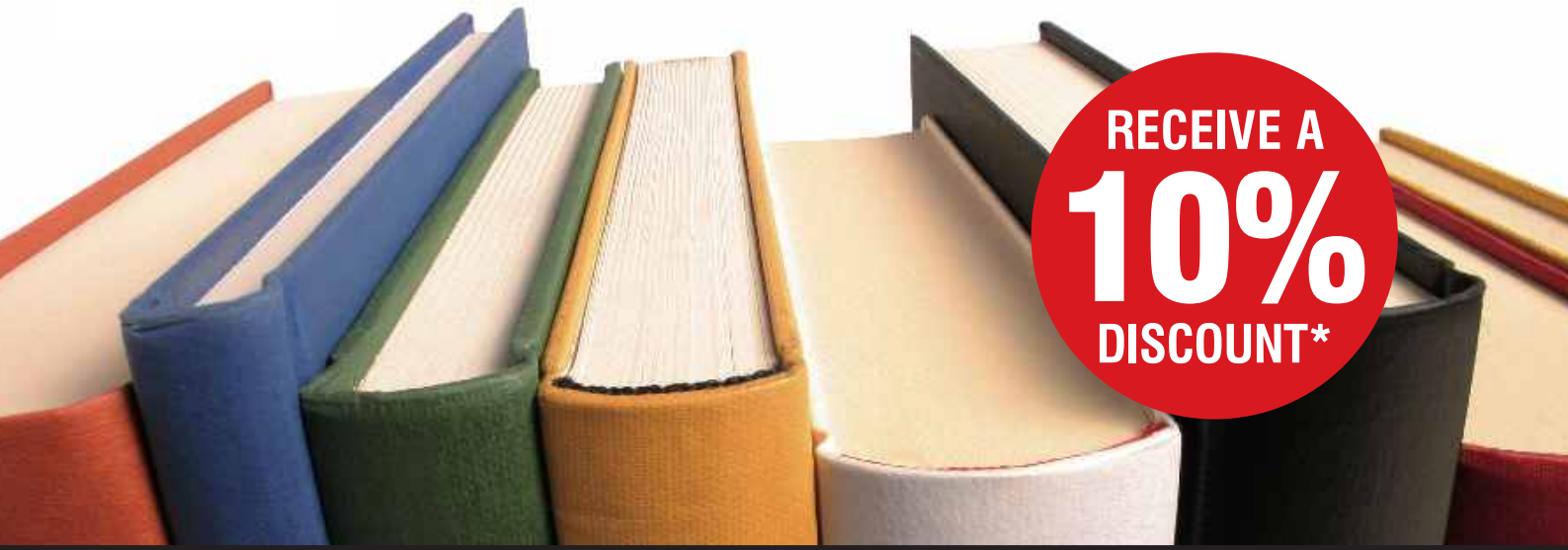

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Vintage operation

MIKE FAIRLEY visits one of Italy's leading wine label converters to find out what has enabled them to achieve continued growth and success

It perhaps seems a long way from printing jewellery tags to becoming one of Italy's leading suppliers of high quality wine labels. Yet, that is the route taken by Italian label converter Notarianni Etichette Autoadesive, based in a pleasant country and hillside location near the town of Alessandria.

Originally co-founded in 1975 by a jewellery seller, the company only moved into the production of self-adhesive wine labels towards the end of the 1980s. Today, Notarianni produces and supplies wine labels to around 1,000 customers – both locally and throughout Italy – and is in the top handful of wine label converters in the country. Indeed, wine labels make up 75 percent of the company's total business. But how has the company achieved this kind of success in such a relatively short period of time?

According to Alfredo Pollici, the company CEO, who took over the running of the company from his father during a phased period from 2002 to 2005, success has been achieved through investment in digital printing machines, the development of their own specialized printing and finishing solutions – and through developing a good relationship with customers.

'We aim to give customers the best possible buying relationship,' explains Pollici. 'In particular we talk to the wine growers and designers in the smaller wineries, and we like to get close to the smaller winery bottling co-operatives that have come together to meet the demand created by supermarket wine sales. After all, it is largely the smaller wineries that have been responsible for driving innovation in wine labeling.

'We also aim to play a key role in helping to educate the wine label designers about new opportunities, solutions and effects that can be achieved with the specialized equipment that we have invested in.'

Although the smaller wineries are largely cyclical, with their peak production period between February and April each year, the company is nevertheless pretty busy throughout the year, either from the larger wineries or through other types of label production. Overall, lead times for new label orders are around 15 days. Being so specialized in their label solutions means that start up time on machines can be up to 55 percent of the time allocated for label production. However, the results can be spectacular.

Undoubtedly, a Notarinni can lay claim to having been at the forefront of innovative wine labeling solutions for the past dozen or more years. They were one of the initial label converters in Europe to invest in digital label printing technology, purchasing their first press (an Indigo Omnius) in the early days of digital printing back in the late 1990s. Today they also have an HP ws4500 digital press which was installed in 2007. Digital has enabled them to create new market opportunities for shorter runs, for different versions, and to personalize for individual restaurants, buyers or events if required. The use of Esko Backstage adds a further important element to their production and creative capabilities.

Apart from digital printing, the company has also heavily invested in and developed screen printing technology, designing and building their own unique screen production lines and screen/finishing lines – including one that incorporates up to 7-color screen, and foiling. Production today includes three screen machines and two finishing lines which include screen. In total, there are some 17 flatbed screen units in the plant and they make anything up to 60 flatbed screens every working day. Currently, around 60 percent of all the company's wine label production includes some level of screen printing.

Hot foiling is also a major part of the company's investment in effective wine

ALFREDO POLLICI, Notarianni, with one of the many labeled wine bottle displays in his office

ALFREDO POLLICI in his office in Alessandria

THE NOTARIANNI LABEL FACTORY in Allesandria

label solutions, with more than 50 percent of their wine labels incorporating some degree of foiling – either solid areas for borders and graphics, or for fine line effects. Foiling units are again built with great effect into their own design-production lines. The highly effective results can be seen on all the several hundreds of decorated wine bottles displayed in Alfredo Pollici's office.

Like many label other converters over the past year, sales have been somewhat flat – against up to 10 percent growth in most normal years. Having said that, Pollici told *Labels & Labeling* that he was looking for the profitability of the company to actually increase in the coming year. 'Last year, we initiated a company training program for the company's 49 employees; we began putting a lot of effort into developing the sales force and changing the selling operation. This is now all beginning to pay off in our results.

'We also introduced a program of efficiency targets during the economic slowdown. This was in preference to making any sales or staff cuts and has proved extremely successful over the past year. We are additionally in a management information start-up phase of putting every department in contact with each other. This should also further improve our efficiency targets, performance and profitability over the coming year.'

Outside of wine labels, the remaining 25 percent of the company's business is in the production of food labels and in the converting of blank labels for the automotive industry.

But what of the future for Notarianni? 'There are still some additional wine growing areas in Italy that we believe we can expand into,' says Pollici. 'We are also looking to expand our activities into the supply chain field. With Europe now starting to come out of the recession, and the efficiency and training programs that we have introduced, we see a continued and successful growth for the company in the year ahead.'

If introducing efficiency targets and new training programs into the business over the past year was not enough, Alfredo Pollici has also taken on the role of president of the Italian label association, GIPEA. The association has 81 converter members and 27 supplier/supporter members and has an active program of technical book and newsletter publication, a twice-a-year congress, and is actively looking at the environmental and waste challenges facing Italian converters.

Pollici aims to make GIPEA a key platform for growing the Italian label industry, for developing industry relationships and for it to become an enhanced information resource for member companies, as well a catalyst for industry change.

There is little doubt that Alfredo Pollici has already made his mark in the wine label printing sector in Italy through Notarianni and is now looking to extend his specialist abilities into the wider world of the Italian label industry.

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TIZIANO Zardini next to a Prati Saturn rewinder

From offset sheets to rolls

AN ITALIAN SHEET-FED PRINTER has set up an offset pressure-sensitive labels division, which is now the fastest growing part of the company's business. Andy Thomas reports

The labels industry continues to see a migration from sheet-fed to pressure-sensitive labels as end users take on board the performance benefits of PS technology. At the same time, offset printers operating in the commercial markets for brochures and books have seen their operating margins cut by ferocious competition as demand continues to weaken.

These trends have pushed commercial printers to look at the narrow web labels sector, which is still growing by volume and where significant value can be added by multi-process printing. Recent developments in roll offset technology have made this an increasingly attractive choice, as printers can retain their highly efficient CTP systems and utilize the print experience of existing press operators. An excellent example of all these trends is print house Zardini, located in the heart of the valpolicella wine region in Central Italy.

A 5-color Heidelberg Speedmaster with UV varnish station is the latest addition to Zardini's sheetfed press hall

This family-run business was founded by Tiziano Zardini 23 years ago, printing business forms on a Heidelberg GTO. The company moved into its current, purpose-built plant in 1996.

Today the main press hall is dominated by a 5-color Heidelberg Speedmaster with a UV varnish station – the first Heidelberg in Italy to combine infra-red with UV drying. The latter is essential because of the amount of film converted by Zardini for its packaging customers.

Also on the shop floor are two 2-color Speedmasters and one 4-color. Finishing equipment includes a Kama HFS TS74 punching unit, hot stamping and laminating equipment, along with two Polar 115XT guillotines. Zardini has developed its own software for job costing and sales monitoring and offers a design service based on stock labels which can be adapted for individual customers.

Over the last five years, Zardini's customer base has shifted from business forms and commercial print into food packaging, with labels, boxes and cartons accounting for some 70 percent of turnover. Sheetfed offset labels account for around one third of the company's business and are specified for food contact applications including pasta, chicken and ham meats. Zardini makes extensive use of edible inks and food-grade papers and films. Over-lamination or a food-grade UV lacquer/varnish are used to seal the print and avoid issues of UV ink migration.

Business has remained strong despite the recession. 'The food industry has not noticed the economic crisis,' notes Tiziano Zardini. Other markets where Zardini operates have not performed so well. The company is a major supplier of tags to the leather, fabrics and marble markets, for example, which are all marked by over-capacity and a movement of end users away from Italy.

DE-LAM/RE-LAM unit and turner bar with reverse print station. For video demonstration visit www.labelsanlabeling.com

ZARDINI production director Tecchio Luciano demonstrates system which cuts up matrix waste and sprays it to kill adhesive

COLD foil UV adhesive laid down by offset print unit

THE first four print units on the Rotatek Brava can be swapped between semi- and full rotary modes

A keen sportsman, Tiziano Zardini sponsors the local ice hockey side

SETTING UP A PS DIVISION

When one major food customer started asking for pressure-sensitive labels, Tiziano Zardini took the decision to buy a roll label press in order to retain the business. 'Now we see roll offset as a major growth area to develop.'

After extensive trialing, Zardini took the decision to purchase Italy's first Rotatek Brava wet offset press. To fully utilize the press and develop new applications, Zardini built a new press hall and publicized the opening of a completely new division of the company. Using his network of sales agents throughout North East Italy, Zardini expects the new press to add an additional 1m to the company's turnover.

The Rotatek Brava was chosen specifically for its ability to print in both rotary and semi-rotary modes, following a suggestion from a customer. The ability to handle short runs with variable repeats in semi-rotary mode was particularly important because Zardini currently has no intention of going digital. The press shares CTP plate making resources with the main plant.

Did Tiziano Zardini consider flexo for his new pressure-sensitive label operation? 'The pre-press and set up on the Rotatek are much simpler than UV flexo, with its need for special aniloxes and so on,' says Zardini. 'At the same time, the semi-rotary capabilities of the Brava allow us to produce shorter runs more profitably than with flexo. This press also has great strength and stability, which is very important to us.'

Zardini is achieving speeds of 60-70 m/min in semi-rotary mode using the 24in cassette. Semi-rotary printing is used not just for short runs, but for longer runs broken down into smaller lots. 'We can print just enough for one lot, change jobs to a different repeat size, then return to the first job.' So enthusiastic is Zardini about the growth opportunities presented by the new roll label division, that a second machine is now under consideration.

PRESS CONFIGURATION

The Rotatek Brava press is capable of switching between semi- and full rotary modes on the first four print units. On the Zardini press an Eltromat Offcon 4 system combines register control with CIP4-ready automated inking control. In semi-rotary mode a buffer unit feeds the web into the fully rotary converting section with its own web guide.

The rotary section is configured with the following units:

- an offset cylinder which can be used to lay down adhesive for cold foil application. Up to now Zardini has not been able to hot stamp film labels in its sheet-fed operation due to heat distortion. So cold foil opens up new decoration possibilities for the company's labels and packaging customers.
- a de/re-lam unit with turnbar to allow printing on the back of the web with a exo head imaging at up to 200lpi.
- two exo stations for a range of applications including spot colors and coating.

An interesting feature of the press - developed by Zardini production - is a system which cuts the matrix waste into small pieces then treats it with a spray to kill the adhesive, making it easier to recycle.

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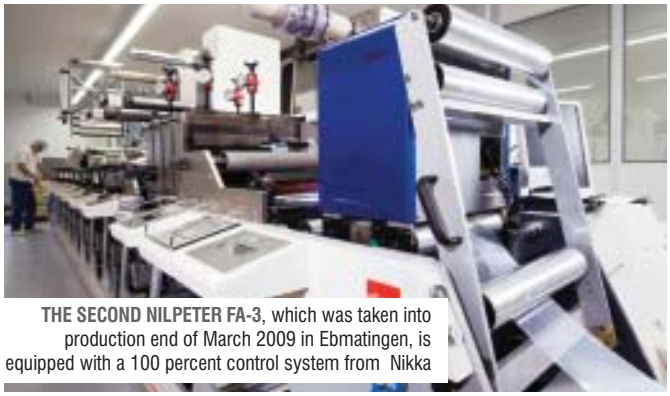
THE TOTAL PRODUCTION area at Tovenca AG is geared to the process ow

IN ORDER to fulfil demanding job requirements in the area of Pharma labels, it is often necessary to handle specialist materials



THE SECOND NILPETER FA-3, which was taken into production end of March 2009 in Ebmatingen, is equipped with a 100 percent control system from Nikka

THE FIRST 8-COLOR MACHINE, a Nilpeter FA-3, was installed at Tovenca in 2007

Pharma focus

SWISS CONVERTER TOVENCA AG has switched to UV flexo and invested millions of euros in process and quality control systems as part of a strategy to focus on the pharma industry. Klemens Ehrlitzer reports

Swiss pressure sensitive label converter Tovenca AG is focusing heavily on the pharma market following a 5m euros investment in all areas of the company's business - from prepress, quality control and printing technologies to 'ownership' of its labels throughout the process chain.

Established in 1979 and with a staff of around 50, Tovenca is based in Ebmatingen near Zurich, Switzerland. It is a key member of the international Topflight network, an alliance of label converters in the US, Venezuela, Sweden, Australia and Switzerland.

Tovenca is signed up to all the key pharma certifications, including ISO 9001:2008, OHSAS 18001:2007 and ISO 14644-1 class 8 (clean room) certification. It fully implements the World Health Organisation GMP-Directives for quality assurance and has strengthened its environmental credentials with ISO 14001.

In addition to a doubling of the production area from 2,000 to 4,000 square meters, Tovenca has implemented a 'closed' environmental system that filters and dampens the ambient air and keeps the temperature range constant. It works with different overpressure systems so that the only connection with the outside environment is incoming and outgoing goods. Since it has been implemented, Tovenca says biological contamination has been eliminated from the label production area.

CLOSER TO THE CUSTOMER

Tovenca CEO Thomas Sommerhalder has built the company's reputation as a 'problem solver' which welcomes challenging orders – for example labels that need to adhere to containers with very narrow radii or that must fulfil complex requirements on high speed labelling lines.

Sommerhalder wants Tovenca to get closer to its customers to identify new demands early, work out suitable solutions fast and retain quality control after the labels have left the plant.

'The responsibility for our products does not end with outgoing goods,' says Sommerhalder. 'It reaches deep into the subsequent process at our customers, in order, for instance, to ensure problem-free labeling.'

Another example is the printing of variable data. 'Almost every customer has different equipment', says Sommerhalder. 'We must ensure that our labels can be printed without problems at every customer.'

Tovenca has mobile teams of technicians dedicated to customer problem solving, despite the fact that the processing problems are seldom caused by the printing or packaging of the labels.

Sommerhalder deliberately refrains from orders based on the lowest price, so Tovenca cannot easily lose business to another 'discounter'. 'Complex orders are less under price pressure,' says Sommerhalder.

Tovenca is proactive in presenting new solutions to end users, for example via regular newsletters accompanied by label samples. Anti-counterfeiting solutions are currently key fields of activity in this regard. Tovenca aims to be the catalyst for the development of new products which can, for a certain time, ensure end users a head start in the market.

SWITCHING TO UV FLEXO WITH NILPETER

Two years ago, Tovenca decided to adopt UV exo alongside its existing letterpress machines with the installation of an 8-color Nilpeter FA-3 press. This was followed by a second 8-color FA-3 in March this year, The new press is configured with up to five screen units in combination, and mounts a Nikka image processing system for 100 percent video control of the printing process.

Tovenca CEO Thomas Sommerhalder says UV exo is now more applicable than letterpress to the special demands of high quality pharma label printing, and is more cost-effective than screen printing.

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MIS drives efficiency at KDV

WHILE Radius Solutions' Pecas Vision MIS has been installed at large global packaging businesses like Multi-Color Corporation, it is also of interest to smaller converters like KDV Labels. Danielle Jerschefske reports

One of the smaller converters that has invested in Radius Solutions' Pecas Vision management information system is KDV Labels based in Waukesha, Wisconsin. The converter, which started producing bakery labels and has since moved into the dairy business and other prime label markets, needed an automated solution customized to suit its particular needs.

The converter has a lot of clients that change their order in the middle of the process and many times customers order the same label, but for multiple locations, the only difference being the rewind positions. Shane Vaughn, president says: 'We wanted to be able to ship easier or change the core tags without any effect on on-time delivery.'

For scheduling, KDV needed to have better transparency of the shop floor. Now KDV is able to see what's happening in real time and has the ability to move around work more easily to fit in last minute orders.

KDV says that the ability to collect shop floor data in real time is extremely valuable. Vaughn explains, 'We know what footage has gone through the press immediately and we can track where it's at – because entry is done at the press. We made an inventory change to help with the process. Stock used to be issued by inventory control, but now it is issued at the press operator level.'

The data transfer wasn't too difficult. Most data was automatically loaded from the old system while some parts required manual entry. The Vision software in particular saves significant time on the front end of the business by completely eliminating duplications. 'There is major office time saved,' Vaughn says. 'Business has increased by 15 percent this year and I believe that there would've been any way that order/entry could've been able to keep up with the increased amount of orders.' The traceability of a roll from delivery to finishing provided the company with the transparency it needed.

One difficulty that KDV hasn't been able to overcome yet is with customer number and internal item number matching. It is still not able to separate items easily if they are called out for a change.

In all, the Pecas Vision software system has streamlined order processing and materials, and has saved considerable amounts of time in the office for KDV.

'With the new work we've gained over this last year it would have been much more stressful without the software support,' Vaughn explains. 'The solution brings more value to the business as a whole. We are very satisfied with our investment and would recommend the system to others in the industry that are looking to overcome similar challenges.'

VISION UPGRADE

Radius Solutions' latest Pecas Vision 1102 upgrade focuses on multi-plant enhancements, allowing companies to move materials between plants more quickly and schedule different stages of work at different facilities based on capacity, cost savings and most efficient use of production resources. These capabilities also include WIP valuation transfers so accurate costs for products can be tracked and analyzed, as well as automatic report generation allowing important information to be pushed to the people who need it.

'During the last few years we have seen two key trends driving the development of our software,' said David Taylor, president and CEO. 'The first is centralization of business processes, particularly for larger multi-plant operations. Since our application is designed to support this structure, it ensures that acquired operations can be easily integrated within the core business system. The second is the need for improved efficiencies based upon existing resources. Consequently we focused on facilitating process optimization and efficiency.'

PECAS VISION AT MULTI-SITE ORGANIZATIONS

Moving up in scale, York Label is implementing Pecas Vision software from Radius Solutions as its standard management system across its operations. This investment is part of the company's integration strategy to support continued growth and allow for standardization across the organization. Pecas Vision will integrated with a tier one financial application.

'Pecas Vision provides industry specific functionality that, combined with the experience of the Radius team, will help us roll out the product to all of our plants quickly and for far less money than a standard ERP product,' stated Chris O'Brien, CIO of York Label. 'We can focus on growing our business rather than customizing software to help us run our business.'

'Choosing a MIS supplier should be an involved and detailed process, since the resulting solution will be the foundation upon which the entire business operates for decades,' said Radius Solutions president and CEO David Taylor. 'The York Label team certainly did a very thorough review of all available options.'

Channeled Resources Group is another corporation to implement Pecas Vision. The company reports it has outgrown its existing AS/400 based information management system and needs a fully-integrated solution that can address all areas of its operations across all its facilities.

EXTENSIVE CUSTOMIZATION

'We felt a generic system would require extensive customization,' said Cindy White, president of Channeled Resources Group. 'When Radius Solutions walked in the door we immediately felt like they really understood our business and had a strong solution for us. They also had excellent references.'

With plans to implement the entire Pecas Vision application suite, the company expects to increase operational efficiencies and improve automation across the whole organization.

Etirama pushes European business

ETIRAMA has celebrated its tenth anniversary with an Open House showcasing its European facilities and introducing a new hot stamping system. Andy Thomas reports

With a successful Labelexpo behind it, Etirama is looking to build on its position on the European continent. Etirama Europe was created in 2007 to serve the UK, Ireland and the Continent from its base in West Yorkshire, England. This operation forms a key part of Etirama's worldwide sales and support network, with sales in 42 countries handled via distributors or agents.

Part of the Grafitec Group of companies, which includes Grafitec Web (Newspaper and Commercial Presses), and Cava UK (Carton Converting machines), Etirama's European sales operation is headed by John Ainley, who brings 40 years of printing industry experience to the new company. Facilities in the UK include a purpose-built showroom and demonstration facility, which recently hosted an Open House for the company's newly developed Stamp Foil line (see below).

Etirama began life in 1968 manufacturing specialized printing and converting equipment for the food industry. By 1997 it had begun to develop a line of narrow web flexo machines to print labels for the food, cosmetic, pharmaceutical, and automotive industries, of which 1200 have so far been delivered to converters around the world.

Founder Ewald Dafferner, now 96 years old, pioneered much label printing technology development in South America, and the company is still under family ownership and management. Today, the company numbers more than 150 employees located in Sorocaba, Brazil, and around the world.

Etirama's manufacturing base is a 4,000 sqm plant located 90km from Sao Paulo. New facilities in Brazil will treble the company's capacity, and there is a major drive to establish sales and service capability in every continent.

The current machine portfolio includes inline as well as CI flexo presses. The inline Superflex Elite is available with shaftless servo or line shaft drive and in two web widths, 250 and 330mm. Maximum operational speed is 150 m/min for both. Standard specification includes pneumatic reel lift, electronic tension control; constantly turning anilox rollers, hot air and/or UV options hot and cold foiling, web turn bars, delam/relam and screen printing unit.

"We have priced the Stamp Foil at a level where it will attract attention from both large and small converters"

Flexo Premium is a 6-color and varnish CI press, which can be configured for use with water based and solvent inks, or full UV. With its temperature controlled central impression cylinder it can print materials as low as 15 microns. The latest version of the globally successful Flexo Wine press, known as Superfull SV, is a 6-color plus varnish line, with servo driven tension control and touch screen operation.

ETIRAMA'S new stamp Foil machine allows converters to precisely register hologram images to the foil transfer

OPEN HOUSE

Visitors from more than 30 converting companies visited the Etirama Open House held recently at its UK demonstration center.

The center of attention was the new Stamp Foil machine, which opens opportunities for converters to add value by precisely registering hologram images to the foil transfer. The machine's CNC manufactured steel frame is capable of handling substrates up to 340 mm wide, and has a hot stamping area of 310 x 250 mm (two heads) and both lateral and longitudinal registration of the foil and die cutting.

Infeed is servo controlled, with an electronic reinsertion sensor and optical sensor on the substrate and foil, while both unwind and rewind shafts accept 600mm diameter reels. Maximum speed is 10,000 impressions/hour. The machine is controlled from a touch screen console. It offers fine adjustments down to 0.01mm, and incorporates a digital counter with programmable auto stop.

'We have priced the Stamp Foil at a level where it will attract attention from both small and large converters,' comments John Ainley. 'It offers high quality finishing as an industrial process and has a very short payback potential.'

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SANDON'S investment in anilox roll development has seen some interesting new engraving specifications emerge on the market

Rapid growth at Sandon Global

THE UK-BASED anilox roll manufacturer has achieved a great deal since its foundation five years ago, as James Quirk reports

Initially operating from a 650 square meter facility in Runcorn, UK, Sandon Global has seen rapid growth since it was established in 2004. Since that time the company has installed three new laser engraving systems with supporting equipment, launched three product lines, and moved to new 1,860 sqm premises on the Manor Park Industrial Estate in Runcorn, Cheshire. All this while picking up several printing industry awards for its products, acquiring an engineering company and setting up a network of distributors around the world.

Sandon Global's investment in anilox roll development has seen some interesting new engraving specifications emerge on the market. New engravings such as HOW (high opacity white), HVP (high volume process) and Ipro (high speed process) are among of the technologies introduced, soon to be joined by HOC (high opacity color) following its launch at Labelexpo Europe.

'HOW engraving was part of a 12-month research program developed for the UV narrow web market in conjunction with Sericol inks,' explains John Millington. 'The objective of the development program was to create an engraving and ink system that could produce a flexo white equal to rotary screen print quality. The research involved the development of the unique HOW engraving and ink system together with the trial of a vast number of plates and tapes in order to achieve the very highest opaque levels of print. This engraving and ink combination has seen immense savings for printers in comparison to printing with a rotary screen unit. The development, once seen as the "holy grail" for UV narrow web printers, is now a reality and the product is exported worldwide.'

The HOW engraving is produced on one of Sandon Global's fiber-optic thermal lasers using advanced cell management software to accurately control the third dimension (cell profile). This achieves consistent and improved ink release that creates a uniform deposit of ink with dramatically reduced pin-holing and increased optical density. The HOW engraving comes in three design specifications produced to give optimal opaque levels whilst still holding out 5/6 point barcodes.

'HOW and now HOC engraving technology coupled with the right UV flexo inks can bring significant cost savings to label printers,' adds Millington. 'There are additional potential savings that would be unique to each customer. One significant area of cost savings is higher press speeds. With the HOW system, for example, the flexo press can operate from 80 to 100 m/min while a rotary screen press typically runs at 40 m/min. Set up times are also much less than screen which dramatically reduces waste and downtime.'

The HVP engraving was initiated by Sandon Global's customers seeking the development of the ultimate combination anilox roll. Following some nine months of trials, the company was able to produce an anilox roll that combined high screen with high volume without compromising the critical cell ratios. The engraving was initially tested in the UV narrow web market and is now used extensively in flexible packaging and in the post and pre-print sectors.

'This unconventional engraving style means that printers can make major savings by reducing the number of print units required for certain jobs,' says Millington. 'We can combine engravings of up to 800 l/inch (320 l/cm) / 1000 l/inch (400 l/cm) with volumes not previously achievable, thus giving the capability to combine solid, text, barcodes and screen on one plate. This engraving makes for greater print latitude for today's printers who are continually asked to produce more colorful designs on a limited number of print stations. HVP also offers enhanced resistance to wear. There appears to be little or no increase in ratios of cell wall to cell openings on engravings viewed 12 months after initial use. This can be seen as a major contributor and benefit to printers who can ensure consistency of print providing the roll is thoroughly cleaned and maintained.'

Sandon's Ipro engraving technology was developed for use in the flexible packaging industry. The objective of the technology was to produce an anilox cell with improved ink evacuation at higher engraving specifications than previously experienced. This engraving was targeted at customers running high-speed CI presses with chambered doctor blades to provide increased resistance to scoring, greater print latitude in the tonal range and increased color hue. While initially designed for CI presses, the technology has now crossed over into the label industry for the production of high quality printing on servo driven presses running films for flexible packaging applications.

'Sandon Global has invested in the very latest generation of fiber optic IPG laser and supporting equipment for the manufacture of its anilox, gravure and coating rolls with the objective of giving customers the best print technology available,' concludes Millington. 'We have seen unprecedented growth in spite of a recession and continue to win new customers. We are excited about the move to new premises and the acquisition of our own engineering company that will streamline manufacturing and repairs as well as enhance future development projects. The future looks good.'

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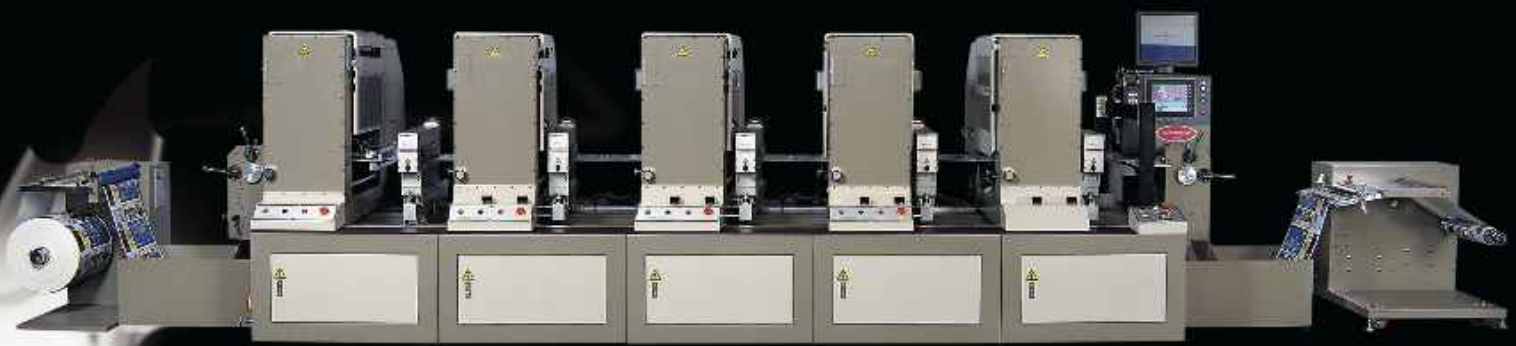

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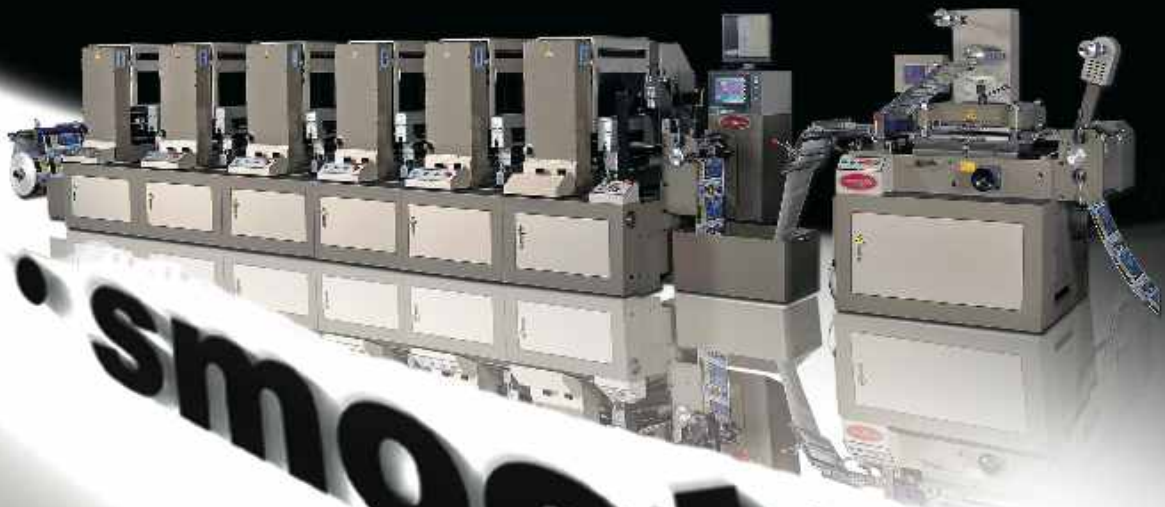

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Letterpress trends

LABELEXPO Europe proved that letterpress technology is alive and well, both in press and in digital pre-press developments. Andy Thomas reports

Despite the fact that L&L surveys show flexography overtaking letterpress as the leading narrow web process in the global narrow web market, it would be a big mistake to think this is a dead technology. Not only is there still development in the press sector – with semi-rotary, servo-driven systems competing with digital on short runs of products with complex converting requirements – but also in pre-press, where digital letterpress platemaking is undergoing major developments.

Added to that, in developing markets, letterpress, particularly when matched with flatbed die cutting, remains a powerful force, with converters often nervous about a shift to flexography because of the need to change to more expensive ink and plate systems.

This trend is apparent, for example, with the recent installation by Suzhou Advance Printing, a label converter based in Suzhou, China, of Nyloprint Combination CW 35×50 platemaking equipment from Flint Group Flexographic Products. Rather than install flexo equipment, the company chose to upgrade its letterpress platemaking workflow with this all-in-one platemaking system includes exposure, washout and drying.

Press manufacturers still pushing letterpress technology hard include Orthotec, which recently demonstrated its new servo-driven CSL3022 intermittent letterpress at Labelexpo with a three-section automated inking system. The press incorporates automated tension control and a scanner allowing tightly registered second pass printing at high speed. The press has a maximum print area of 300 x 220mm and speeds up to 15,000 impressions/hour for a six station machine, and up to 12,000/hour for nine stations or when using the new rotary die system. A hybrid inking system allows the same station to double as a letterpress or a flexo unit for varnishing or spot color application.

Orthotec also introduced a rotary hot-stamp station which uses a flexible plate – an innovation on intermittent letterpress machinery. Options for the CSL3022 include a lamination station doubling as a cold foil unit, and the SLT300 slitter, which can work both in- and off-line. The SLT300 unit has two rewinding shafts with electronic tension control while operating in-line, with forward and reverse winding. A counter is also available.

Labelmen has also been highly innovative in its approach to letterpress with its PW260 and PW460 systems, demonstrating not only standard PS work, but multi-web applications for promotional labels and most recently in-mold label applications, including specialist delivery systems.

The company recently signed a licensing agreement with Martin Automatic to build STS automatic splicers and STR turret rewinds onto its equipment. Lo Chin-Shiung, president of Labelmen, commented: 'We plan to launch a new Labelmen MN series press, which will have Martin's automatic roll changing equipment fully integrated into the press. For our customers, it will be a press that has the highest flexibility and efficiency among all of our existing product line.'

Smooth Machinery's latest machine, the SPM-340LR intermittent shaftless letterpress, can now be paired with the SPM-340F on-line flat-bed die-cut module, which can achieve speeds up to 300 impressions/min. The flat-bed die cut module greatly reduces the cost of dies on shorter run, fast turnaround work. The first European installation of the machine is at Hagmeier Etiketten in Germany.

Taiyo has long been a letterpress specialist. Although the press the company showed at Labelexpo was based around wet offset print units, the new TMC-350-7C modular combination press incorporates dual servo-drives on each print station, allowing the press to be freely configurable between wet offset, letterpress, flexo and screen units.

Shiki is another long-term letterpress pioneer, currently promoting its high speed intermittent press range, now available with a wider 330mm web width. The company is seeing an interesting trend towards mixing letterpress and offset units on the same press chasis, having recently built such a machine for an Egyptian converter, and reports a lively interest in letterpress at the European Labelexpo show in September for short run work. 'Production speeds of 30 m/min are not much slower than many converters use for flexo presses if they are going for the highest quality work, and it is still faster than most digital presses on the market.'

SMOOTH Machinery's SPM-340LR intermittent shaftless letterpress

Computerized pre-setting of letterpress ink delivery systems is a major trend. Retrofit modules have long been available from companies like AP Maschinen (now Kai Gmuer), but there is increasingly a move by machine manufacturers to include them as standard options.

Lintec pioneered computerized ink setting on its LPM-300iTP semi-rotary letterpress, which uses a segmented roller to 'collect' ink and deliver it to the plate in the exact quantities determined at pre-press. The system means the ink settings can be pre-set and then recalled for repeat work.

Now that AVT/GMI's PrintVision/Helios II 100% web inspection is integrated with the MicroColor NW remote ink control system, letterpress printers can use CIP3 digital pre-setting at the same time as installing a top line inspection system. Linked with the PrintVision/Helios II, operators can immediately identify any color shift and handle color changes detected early in the process by the PrintVision/Helios II.

DIGITAL LETTERPRESS

Looking at recent plate developments, Toyobo is now distributing its Printight water-washable letterpress plates. Also water-washable is Flint Group Flexographic Products' nyloprint WS 230 S digital stencil plate for letterpress security printing applications. This allows conventional film processing to be replaced by digital mask ablation.

On the imaging side, we do not hear so much today about direct engraving of letterpress plates. The buzz word is direct ablation, where specially formulated letterpress plates coated with a black ablation layer can be imaged on the same systems as a digital flexo plate.

At Labelexpo, Dantex, long a champion of digital letterpress, was imaging digital letterpress plates on a CDI platesetter, while Lüscher was claiming a world first for its XPose! 4FLEX platesetter, which can image printing forms for letterpress, flexo, screen and offset plates on the same machine. The system is aimed particularly at label converters using hybrid printing presses which mix UV letterpress with UV screen and UV flexo coating stations. 4FLEX incorporates high power 940nm thermal diodes to image the letterpress plates.

Screen recently demonstrated a new halftone dot for letterpress printers which exploits the company's 4,800 dpi resolution imaging technology, and is claimed to produce gradations as smooth as those achieved by offset litho printing at 200 lpi. The Flexodot 4800 can be utilized both by Screen's PlateRite FX870II and PlateRite FX1524 thermal CTP platesetters for the letterpress sector. These models feature a newly developed, high power imaging head and an auto-balancing function that stabilizes drum rotation.

Flexolaser is another digital imaging specialist which can handle digital letterpress plates. The company recently demonstrated a new workflow system - Graphic Republik's MaxPro - driving its Flexolaser digital imagers which can image letterpress as well as flexo plates. When using Flexolaser's piccolo small-format laser system for digital production of letterpress plates, the machine is provided with a magnetic vacuum drum.

RECONDITIONED MACHINES

Letterpress machines certainly hold their value. Many years after Gallus discontinued the R160 and R200 letterpress machines, there is a healthy trade in reconditioned machines. There are now numerous companies which will take the press chasis, strip it down, and build fullyu-customized converting platforms which can include elements as diverse as booklet making machines, RFID systems, digital printing heads and various multiple web configurations.

One such company is RüttimannTrade AG. Rüttimann has been a long-term letterpress manufacturer and supplier of printing units for the Gallus R160 and Gallus R200, and has now extended its business to include the overhaul, service and support of existing Gallus R160 and R200 letterpress machines.

CEO Martin Rüttimann is in little doubt about the continued longevity of these press platforms: The letterpress printing method has been viewed in certain markets, as it has been in the United States, as older technology. However, since the development of high definition digital printing plates, the letterpress printing process is making a comeback and will be a much closer competitor to offset press printing than ever before. The cost efficiency of the letterpress printing process is certain to lead to a revival of the letterpress printing process our printing industry."

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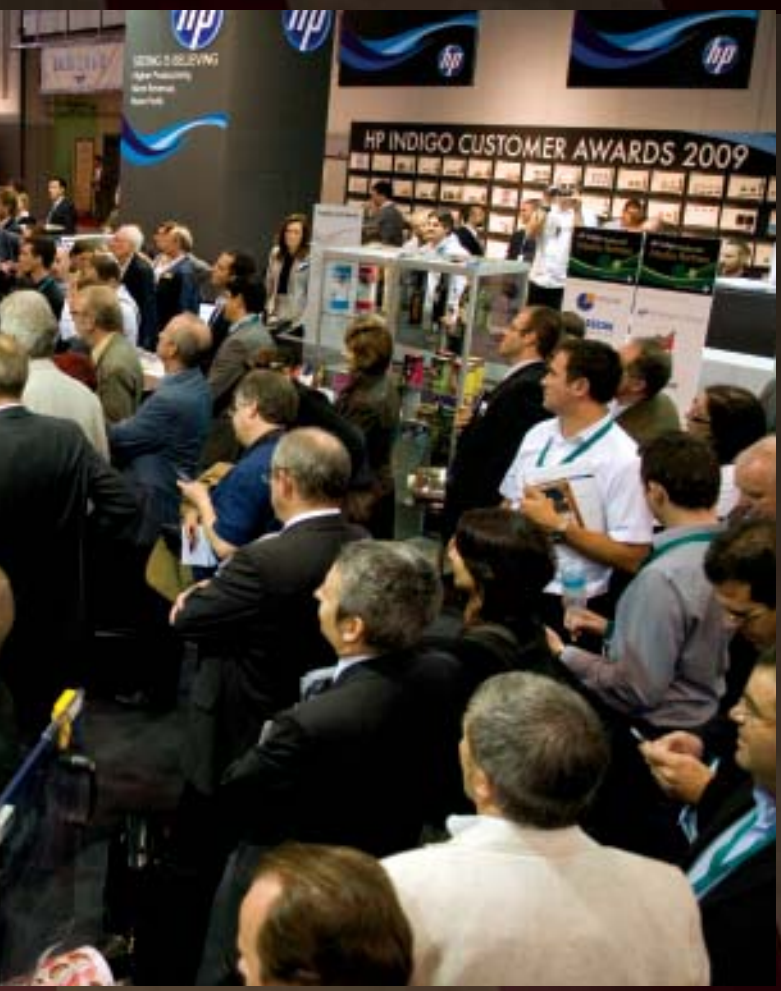
Largest-ever Labelexpo signals economic recovery

LABELEXPO EUROPE 2009 defied the global economic downturn to attract 24,169 visitors from 125 countries to the event in Brussels on September 23-26



SHOW ON EARTH!

Exhibitor numbers and exhibition space both increased from the 2007 show, while the visitors came from the widest geographical distribution in the event's history.

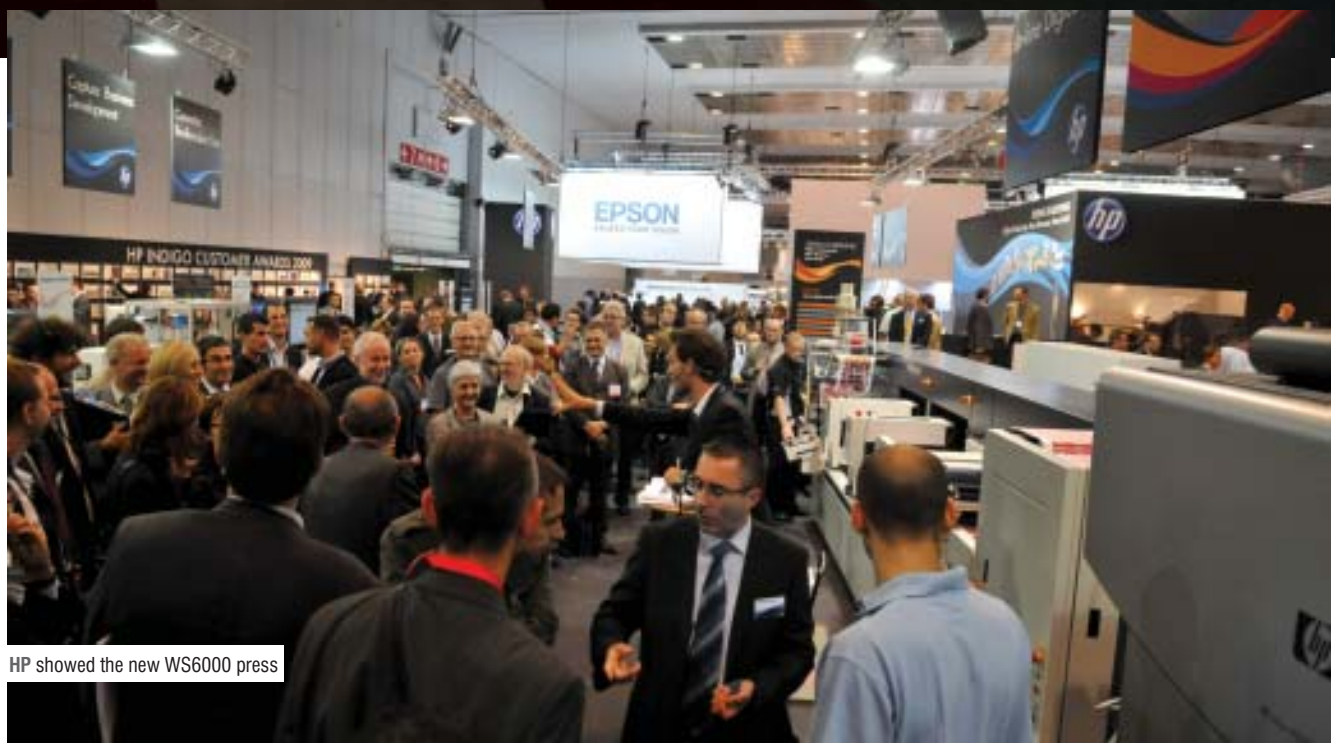
Despite the visitor number being slightly lower than the previous show (by 2 percent), many exhibitors reported increased sales. Even before the show had finished, over 80 percent of exhibition space had already been booked for Labelexpo Europe 2011.

Dates for the next Labelexpo Europe in 2011 are 27-30 September; a Tuesday to a Friday to meet the demand for visitors who find it more convenient to attend the show on a weekday.

Due to an increase in exhibitors (544 compared to 511 in 2007), this year Labelexpo Europe expanded into a sixth hall, which featured many of the latest advancements in digital technology. Digital press manufacturers also reported a high number of machinery sales. A major development for Labelexpo Europe 2009 was the Digital Label Experience feature area in this new hall, which hosted a series of seminars throughout the show.

Roger Pellow, Labelexpo managing director, said: 'Labelexpo Europe 2009 was a truly incredible show given the current global economic crisis; it showed how resilient this wonderful industry is. There was a huge amount of exciting new products that the manufacturers had to offer. Digital has now become a reality and it was also interesting to see how established companies are embracing these new technologies. The event is the industry's meeting place where everyone comes together to do business, learn and network. It is truly a global family.

'I would like to thank everyone involved with Labelexpo Europe. The visitors, exhibitors, media and associations have all contributed to make this one of the most successful events that we have ever had.'



HP showed the new WS6000 press

Digital presses

THE many inkjet developments at the show marked a distinct shift in digital printing. Report by Barry Hunt

A TIMELY INTRODUCTION?

As expected, digital printing and finishing technology was a major feature of Labelexpo Europe.

The Digital Label Experience series of free seminars, hosted in a new digitally-related hall, were well received. Based on technical and marketing issues, they clearly showed that many more converters want to learn how the technology can relate to their businesses. For while digital's share of total label output remains relatively small, it is growing faster than competing technologies. Global volumes average around 15 percent a year and offer higher margins. Behind it all, brand owners now appreciate the unique benefits that digitized production brings, not least in versioning, variable data and personalization. Furthermore, it captures the essence of the moment, as characterized by smaller print runs and a mood that encourages service-led initiatives.

Of course, such factors have long influenced the developments of the market leaders, HP Indigo and Xeikon. The crowds predictably flocked to see their latest approaches to combining flexibility with fast throughput. This year they had the added attraction of single-pass CMYK inkjet printing. Over 25 different digital vendors were present, from first-time entrants to established vendors serving the inkjet-based coding/marking, industrial and wide-format markets.

Largely centered on piezo, drop-on-demand print heads - with Cambridge, UK-based Xaar as the largest OEM supplier - inkjet digital printing has certainly arrived. Currently, it competes well with the lower end of conventional flexo, or semi-rotary offset, but with varying levels of quality; it is not yet in the same class as the best UV flexo or offset. Nevertheless, the best of inkjet printing combined with the technology's fast rate for job changeovers again chimes with current short-run production patterns. Several technical issues have yet to be resolved, including the rival claims for the merits of binary versus grayscale technology (see L&L4, p.103).

NEW DIGITAL DEVELOPMENTS

HP Indigo's high volume WS6000 label and carton press received its Labelexpo Europe debut. Over 50 have been installed worldwide since May 2009. HP claims the press competes well with flexo or offset for jobs of around 4,000 linear

ABG Digicon

ALLEN Datagraph Systems launched the iTech AXXIS

meters (13,000 linear feet). This is said to account for around 80 percent of most converters' jobs. The ws4500 label workhorse, which has a comparative crossover point of 6,500 linear feet, was shown with ABG's new entry-level Digicon Lite finishing line.

The new HP Indigo Smart Planner 3.0 upgrades the former HP Indigo Label Job estimator. It allows users to calculate the break-even point between conventional and digital jobs. HP has also introduced SmartStream, based on an EskoArtwork's digital front-end and workflow controller. An innovation first seen last year in Chicago, is the 'Tower of Production'. It emulates typical working conditions within an eight-hour shift using a WS6000 press operating at 100 ft/min (30 m/min) and producing various four-color jobs on various substrates.

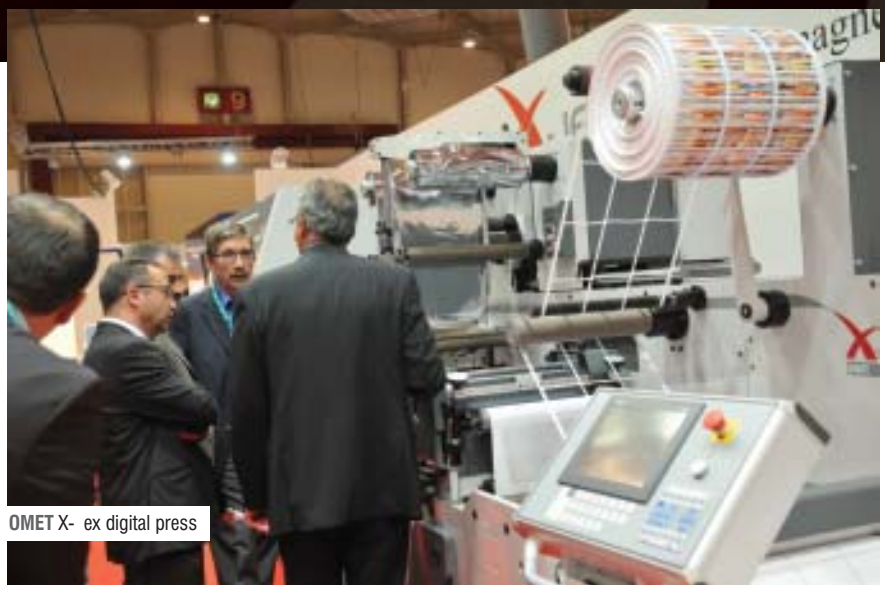
Xeikon's 3300 with dry toner print engine now offers a heat transfer function. Using a roll-fed siliconized material it prints labels for plastic containers, such as cosmetics tubes, and resembles in-mold labeling. The company also introduced a larger unwind for the 3300 and expanded the range of speciality substrates.

ATLANTIC Zeiser Gamma 70P

JDF INTEGRATION

This Labelexpo saw the first real integration of digital presses directly into plant-wide Management Information Systems (MIS), *writes Andy Thomas*. Using JDF links, data flows in both directions: job planning information is sent from the estimating module to the press, and the press sends back status data to the MIS planning and invoicing modules.

Xeikon demonstrated a 'live' example of JDF integration using Deixis web portal software. It allows end-users to request



OMET X- ex digital press

a job through the portal. A CERM MIS system automatically generates a price quotation. After approval, the MIS gathers all the relevant job settings and artwork for submitting to the 3300's X-800 digital front end, which reports the real-time job status.

On the HP stand, a Tailored Solutions Label Traxx MIS was shown networked to an EskoArtwork BackStage server and an HP Indigo press. Orders entered by users via the Label Traxx E-Traxx module were automatically transmitted directly to Esko BackStage, where they are formatted for the particular HP Indigo press in production. Complex functions such as step and repeat are handled automatically, again using industry-standard JDF protocols, which eliminate re-keying and the possibility of errors being introduced as files are moved from one stage of production to the next. The software also enables two-way communications, creating a return reporting path for monitoring equipment performance and recording production data. This new feature was introduced in Label Traxx 5.5.

Advanced Inkjet Technology, part of Rapid Machinery in Australia, gave the European debut of the Squidjet modular print engine for stand-alone use, or integration within existing servo-based presses. The former comprises an unwind, pre-treatment, CMYK printing, UV curing and the usual finishing functions. It is available with, or without, partial-cured pinning. Software options include fully variable printing and integrated print verification. AIT's Calamari variable data single or four-color print unit can be integrated with conventional presses, packaging lines or mailing systems. AIT also showed Bottlejet, a unique digital print system for printing direct to bottles and containers.

Agfa Graphics, now partnered with Edale, introduced the optional Express Print Mode for the :Dotrix Modular single pass UV industrial inkjet press. It increases print speeds from 24 m/min to 32 m/min on a 650mm web width. While influencing the volume of the grayscale print heads, the print resolution remains unchanged at a native resolution of 1,000 dpi to give an effective production capacity of 20 sqm/min. An upgrade kit is available for installed presses.

Atlantic Zeiser launched the Gamma 70 series printing webs up to 70.5mm at a top speed of 24 m/min (with Xaar 1001 print heads). The standard Gamma 70S prints wet-on-wet, while the premium Gamma 70P offers both pinning (partial curing) and wet-on-wet printing using either its Smartcure LED UV system or normal UV curing. Also new was the Delta 105 high speed grayscale series, which offers a 105mm print width and 600 dpi resolution. Smartcure is an option for the Delta 105 UV when printing non-absorbent label stocks. AZ's BrailleJet system was displayed by Grafotronic as part of a variable data label marking system.

Delta Industrial added a new CMYK

DURST Tau 150

LED SHINES A LIGHT

Labelexpo saw the introduction of UV-LED curing systems for various types of inkjet printers. Although at the early stages of development, it strengths are apparent. Principally there is no ozone produced and energy consumption is much lower compared with conventional mercury vapor UV lamps. Water-cooled LED lamps would seem ideal for curing thin, heat-sensitive films using the type of compact lamp units best suited to inkjet printers.

LED curing is increasingly used for 'pinning' individual colors directly after printing to reduce dot gain, followed by end-of-line conventional UV curing. According to John Corrall, md of Industrial Inkjet in Cambridgeshire, there are several unresolved issues in respect of partial curing, just as there are with wet-on-printing with a final UV cure: 'The length of cure, use of corona treatments, the surface energy of substrates and design of print heads all have some effect on ink usage and print quality.'

A major LED developer is Phoseon Technology of Hillsboro in Oregon. Its OEM systems appeared on single-pass digital presses from Atlantic Zeiser, C-Sat, Durst, Francis Buhler, M-Print and Stork Prints. A single unit of its RX FireFlex LED curing unit also appeared on the new Gallus ECS 340 exo press. Working with Phoseon, Siegwerk has developed a range of specially-formulated inks that are compatible with LED's lower concentration of spectral intensity. Integration Technology in Oxfordshire, UK, is another vendor. It introduced a series of compact UV LED curing lamps to augment its compact UV curing systems for inkjet printing.

EPSON Digital Label Press

drop-on-demand inkjet label printer module to its off-line web processing portfolio. The front-end, driven by ixPressia Print Engine Colour Label software, processes grayscale-quality color with variable content in real time to match the maximum print speed of 30 m/min. Features include transparency and ICC color profile support for accurate reproduction. The software enables users to print any combination of fixed or variable images when printing ID cards and labels. Customized versions can be integrated within manufacturing and packaging lines. Delta plans to upgrade the print engine to print with widths from 70mm to 280mm while maintaining the optimum speed. The Delta Mod-Tech system was demonstrated with the Delta Edge laser cutting system.

Based on the single-color K series product range, Domino's prototype CMYK printer has variable drop size piezo print heads. The nominal resolution is 1,200 dpi (600 x 600 dpi with four grayscales) at up to 50 m/min. The printer can also be configured to print at 1,700 dpi. Set-up features include a fully automatic head cleaning system, web cleaning and an ink control system. An as yet unnamed model with a 13-inch wide web will become commercially available in Spring 2010. Either UV curing or IR drying units are available depending on the customer's choice of UV or water-based inks.

New to the label industry, but with 15 years of inkjet experience, Durst introduced the Tau 150, with 100mm-165mm web widths printing CMYK, with optional white, at up to 50 m/min. A run length of 40,000 labels is said to be a realistic benchmark for cost-effective digital label printing on a broad range of standard substrates. High performance Tau inks are available directly from Durst in 5 liter containers with an easy and secure

SEE the video of Nilpeter's stand with press demonstrations and interviews at www.labelsandlabeling.com

ink refill system. An optional Variable Data Printing (VDP) module offers label-to-label variability. The complete system includes EskoArtwork pre-press workflow software and the Rotoworx 330 stand-alone finishing unit with semi-rotary die cutting, coating and lamination. Made by Durst Canada, following a recent acquisition, the Rotoworx 330 has a 330mm-wide web.

Built on the established Model 4000 platform, EFI Jetrion's new Model 4830 has a wider web at 210mm (8.3 inches) for printing two-up 100mm labels. Output speed is doubled at 36.6 m/min, or 120 ft/min. Powered by the latest EFI Fiery XF RIP, the press provides seamless workflow integration and allows advanced spot-color matching. Its white-ink capability enables printing on transparent filmics, while a capability to print directly to pre-printed rolls or on already die cut labels is seen as a useful feature. A precise re-registration capability and a new reverse rewind combine to offer full-color, dual-sided printing with less than one minute of changeover. This is said to be markedly faster and more efficient than dual-sided printing on a flexo press or other digital devices. Applications include pharmaceutical, health care and hang tag applications.

Epson's new Digital Label Press uses water-based pigmented inks - CMYK, plus orange and green with a white ink under development. Using a stop-go web feed, it prints with an array of Epson MicroPiezo print heads. The resolutions are 720 x 720 dpi on standard paper labelstocks and 1,440 x 720 dpi on

EFI Jetrion 4830

SEE DETAILED INTERVIEW with EFI's Dr Ken Stack at www.labelsandlabeling.com

filmic substrates, at a rate of 5 m/min on 80mm-330mm web widths. The press costs 200,000 euros in Europe, or 350,000 euros with a newly-developed 'mini-converter' from Grafisk Maskinenfabrik. It will be available from around mid-2010. Epson also unveiled the 24 inch Stylus Pro WT 7900, a packaging proofer with a new type of water-based white ink. It uses a nine-color Epson UltraChrome HDR (High Dynamic Range) ink set to produce a wide color gamut and accurate spot colors.

Screen uses Epson's print heads and water-based pigmented inks for the Truepress Jet520. It appeared in 2006 for printing commercial products, including direct mailers. Since then Screen has moved nearer the labeling markets. The show version was printing high-volume glue-applied labels roll-to-roll from a 507mm-wide web at up to 128 m/minute. Screen's color management skills as a platemaking systems vendor, plus the development of special pigmented inks, may prompt it to enter the pressure-sensitive and sleeve labeling market with a narrower version.

Stork Prints launched the DSI 4330L, a modular CMYK inkjet press with in-line varnishing and semi-rotary die cutting. It has a web width of 330mm and runs at up to 35 m/min. Native print resolution is 360 dpi, with an apparent resolution, with grayscale enhancement, of 1,000 dpi. Tonal values down to 1 percent can be achieved. The press uses Xaar's 1001 inkjet heads (for more information from Xaar on what's driving the inkjet market, visit www.labelsandlabeling.com), optimized with proprietary technology from Stork's Veco division. The UV ink is 'fixed' or pinned by inter-station LED lamps before final curing to enhance the quality of dot formation. An opaque white inkjet unit is planned, although a semi-rotary screen or flexo white unit could be placed before the inkjet heads.

Other digital developments included Nipson's new DIGIFlex with on-line finishing equipment. A combination of proprietary magnetography and 'cool' xenon flash fusing allows the monochrome printer to handle coated and uncoated papers, pressure-sensitive labelstocks, films, foils and thermal-sensitive stocks with weights ranging from 40 gsm to 300 gsm.

Primera showed the new CX1200e with a dry toner laser engine. It prints high-quality CMYK labels on demand with a resolution of 2,400 dpi.VIPColor's VP485 uses drop-on-demand inkjet print heads to give a similar top speed of some 6 m/min on a 216mm web width. It features less expensive separate ink tanks instead of cartridges. Primera also demonstrated a prototype of its LX900e system, claimed the company's fastest and most economical offering to date, which will be available in December. The LX900e is a full-color 4800 dpi thermal inkjet printer with Primera's 'Imaging Perfection' enhancements. It produces labels at up to 4.5 in/sec in draft mode with a maximum printing width of 8 in. With individual ink tanks, individual color replacement is now possible. 'The show has been extremely good for us,' said Monika Fricke, Primera marketing director. 'We ran out of LX900e brochures by the second day.'

Allen Datagraph Systems launched the iTech AXXIS desktop printer with a installed price of €25,000 in Europe. It delivers a resolution of 5,760 x 1,440 dpi using CMYK Epson variable droplet heads and can print on media widths 100mm to 220mm with an outside roll diameter up to 280mm at speeds up to 6m/min.ADS also supplies separate modular finishing units, comprising a laminator, die-less die cutter,

STORK PRINTS launches digital label printer DSI 4330L. See video demonstration at www.labelsandlabeling.com

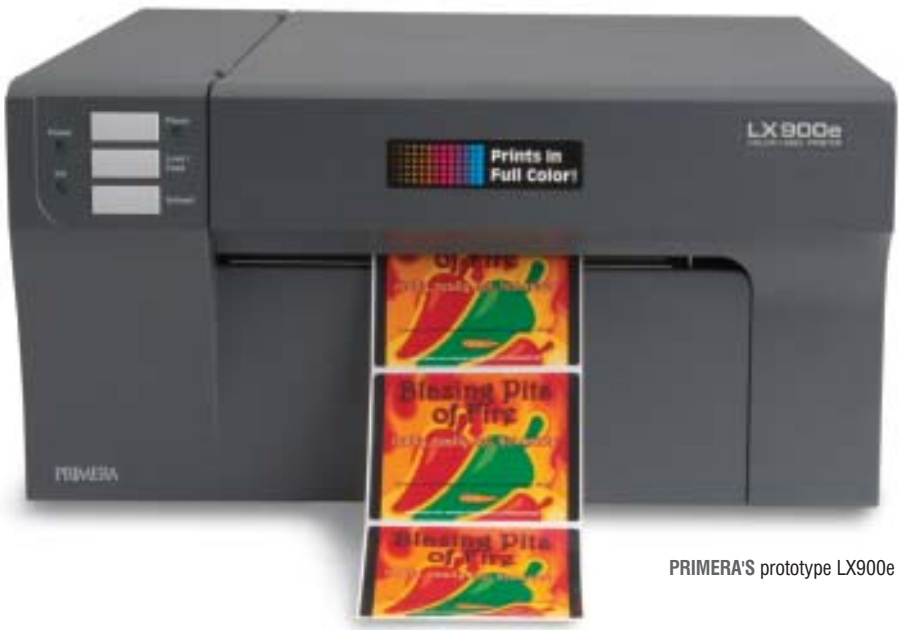
matrix waste stripper and a rewinder.

Wide-format inkjet printers and cutting machines have been converting short-run labels for some years. An interesting feature of the new UJV-160 printer from Mimaki Engineering is its UV LED curing lamp (see p.95). Mimaki also offers an opaque white base or topcoat ink developed for printing on transparent or colored substrates. Printed products are cut on the company's CG-FX Series cutting machine. It features both accurate contour and straight cutting, as well as die cutting.

Wide format specialist Roland also introduced a machine based around LED-cured UV inks. The VersaUV inkjet printer/cutter has a print resolution up to 1440 x 1440 dpi, and the 6-color engine can be configured with two whites then CMYK for high opacity clear film work, or CMYK plus two coating heads for combinations of spot matte and gloss varnishes. An intermittent feed system allows high build varnishes for applications like control panels.

VIP Color demonstrated its VP485 on demand 4-color desktop digital printer. Using HP inkjet print heads, the machine prints at up to 4800 x 1200 dpi and a maximum label width of 8.5 in. Variable data software is included and the machines are capable of distributed printing where data is controlled in a central location. The company says that it is focusing on end users with the machine. VIP Color also demonstrated its in-line finishing system with a thermal cold foiling system and Stylus plotter for die cutting. With this product the company is going after the wine markets.

Also at the show were the latest developments in coding and marketing systems. A first time exhibitor was Auto ID specialist Bixolon – spun off from Samsung's specialty printing division in 2002 – which was demonstrating a full range of POS labeling and marking equipment including direct thermal and thermal transfer label printers, mobile printers and label design software.



PRIMERA'S prototype LX900e

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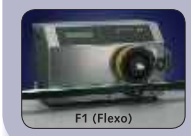
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Green award debuts at Labelexpo

GEW has won the first Green Award for industry suppliers at the Label Industry Global Awards 2009 ceremony, held during the first night of Labelexpo Europe in Brussels. Danielle Jerschefske reports

GEW has been awarded the first Green Award for suppliers at the Label Industry Global Awards 2009. The Award, sponsored by Xeikon, honors companies taking action to reduce their impact on the environment before restrictive legislation is imposed.

Entrants to the Green Award competition this year offered a broad range of solutions and opportunities for label converters to reduce their environmental impact. The judges evaluated submissions using five criteria: pollution reduction/prevention, environmental leadership, economic effectiveness, responsible sourcing, and potential for industry advancement.

The first award went to GEW for its e-System UV ink curing equipment. The e-System is claimed to reduce power requirements by 30 percent compared with previous systems and to reduce CO2 emissions by the same amount, while extending lamp life and bringing significant cost savings.

GEW managing director Malcolm Rae said: 'This award is the result of proactive efforts put in by the design and development team at GEW based on reducing energy costs for printers and concerns about climate change and the environment. Compared with conventional UV curing technologies, the e-System range of electronic power supplies and optically perfected lamp heads has collectively saved customers an estimated 7 million and has reduced their carbon emissions by around 30,000 tonnes since its launch in 2005 to date.

'Using our systems and the new peripheral tools we offer to optimize energy saving will help label printers meet the environmental points criteria being set by end users. We are delighted to have received this award in the face of strong competition.'

Recognizing the importance of the Green Award, Roger Pellow, managing director for the Tarsus Labels Group, commented: 'We feel that the label industry needs to take the issue of the environment more seriously. By introducing a Green Award we are bringing attention to the idea and highlighting it as an important issue. I personally, and we as a group, believe that by adopting green initiatives a company can gain a commercial competitive advantage while becoming more efficient and more profitable.'

Brian Wenger, president of GEW, answered a few questions on the e-System and the environment for L&L.

GIVE OUR READERS A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE E-SYSTEM

We started beta testing the e-brick electronic power supply in 2004 in readiness for its official launch at Labelexpo Europe 2005. At the time the label industry was just becoming aware of climate change initiatives and legislation regarding packaging and the environment, so the product was enthusiastically received. Customers were quick to accept the technology as 30 percent more efficient versus conventional transformer power supplies with its corresponding 30 percent reduction in carbon emissions.

HOW DOES 'BEING GREEN' RELATE TO COST SAVINGS AND EFFICIENCY?

GEW electronic power supplies are light in weight and have a small carbon footprint in terms of transportation. Since most of our systems are delivered by air, this is significant. Many printers replace their UV lamps every 1,000 hours, but with e-System these can now typically last up to 1,700. UV lamps contain mercury, so the use of this element is also substantially reduced.

WHAT NEW PRODUCTS IS GEW WORKING ON TO FURTHER REDUCE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT?

We have just brought to market a new range of peripheral technologies designed to further reduce operating costs and benefit the environment. These include intelligent power management software to boost energy savings when the UV system is on standby, cost-effective UV monitoring tools that can be hand-held or fully integrated with the lamp heads, and proactive servicing of systems in the field via the internet.

WHAT DOES WINNING THE FIRST GREEN AWARD MEAN TO GEW AND ITS CUSTOMERS?

We are delighted to have been honored with the Labelexpo Europe Green Award in the face of strong competition. It is recognition of the investment we have made in leading green initiatives in the label industry.

LABELEXPO GREEN PARK

GEW was up against strong competition among other exhibitors in the Labelexpo Green Park, with a wide range of companies demonstrating systems which help converters reduce their environmental impact while increasing productivity and added value.

Armorshowcased its line of SolFree thermal transfer ribbons produced without solvents, reducing the carbon footprint by 70 percent. The SolFree also has increased backcoat performance which can improve the longevity of print heads in thermal transfer printers.

Evonik Goldschmidt promoted its premium UV release coating

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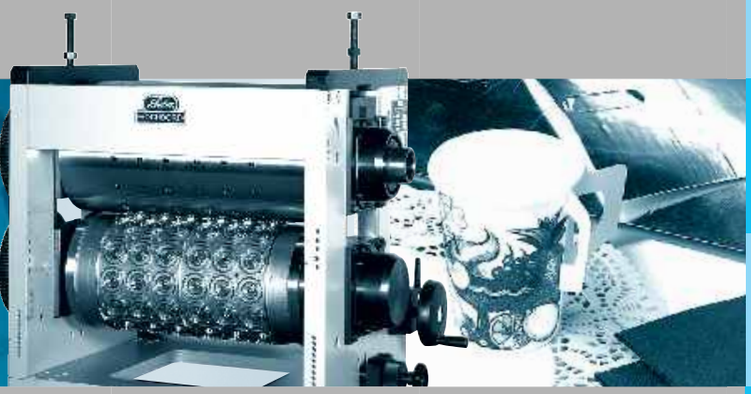

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- Maximum press speed: 120m/min
- Constantly rotating ceramic anilox rolls with reverse angle doctor blades
- Automatic plate cylinder throw-off at press stops

OPTIONS:
- Full U.V. drying
- Rotary coil foil
- Turn bar/delam/relam

WEBFLEX

- From 2-10 colours, flexographic, rotary screen, rotary cold foil
- Fully modular, in-line flexo printing & converting system
- 13" (330mm) & 17" (430mm) web widths
- Press speeds in excess of 160 metres per minute
- Rapid-Change print system, with Tool-Free print cartridges
- Interchangeable machine ready stations
- Quick-Change impression settings
- Anilox throw off and Self-Clean plate rotation

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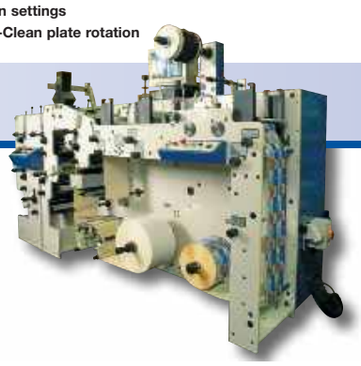

- Up to 6 colours, or 5 plus 1
- Compact, multi-colour, flexo printing & converting press
- Central impression design for excellent print registration
- 260mm web width, with 250mm print width
- Press speeds in excess of 70 metres per minute
- Constantly rotating anilox rolls and automatic plate throw off

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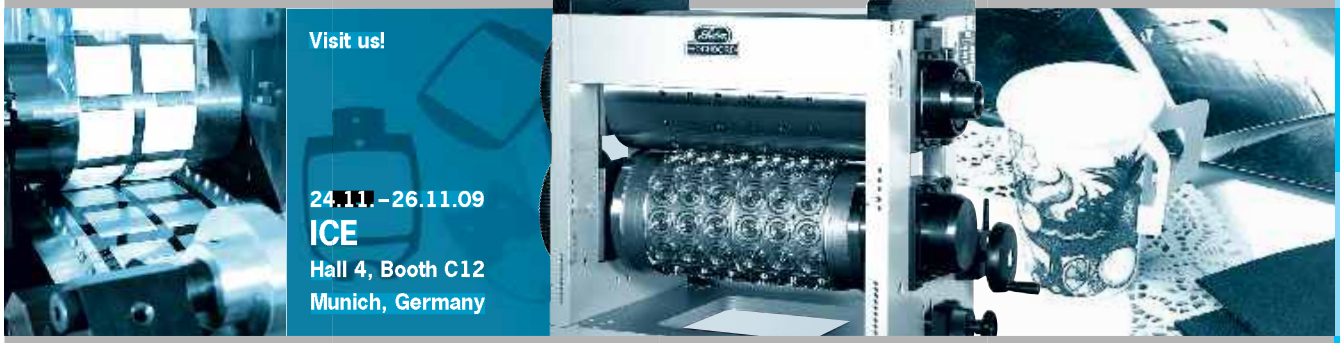

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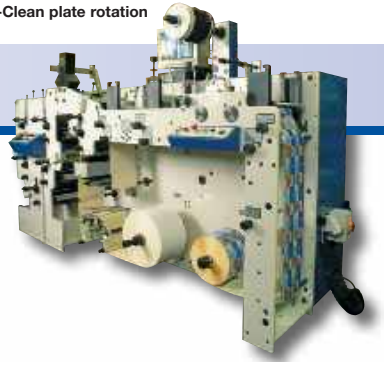

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(L-R) Mike Fairley, Tarsus labels group; Dave Lyus accepting the Award on behalf of GEW; Filip Weymans, Xeikon, the Green Award Sponsor; Dean Scarborough, Avery Dennison

Tego RC Silicones, which on a 30 micron BOPP liner can reduce material weight by up to 56 percent compared with glassine. BOPP 30 can be sold for re-granulation and reuse. Also shown was the RC 922 silicone coating which offers low release and low initial spike qualities and good release stability. Colored silicones for color coding release strengths could also be seen.

GSE Dispensing BV featured its Colorsat Match automated ink dispensing unit that dispenses only the amount of ink required for each job, significantly reducing waste and reducing running costs by nearly 30 percent. There are over 40 converter installations worldwide.

On the materials side, UPM demonstrated how its label paper is sourced from sustainably managed forests and explained its 'lifecycle approach' from the sourcing of raw materials through to production and final disposal of the end product. The company has invested heavily in CO2 neutral biomass based fuels, for example, resulting in a reduction of 40 percent of mill site carbon dioxide emissions per tonne of paper since 1990.

Herma promoted its line of 62N Bio TAK adhesive, which is claimed 100 percent biodegradable and compostable. The adhesive line has been awarded the Compostable Packaging Standard DIN EN 13 432. The company's line of biodegradable cellulose-based Herma Naturefilms in silver, white and clear supplied by FSC certified companies was also on display. The films are ideal for fruit labeling, sandwich packs and beverage bottles.

Ahlstrom explained the environmental credentials of its enlarged range of release and label papers. Thanks to both FSC and PEFC Chain of Custody certifications for its manufacturing sites in France and Italy, Ahlstrom's range of Silca supercalendered release papers are available as FSC or PEFC labeled.

Paragon Inks' NC Series UV ink range meets the industry's most stringent migration requirements and performs well at press speeds of over 250 m/min on a variety of substrates - including Herma's biodegradable line.

Unilux introduced a range of pulsed LED inspection lights that offer uniform illumination, increased energy efficiency and longer lamp life. The LED lamps have a higher initial cost than the traditional xenon lamps, but make this up with a lifespan of five to eight years. Their softer light makes them best suited for inspecting labels and packaging with highly reflective coatings, foils or metalized substrates or on high-speed lines, reducing the tendency to build up of hot spots.

Ziegler Papier promoted its range of FSC certified papers, available in a number of qualities. CO2 free papers are also supplied on a limited basis. The emissions footprint for the paper is calculated using the IPCC method, which accounts for the six most important greenhouse gases.

UV lamp specialist IST showed how its latest MBS-5 UV system can reduce energy consumption by providing the equivalent of a 200W/cm source from a 140W/cm lamp. Other system elements including the power supply, UV output measurement and 'cold mirror' reflectors, further contribute to energy savings.

Integration Technology had more to say about LED-based UV curing systems with the launch of its latest semiconductor light matrix (SLM) technology system. Specifically designed for heat sensitive applications, it is claimed to enable the creation of 'miniature' UV inkjet systems and the 'first truly serviceable SLM'.

MARK Andy's new P7 Performance Series press

Conventional presses

THE MANY INNOVATIVE PRESS DEVELOPMENTS on show suggested that manufacturers have at least kept up their R&D spending, despite recessionary times. Report by Barry Hunt

Incorporating chunks of Swiss mountains, the Gallus ECS 340 UV flexo press was an undeniable novelty. The mainframe is made from technical granite, which gives a robust construction with cantilevered print units for clear access and ease of operation. Increased stability also contributes to fast set-ups with reduced materials wastage, and noticeably quieter running. The short web path gives a total web length of around 11 meters for an eight-color machine. Uniquely for a flexo press, one of the eight watercooled curing units was a LED UV curing lamp. It was developed with inkmaker Siegwerk and Phoseon Technology (see *LED Shines a Light*, p.94). Other features include plate sleeves and chambered blade inking system.

Gallus aims the servo-driven ECS 340 (Essential Converting System) at the commodity sector, where food and dairy products account for some 25 percent of total label volumes. It is therefore manufactured to include just the basic functions, with an overall aim of reducing substrate wastage, at an economical price - Gallus quotes a price of around €400,000 for a seven-unit press.

Another innovative product was Nilpeter's HoloPrint module. Uniquely, it prints 50,000 f secure holographic images in register directly onto any web-fed paper or film substrate using special UV-cured varnishes. This results is a strong and affordable security device, which avoids the usual storage and security issues surrounding conventional embossed foils holograms. HoloPrint integrates with any Nilpeter platform press. At the show it followed a Caslon inkjet module on a six-color Nilpeter FA-Line UV flexo press. HoloPrint images are suitable for a wide range of anti-counterfeiting applications and offer unlimited printed areas to maximum print widths of 330mm (13 inches) and 410mm (16 inches).

Also shown was an MO-4 UV combination press, running with five offset units and a UV flexo varnish unit, with a web width of 406mm (16 inches). The MO-4 handles both long and short-runs of premium-quality labels and packaging products using freely configurable offset, flexo, hot/cold foiling, rotary screen, gravure units and the new HoloPrint module.

Mark Andy's new P7 Performance Series reflects a trend towards open-design, servo-driven UV flexo presses. A 17 inch (510mm) wide eight-color version was shown with substrate changes. The focus was on the rapid loading of new plate cylinders, substrate transfer and using minimal ink to register the job in less than one press length at speed. The P7 has a top speed of 750 ft/min (230m/min). It features a new print head design with auto registration control. The inking system automatically sets the anilox and a tool-less doctor blade. Impression cylinders adjust seamlessly for repeat changes and switching between substrates.

Unobtrusive 'press guard' bars, which snap into place once the plate cylinder is installed, ensure safe operation. The bar covers the nip between the anilox roll and plate cylinder. Mark Andy claims the P7's web path is 20 percent shorter than current available presses. Provision is made

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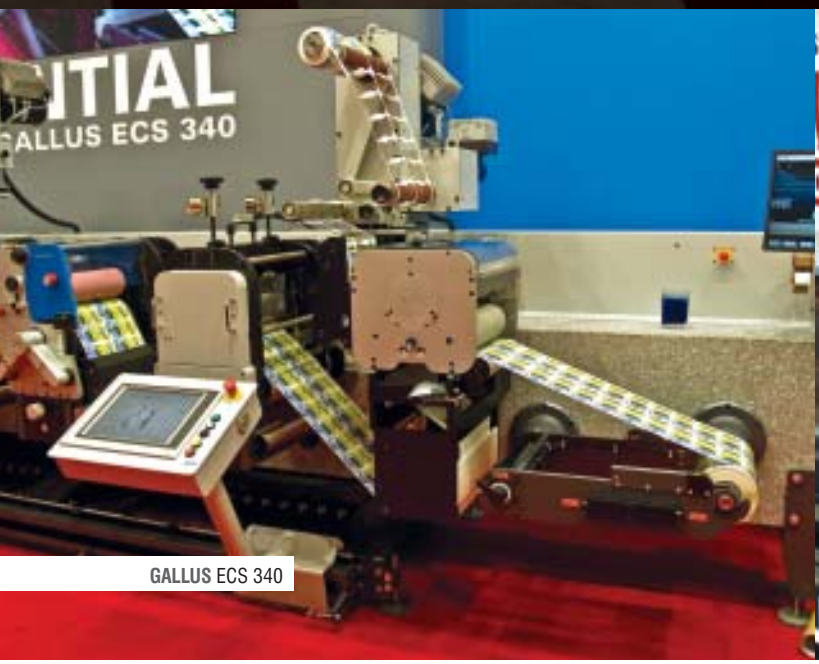

GALLUS ECS 340

OMET Vary ex Offset press

for combined UV and hot air drying applications to reduce changeover time since the operator is not required to re-web the press from job to job.

Omet introduced the X-Jet 420 print engine for integration with its X-Flex platform press, which can include UV flexo, screen printing and laminating units for premium label applications. Alternatively, an X-Jet 420 with drop-on-demand CMYK print heads can run with unwind/rewind units as a stand-alone unit, again for handling short label runs. In addition to the traditional packaging material converting capabilities of the X-Flex, it is possible to combine the Omet's Mono Twin Cut die cutting unit with the digital module. Even if the size of the print image changes, the magnetic cylinder remains unchanged. The simple replacement of the die cutting tool allows operators to restart production immediately, claims the company.

The VaryFlex F-1 Offset combination press also received its world debut. Available in print widths of 340mm or 430mm, it offers variable print lengths of 12 to 25 inches using interchangeable cassettes with speeds up to 200 m/min.

MPS launched three new models. The EF-Packaging flexo press has a 660mm web width (26 inches) and offers UV curing and hot air drying. Other features include gearless servo technology, and different-size air mandrels to improve quality and to reduce tooling (print-sleeve) costs. MPSensor technology allows operators to freely select point-to-point or point-to cylinder print registration. Aimed at more conventional label markets, the new EC features a short web path and MPS's newly-developed Icontrol. It has freely interchangeable units, including UV, hot air and IR drying, screen printing, and hot/cold foil stamping. Like current MPS models, including the entry-level E-print, it also incorporates existing MPS quality and performance technologies, including Crisp Dot, Multi Drive and Auto Teach.

FALL AND RISE

Having emerged from liquidation (similar to Chapter 11 in the US), the former Gidue company is now revamped as Nuova Gidue in partnership with Nuova Castiglioni, a press manufacturer near Florence. The intention is to continue the former lines, including the Xpannd offset combination presses and a new version of the Combat UV exo press, as a much slimmed down company. It plans to develop a four-color intaglio printing machine for niche packaging applications requiring high levels of security.

MPS E-print press

An unusual feature of Rotatek's 420mm wide Brava UV offset combination press is that it operates in either rotary or semi-rotary modes. The latest version has a new hot-foil unit with foil saver, which augments UV flexo, screen, cold foiling, embossing, varnishing and rotary die cutting. In rotary mode with automatic inking the servo-driven press prints up to 150 m/min, equal to 4,000 sqm/hour. In semi-rotary mode the stop speed is 1,890 sqm/hour. The Brava is intended for converters with a mix of short-run jobs of non-repeat job/sizes, as well as much longer print runs of premium-quality labels, including cosmetics and wine labels.

Edelmann Graphics demonstrated a complete Evo-Print UV offset press line, which is available with three or two-cylinder inserts for label and packaging printing. It also showed a print tower for the new Label-Print 43, which operates in either semi-rotary or full rotary modes. The former gives an infinitely variable repeat length of 410mm, with no blanket gap, at up to 70 m/minute. In rotary mode the repeat lengths with a three-cylinder insert are 279mm to 660mm (11 to 26 inches) and top print speed is 300 m/minute. Also new is the STAR-Print (Sleeve Technology Advanced Rotation) series of label presses for offset, flexo, gravure and screen process combination printing. Bearer-mounted sleeves hydraulically mounted on the mandrels replace the traditional plate and blanket cylinder inserts. STAR-Print open platform presses can be configured to run wet-on-wet or with intermediate curing and are available in web widths of 520mm (20.5 inches), 760mm (30in) and 920mm (36in). Models up to 920mm (36 inches) wide are available.

Focus launched its Proflex 'S' Series press - the company's first machine to be fully servo controlled, meaning factors such as tension control for different substrates can be stored for repeat jobs, with job set-up via touch screen interface. The press can be configured with IR/UV drying systems and options include point-to-point auto register control, hot and cold foil and a digital inkjet system developed with Digital Print Inc which can handle high volumes of data for printing security information, bar codes, sequential numbers

EDELMANN TIES UP CHINESE DEAL

German narrow-web press specialist Edelmann has entered into a sales co-operation agreement with Chinese press manufacturer Dowell Printing Equipment. The agreement gives Edelmann Graphics exclusive sales rights to all of Dowell's products in Europe, up to the Russian border and the Caspian Sea, including Iran and the Arabian Peninsula. This will include consulting, sales, service and after-sales parts supply.

Dowell Printing Equipment, Hong Kong, is a subsidiary of the Wutung group in Guangzhou, with over 1200 employees. Dowell manufactures narrow web presses for the labels and packaging sectors. Available in web widths of Until now, Dowell has not been present in the West, although there are installations in Italy and Russia. To begin with, Edelmann will handle the Dowell products from its Germany headquarters, but the medium-term plan is to open dedicated regional offices.

EDELMANN Label-Print 43

CODIMAG Aniflo waterless offset press

and variable text. The print units can optionally be supplied with enclosed ink fountain technology with twin doctor blades.

Edale's new partnership with Agfa Graphics has resulted in an inline cutter module as an option for the :Dotrix Modular inkjet press. Cut position information is automatically transferred between the printer's imaging software and the cutting device. This hands-free configuration reduces set-up time between jobs: the cutter device interprets job length variations (even within the job) without the need to stop production. Edale plans other types of on-line and off-line converting equipment as used in conventional flexo production.

Etirama launched an upgraded version of the servo-driven Flexo Wine. The six-color CI press has a UV flexo varnisher, touch screen control, a larger triple die station with 4 inch anvil rollers, and an improved inter unit hot air drying system. The company also introduced the New Stamp Foil, a hot foil press with a 350mm web width and servo-controlled substrate and foil pull.

Partnered with EskoArtwork, Agfa, Toray and 5/7 Etiquettes, Codimag demonstrated the integration of its Aniflo waterless offset process into a digital workflow. Improved control over printing quality, higher efficiency and cost effectiveness are claimed. Users can standardize and control the process by eliminating variables, such as ink water balance, ink key settings, or rollers settings. An anilox roll provides a controlled and constant ink flow to the form roller. Press calibrations are not affected by press variables. Color and print results are claimed to be 100 percent predictable resulting in reduced set-up time and waste.

Kammann's new K 61-OS modular flat screen press produces labels, printed electronics, including RFID antennae, flexible batteries or bio sensors. Output speed has increased from 30 m/min to 36 m/min using a continuous web transport and a drying oven. Each module has its own electrical control with servo motors for customized configurations. Optional production modules include waterless offset, hot and cold foil stamping, laminating, embossing/debossing, rotary die-cutting, land UV flexo varnishing.

Muller Martini displayed a 520mm-wide print tower of the Alprinta 52V offset press for the packaging and label printing market. Visitors were also informed on developments with the Muller Martini VSOP series. The company acquired the patents for Variable Sleeve Offset Printing from Drent Goebel and plans to integrate presses designed for flexible package printing and cardboard-box printing into its product range at the end of 2009. Demonstrations on a sleeve seaming machine also took place at the Karlville stand using shrink sleeve film printed on an Alprinta V. This joint project enabled Muller Martini, INEOS Films and Karlville to demonstrate their expertise across the entire shrink sleeve production process.

Taiyo used the show for the first European showing of its new TMC-350-7C modular combination press. The machine incorporates dual servo-drives on each print station which allow the press to be freely configurable between wet offset, letterpress, flexo and screen units.

Miyakoshi introduced its MLP13A intermittent web offset press. The fully servo-driven press has a maximum print width of 330mm and prints at up

NEW ARRIVAL

This Labelexpo saw the debut of a new exo press manufacturer – Swedish company Sepac (see p. 125).

SPANISH dancing in front of the Rotatek Brava press

to 200 impressions/min. It can handle substrates in a range of 70-300 microns. The press is configured with five offset print units, flexo coating, in-line hot foil unit, embossing and die cutting. Miyakoshi is claiming a world first for the integration of an automated register system, claimed to reduce wastage by 45 percent.

Shiki introduced its FX-10 intermittent feed offset press, with the ability to switch between wet, waterless and dry offset (using photopolymer letterpress plates) and letterpress in the same print station. The servo-driven press incorporates a new ‘semi-sleeve’ technology for more precise and rapid plate mounting. Printing plates and blankets are clamped onto chases – semi-circular sleeves or saddles – that slide into the press and clip on in a one-touch operation. Mounting new plates can be done off-press while a job is running. The FX-10 has a print width of 254mm (10in) and prints at up to 250 impressions/min. The press has fully automated ink wash-up. Production parameters can be input from a touch-screen monitor. Options include back-side printing and laminating units.

Shiki was also promoting new off-line finishing machines, including a label inspection line and adhesive-side printing unit, which can be used for partial adhesive neutralization or printing on the adhesive side.

K2 International showed a Series 3 modular flexo press. Equipped with PLC controls the full range includes models with geared or servo options in widths up to 650mm. Both UV curing and IR hot air drying are available. Standard equipment features from one to 12 print units, touch screen controls, automatic web tension control with electronic web guides, and ceramic anilox rolls with doctor blades.

Letterpress was also well represented at the show. Labelmen was talking about its agreement with Martin Automatic to enter into a licensing agreement whereby Labelmen will build Martin's STS automatic splicers and STR turret rewinds for sale on equipment manufactured by Labelmen. Lo Chin-Shiung, president of Labelmen, commented: ‘We plan to launch a new Labelmen MN series press, which will have Martin's automatic roll changing equipment fully integrated into the press. For our customers, it will be a press that has the highest flexibility and efficiency among all of our existing product line.’ At Labelexpo Labelmen was showing two high specification machines, its PW260 and PW460 systems.

Smooth Machinery was demonstrating its latest SPM-340LR intermittent shaftless letterpress and SPM-340F on-line flat-bed die-cut module, which can achieve speeds up to 300 impressions/min. The flat-bed die cut module greatly reduces the cost of dies on shorter run, fast turnaround work. Lintec showed its well established LPM-300iTP semi-rotary letterpress, incorporating a computerized ink pre-set system.

Labelexpo keynote interview

AVERY DENNISON President and CEO, Dean Scarborough, shares his thoughts on the Labelexpo series and ideas for future shows with Mike Fairley

DEAN SCARBOROUGH President and CEO Avery Dennison

MIKE FAIRLEY: When did you go to your first Labelexpo show?
DEAN SCARBOROUGH: It's now 20 years since I attended my first Labelexpo show. I was the marketing director for Fasson Roll North America and the show was the very first Labelexpo Americas to be held. All my customers were there and I thought it was a great event for bringing the label industry in North America together.

MF: How does this Labelexpo Europe compare with the other shows you have been to?
DS: I am absolutely stunned by the sheer level of attendance in Brussels – and by the level of optimism for the future being shown by the visitors. We have seen existing and potential customers from all over the world – far more than we ever anticipated – and our booth has been crowded with visitors throughout the show.

MF: To what do you attribute this level of attendance?
DS: For many, it seems to have been a relatively late decision to attend. I think they heard the more positive economic news in the media over the past few weeks – not to mention positive messages from FINAT and the excellent marketing by Tarsus up to the last minute. I also believe the global nature of the show in Brussels helps attract more people.

MF: What features especially contributed to the excitement at the show?
DS: It was certainly smart to have a dedicated digital hall and digital experience panel sessions at the show. Hall 9 – the digital hall – was extremely dynamic and showed just how much interest there is in digital printing technology.

MF: Are conventional analogue presses now under pressure from digital solutions?
DS: Conventional presses still have a long future. There are some pretty creative conventional press manufacturers out there developing new solutions and opening up new markets.

MF: Apart from the American and European Labelexpo shows, there is also the Asia show. How do these three events fit into the strategy of a company like Avery Dennison?
DS: We see Labelexpo Americas as very much an American show. North American converters do not particularly travel to the European Labelexpo. We therefore concentrate our show activities in Chicago on the home market. Labelexpo Europe, on the other hand, is very much a global show. Visitors come from pretty well every corner of the world. It generates new business and stimulates global growth for us in Avery Dennison.

Labelexpo Asia, and of course the Chinese market in particular, are where we see our potential for long-term new growth. We would like to see this show grow to become a major global label event like Brussels. A major keynote conference and panel session, much the same as we have seen here in Brussels would provide an excellent platform.

MF: What ideas for future industry and Labelexpo Europe growth do you have?
DS: Avery Dennison has concentrated much of its effort in recent years in getting factories established in new growth markets such as Eastern Europe and Asia. Now we need to get back to growing the market for labels by finding new applications and solutions.

Our booth at this year's Labelexpo was organized around solutions for major market segments such as food, beer & beverage, pharmaceuticals, and household & personal care. Our focus is to show our customers the untapped opportunities that exist within each of these end-use segments.

In addition to labels, we are developing retail information services activity for end-user customers. In both areas we are targeting the whole area of brand protection and enhancement. There are still numerous opportunities for growth out there, but they need to be stimulated further.

In terms of future Labelexpo shows, we would be interested in the concept of a 'show within a show' that would attract label buyers and users as well as label converters. I'm thinking of a show area that would focus on new label solutions, enhancing the brand, security and brand protection, functional labeling solutions, the use of RFID, and certainly sustainability – perhaps backed up with a solutions-oriented conference and panel sessions.

Innovation city

LABELEXPO saw L&L's full team of journalists hunting down the new product launches across every area of activity in the label technology industry. This report compiled by Andy Thomas, Barry Hunt, Danielle Jerschefske, James Quirk, Elinor Zuke and Mike Fairley.

SHRINK LABEL CONVERSION

Accraply/Stanford exhibited four new machines: the SM-12 shrink sleeve seamer, the DM-12 shrink sleeve rewinder, the 142LT doctor machine, and the Accraply 5205UHS pressure-sensitive label applicator. The SM-12 included upgraded solvent dispensing, rewind roll oscillation and unwind tension control system as well as a re-vamped, more user-friendly, touch screen interface with integrated lay-flat measurement system.

The 142LT Doctor Machine was operating as a web-handler for a new Accraply high-speed on-press self-adhesive label applicator – the 5205UHS – with label application speeds in excess of 70,000 per hour. It is a compact design including on-the-fly label supply splicing.

Seamus Lafferty VP of product development said, 'Labelexpo Europe was an excellent show for us. Our booth traffic was on par with past shows, and while money remains tight, we have orders, with the promise of more to come.'

Karlville, meanwhile, demonstrated its K1 entry-level shrink sleeve seaming machine, which uses a direct injection system for applying solvent and digital guides for the unwind.

UNWIND/REWIND SYSTEMS

Martin Automatic demonstrated two lines of automatic splicing systems at the show. The MLS Automatic Splicer is a compact lap splicer ideal for introducing additional webs to a process such as mid-press laminating applications. The LRD Automatic Transfer Rewind shown running on the booth was sold to Kolle Etiketten GmbH of Germany. The LRD is a non-stop rewinder that automatically changes rolls at full press speed and automatically unloads the completed rolls. In combination with the LRD, the MBS Automatic Butt Splicer was also on display. The company reported that it closed more deals at the 2009 show than at the last Labelexpo Europe show in 2007.

TESTING EQUIPMENT

RK Print Coat Instruments showed its new Paste Ink Proofer (PIP) with integrated UV curing capability. The Paste Ink Proofer proofs UV litho inks, UV web offset inks, UV letterpress inks and UV curable varnishes. It offers automated operation, eliminating the need to weigh or measure ink samples. Accurate proofs are obtained in a single operation and two inks may be proofed simultaneously for comparison purposes.

The FlexiProof UV is a precision bench top system that incorporates an enclosed medium pressure UV lamp and is also supplied with a quick-change ceramic or steel anilox and swing-in doctor blade.

CLEANING SYSTEMS

Alphasonics rolled out its new 'one-stop-shop' range of cleaning systems, which now includes for the first time a range of non-contact plate cleaners (see L&L4, 2009). On the stand was a fully automatic PC plate cleaning system, a new PW series unit, as will our the AS1000 parts washers with on-board flocculation and the new AS2000 system, designed to offer an alternative to traditional parts washing systems.

Illinois-based Sonic Solutions said it had seen 'more focused and driven buyers,' at the show, and featured both its ultrasonic anilox roll cleaning system and the water-based Sonic-Kleen concentrate. The system can clean up to 6 rolls at a time.

AUTO ID AND LABELING SYSTEMS

New from DPR was the compact Apex 1290 color LED tag and label printer, designed for the rigors of the shop floor. The APEX 1290 prints up to 1200 x 600 dpi images along with variable data on a variety of media, including tag stock up to 12 point and adhesive label stock. Print speed is up to 30ft (9.14m)/min on a web width of 320mm. Also new from the company was a motorized core holder able to handle rolls up to 400mm diameter and 220mm wide, designed for use as the rewinder or unwinder for inkjet label presses. A reel to reel label counter operating in ft/meters, able to read from either side of the web was also shown. The unit accepts both pneumatic and mechanical core holders and counting can be pre-set with automatic stop. A battery-powered accessory which allows electronic label dispensers to be used at any location, and a step power controller, were also launched.

Euro Plus introduced SAP connectivity for its NiceLabel labeling system. NiceWatch Enterprise Business Connector functions as a single gateway and control point for all networked printers. Its print engine includes Windows drivers for over 1800 printer models and multiple printers can be driven simultaneously. Also included is a graphical template designer.

Looking at consumables, Armor launched SolFree, a solvent-free manufacturing process for thermal transfer ribbons (TTR). ITW Thermal Films launched a website service that allows customers to specify their application requirement from a database that holds test data of 100+ labelstocks. ITW also launched a range of resins, the Extreme Series Resin.

Jujo Thermal introduced its new thermal label face stock produced with 100% 'green' electricity from hydropower. The company also launched its improved durable topcoated paper grade, AL60KT-M.

New developments in Sihl's thermal product range are non-top coated Pro grades and top-coated Alpha papers, including thermal cardboard with security features for railway and event tickets as well as two new thermal direct printable films.

WEB TREATMENT

PANTEC Electroman hot foil stamping system

Meech International launched its ShearClean double-sided vacuum web cleaning system for reel widths up to 1.2 meters and equipment speeds up to 400 m/min. ShearClean incorporates two cotton-covered rollers positioned either side of the web. The rollers spin at high speed in the opposite direction to the web, generating air currents that break up the boundary layer on the web surface, allowing the vacuum system to remove particles that were held in that layer. Static elimination equipment is built in.

Meech also showed its 977CM static control system with a new, fully automated closed-loop feedback system which detects residual voltages on webs and adjusts output accordingly.

Vetaphone, meanwhile, announced that its Corona Plus VE1A series now comes with integrated remote control and launched plasma cartridges for existing corona treaters.

German-based waste extraction system manufacturer Matho was promoting the benefits of a matrix and edge trim extraction systems with its re-designed compact and moveable Cuttobag CB-100.

DIE SYSTEMS

Kocher + Beck introduced a new die cutting station. As yet unnamed, it features two stations in one to allow for off-line preparation of the next job. Its-slide-in/slide-out design reduces downtime and waste. It is also easy and quick to set up, and is targeted at converters with a high number of job changes per shift.

Also given its premiere was K&B's new Screen manufacturing venture. 'Tec Screen' is due to go on sale in January 2010 and will offer an alternative to existing screen manufacturers in the market. The company's Martin Stierle is confident of rapid uptake once testing is fully finished and supplies commence. The Tec Screen system will be fully Gallus compatible.

RotoMetrics demonstrated for the first time its heavy duty die stations for converting folding cartons, blister boards, tickets, labels and other specialty applications. Unique to the design is a hydraulic pressure bridge that allows for easy access and a cooling system that keeps the die and anvil at room temperature for optimum cutting and extended die life.

The company also introduced the Pantec Electroman hot foil stamping system, an electrically heated and sealed mandrel that contains encapsulated oil. This patented product provides even heating across the entire cylinder and has no pumps or hoses, eliminating the risk of hot oil exposure.

Also promoted were recently launched flexible die products: FlexPremier, designed for longer die life on abrasive materials such as thermal transfer, and AccuFlex, engineered to convert material on thin film liners with calipers of 30 microns or less. Other product introductions included the RD Slitter for unsupported films and film release liners, Flat Magnetic Bases for flexible dies and Spring-eject Dies that use a spring-loaded plunger to eject material out of the web on dies cutting through to the anvil.

Of the new lines exhibited by Gerhardt, the most interesting was the Shock Air system, which combines the features of a solid and magnetic die, ejecting waste through holes in the flexible dies aligned with holes in the cylinder. Efficiently removal of the waste also provides higher cutting tolerances. Three new coated dies were displayed for extended use, high abrasion and non-stick applications. The new High Blade flexible dies, meanwhile, can convert up to 5mm material for medical products, booklet labels and more, while the Continuous Cutting Line dies, through 45 degree overlapping, wrap entirely around a solid image to produce a no-break cut.

Wink has also developed a solid/flexible die system, which the company calls FlexAir, where air passage holes on the surface of the magnetic cylinder match exactly with the holes of the corresponding flexible die, so that cut-out waste can be blown directly into a suction funnel. FlexAir is being positioned as a cost-effective and time-saving alternative to solid air dies, particularly for long run jobs. FlexAir dies are available with all wink's standard finishings, including laser, MC and non-stick.

Also new from wink was the XtraCut anti-ageing system for flexible dies, whereby dies are re-sharpened automatically by a patent-pending process. The repair is claimed to be within a tolerance of +/- 2 microns. The company launched a new web portal, mywink.net, for fast and easy on-line ordering of cutting tools. The site includes preview function and plausibility checks, file upload, order tracking and searchable secure archives.

Bunting Magnetics launched two long life flexible die two coatings, Diamond and Black Diamond. 'These coatings allow our flexible dies to run four times longer than ordinary dies,' claimed Mike Wilks, general manger of the company's flexible die division. 'Also, this new coating process makes our dies highly resistant to cracking and chipping which helps quadruple the life of the die.'

The Diamond coating is suited to die-cutting thermal transfer labelstock, while Black Diamond is aimed at reducing die lifting, increasing performance for small, tight corner die-cutting applications including stamps.

Spanish-based Lartec introduced its Art & Cut dies tools, which allow designers to personalize the texture of their materials with the possibility of die-cutting at the same time. While the Embossing dies create a textured outline to the shapes, the Fantasy dies offer a continuous, textured area.

The new dies are aimed at shorter print runs where it is not

ITALIAN ALLIANCE SHOWS ANTI-COUNTERFEIT SYSTEM

A new anti-counterfeit label system was launched at the show Federico D'Annunzio announced as sales and marketing director. The project involves nine European partner companies, including Ritrama, Prati, Etipack and Nikka. UnivocalSign is a patented technique for producing basic labels that have randomly distributed particles. The system marks each product the packaging or manufacturing stage with a 'digital fingerprint' to ensure its authenticity and traceability.

This can be tested on the web, an emailed photograph from a mobile phone, SMS alphanumeric code, or an email to the test site. The system applies raised dots at random then coats them with a transparent film. The texture and random application, the manufactures claim, makes the code impossible to copy.

In operation, the labels are inspected by Prati's Jupiter TC280. Using a Nikka video inspection system, the Jupiter technology reads and stores the univocal data before counting and rewinding the labels. The data is stored securely by IBM computers and Etipack's labeling machine applies labels to the final products, activating the data matrix.

Consumers remove a piracy-proof seal – developed by Ritrama – after purchase, so the code should only be sent once. If it is received a second time, the producer is informed and can take necessary investigative actions.

So far the system has been trialed with an unnamed soil fertilizer manufacturer in Eastern Europe, where counterfeit goods account for 80 percent of the market.

economical for converters to order large quantities of pre-textured material.

Israeli company Suron introduced its NHT Hardened Gold Die, made from flexible steel and with a new coating designed to handle tough and abrasive stocks. Electro Optic showcased dies able to handle the industry's new, thinner liner materials of 20 micron thickness, as well as its DLS-C products for long life performance. Lieben Dies – a new entrant to the European market – showcased its range of aluminum punching tools. The South African company coordinates European after sales support and re-sharpening through its agent Mario Zearo and uses raw materials from Germany.

Rototechnix showed a range of cylinders (cutting, magnetic, print and hot stamping), while Redex-Andantex showed its full range of servo drives and gearbox systems.

FINISHING AND INSPECTION EQUIPMENT

For AB Graphic International, Labelexpo was a chance to show off a wide range of new inspection/rewinding equipment. New features for the Vectra range of turret rewinders included a 1000mm unwind module and ATR standalone converting line for the production of blank, self-adhesive labels. Completing the Omega range was the RTS offline sheeter, a new roll to sheet version that can run off- or on-line and is capable of cutting to mark, to length, or to inter-label gap.

For label inspection systems, new products included the Flytec 150 bi-directional 100% inspection rewinder for security applications. This model includes two domino high resolution ink jet units and Fleye line scan camera system with database comparison.

Also on the stand was the Omega/Flytec Booklet Machine that combines the Flytec system with modules from the Omega converting line.

Prati also had a lot of new products on show. The company previewed its PH330 Pharmacheck system for inspection and finishing of pharmaceutical labels, which operates without the need for a buffer. A video-controlled cutting system integrates with double label inspection, and positions multiple errors on the correction table for increased productivity.

Other new equipment included the VEGAplus LF450 and LF530. The LF450 system is equipped with a glueless turret rewinder while the LF530 incorporates unwinding inspection and single shaft rewinding modules. Both systems can integrate printing heads and are capable of uploading job data via JDF.

Also on the stand was the VEGAplus LF330 Booklet system for the off-line production of booklet labels. The system features a Longford OS700 booklet feeder, hot-melt unit and a patented lamination unit which allows the label to adapt to container contours.

A wider Jupiter TC450 was shown, along with a smaller TC280 equipped with a Nikka inspection system demonstrating the UnivocalSign anti-counterfeiting system (see sidebar). A Uranus TSIJ 180 inspection machine was demonstrated printing braille with drop-on-demand inkjet heads.

For converters looking to produce booklet labels in-line, it is interesting to note that Longford Europe unveiled a new software-driven re-registration system which allows compensates for web stretch whilst fixing the product on pliable substrates as they travel on the press or rewinder.

French manufacturer Serlem, meanwhile, is building a niche in in-mold label (IML) conversion, and introduced its CFB 550 off-line machine IML converting machine. Designed to cut OPP, PVC or paper with a flexible die, the servo-driven machine feeds onto a collection and stacking station, Maximum cut width is 670 mm and production speed from 60-100 m/mn (328.1 fpm) depending on the cut size and shape.

Schober focused on the production of in-mold labels with its RSM 520-MSV high-speed rotary die-cutting and processing system. Die-cut labels are counted and stacked with three different devices: M stack for very shorts runs, S stack for long runs and V stack for very large labels.

L-R: Mark Andy/Roto ex introduced the HSR and HLR finishing systems, center: Prati Jupiter Inspection system, right: Rotocontrol RCS350

Mark Andy/Rotoflex introduced the HSR and HLR finishing systems, a new offering for converters interested in horizontal inspection, die-cut and rewind technology. Key features of the new HLR line include accommodating digital printing units, high-end inspection systems and custom die-cutting. Also on the stand were the established top of the range VLI and VSI rewinders, now with updated controller technology.

Formally launched in March, Rotocontrol displayed the entry-level RSC series of slitter/rewinders and the RSI series of inspection slitter/rewinders, both with die cutting. The DRM series of semi-automatic dual turret rewinders feature dual mode operation where the module operates as a turret, or alternatively in dual rewind mode with the shafts locked in position. In a different vein was the EDM200, a servo-driven semi-rotary UV-flexo press with infinitely variable print lengths for overprinting and short-run printing. It uses sleeves for the print and anilox cylinders, chambered doctor blades and web insetting register control.

Grafotronic, meanwhile, showed its modular U-Line multi-function pharma label inspection/processing machine. Equipped only with a Nikka camera system, the U-Line can be used as a high-speed inspection machine operating at up to 180m/min. It can also utilize inkjet, BrailleJet and booklet-making in any combination with the inspection system to make a highly flexible system for entry level or advanced users.

Bar Graphic Machinery featured the new 410-mm wide Elite 400SI inspection slitter/rewinder, fitted with an Erhardt + Leimer Nyscan 100 per cent print inspection system and servo-driven rewind. The Elite 370SDi version offers additional rotary die cutting, and the Elite 370 DTR die cut to register slitter/rewinding. BGM also introduced the Elite RL400 for handling reels up to 425mm wide.

Polish manufacturer Emis exhibited its Flexor inspection rewinder product range for the first time, launching three new machines. The Flexor Jumbo Line is a hybrid machine which covers converting or die cutting and inspection, featuring a movable missing label detection station and unwind for 40 foot rolls with electrical lift. The 400IS has 100% inspection with an integrated paper buffer, doctor table and waste rewind, while the 250TD+ is a compact machine for low volume blank label production, with the possibility of re-registration to a die cut preprinted web.

Emis also displayed CTC International's new VTR Value Turret Rewinder, marking a partnership for the sale and production of CTC's label automation products in Europe.

Sohn Manufacturing demonstrated the Wizard Series semi-rotary die cutter for digital finishing, along with the AR-Series rotary die cutter with re-registration capability. Sohn has moved into the digital print market with a 4-color press using Industrial Inkjet technology with in-line lamination and die cutting, available in 6 and 13in widths.

For high capacity paper label finishing, DCM demonstrated its LC system, designed to work in-line with a gravure press or off-line in tandem with the EMB embossing system. It operates on web widths up to 660mm and speeds up to 150 m/min.

Also in the high volume sector, Bobst Group promoted its full range of equipment, including the Titan SR8 twin-shaft cantilever slitter rewinder, with differential rewind shafts, rapid job changeovers and up to 1800mm (71in) web width. A semi-automatic slit reel unloading system is now available with other reel handling systems, as options. The modular Bobst Rotomec MW 60/80 medium web sleeve press is already used by label converters in the high volume film market, and incorporates UV or EB curing, die-cutting, lamination, reel-to-reel or reel-to-sheet delivery. Bobst's Fischer & Krecke division was promoting its CI flexo technology, including the revolutionary smartGPS (Graphic Positioning System), which eliminates the need for impression and registration setting.

Ashe Converting Equipment displayed its Solitaire slitter rewinder, which can be configured to run multiple substrates including papers, laminates, films and aluminum foil, with operating speeds of up to 500 m/min (1640 ft/min) on web widths up to 800mm. Also on show was the company's established Opal turret rewinder.

DIGITAL LABEL FINISHING

Digital label converting systems were a major feature of the show. ABG introduced its Mini Digicon, a compact, entry-level machine to meet basic converting requirements for digitally printed labels, including flood varnish, UV curing, semi-rotary die cutting, slitting and single spindle rewinding. The established Digicon 2, meanwhile, was shown with new flatbed screen module for short run work and reduced tooling costs. The screen module, together with the flat bed foil and embossing units can be configured alongside semi-rotary print and die cutting for greater flexibility.

Grafisk Maskinfabrik introduced its DC330 digital label finishing line, which as well as semi-rotary die cutting includes a high gloss varnishing unit said to remove the need for 'super gloss' foil. Optional features include a print buffer, screen units, laser die cutting and sheeting modules. Also new is the DC330mini, a more compact and servo-driven version of the DC330.

Aztech Converting demonstrated its modular full rotary Die Master RR Series

for digital label finishing, featuring dual servo web control and re-registration. The Die Master is available in 13, 18, and 20 inch models and can run up to 500 ft/min. Also shown was the ISR slitter/rewinder with inspection system available in widths of 13, 16, 18 and 20 inches. The system can run up to 800 ft/min. The UDB Series unwind module ran on the stand in line with a Leibinger Jet 3 inkjet station complete with an RW Series rewinder on the end.

KPG – formerly the Kopack sales operation – branched out into the digital converting world with the launch of the DP Series of web transport bases for integrating with digital printing modules. The modular bases come in web widths of 250mm and 400mm. KPG can supply a base complete with inkjet printheads, or as a customized transport base for use with heads specified by the customer. Finishing options include UV flexo varnishing and rotary or semi-rotary die cutting, and combination systems could also be developed including rotary screen, UV flexo, and cold/hot foiling.

The show was also notable for showcasing the latest developments in laser die cutting. Spartanics received significant interest in its Finecut narrow web laser cutting system, which offers speeds up to 100 ft/min with an optional high speed mode to reach 300 ft/min. Improvements have been made to the integrated software for web control, registration and laser power control to avoid cuts through the release liner.

ABG's Digicon Sabre Xtreme laser cutter now has higher production speeds resulting from new, high performance optics and software updates. Working on a maximum web width of 330mm and using two 200W sealed CO2 lasers – one for each side of the web – typical speeds are 85 linear m/min on a 1-up 150mm circular label to 40 m/min on 4-across 50 x 50mm square labels.

Cartes displayed the latest edition of its 350 laser converting label system as well as combination machines which integrate silkscreen, hot stamping, flat die-cutting or laser converting units to cover the complete label production process.

WEB INSPECTION SYSTEMS

AVT/GMI featured an enhanced PrintVision/Helios II 100% web inspection integrated with the MicroColor NW remote ink control system. The PrintVision/Helios II supports the new E-Pedigree FDA regulations for pharmaceutical packaging. Also new is data exchange with MIS systems to reduce set-up times. The GMI MicroColor NW supports offset and letterpress printing using CIP3 digital pre-setting. Linked with the PrintVision/Helios II, operators can immediately identify any color shift and handle color changes detected early in the process by the PrintVision/Helios II. Unilux introduced LED versions of its most widely used stroboscopic inspection lights. 'The selection of pulsed LED or stroboscopic inspection lighting really comes down to the application,' Unilux president Michael Simonis said. 'The pulsed LED is better for high-speed, highly reflective printing, and the strobe for most other printing applications.'

BST International introduced the SUPER HANDYScan 4000 and PROScan 4000 as successors of the BST 3000er series. The PC-based systems are equipped with high resolution, digital three-chip cameras. They embody BST's 'Super Lens' function which reduces distortions effects. The PowerScope 4000 is a new entry-level video web inspection system, available with either a motorized camera movement or as a manually-operated version. Also new is the CLS Pro 600 line and color contrast sensor for monitoring printed lines, print edges, web edges and patterns.

Erhardt + Leimer launched Nyscan LT (Light), an entry-level 100% web inspection system, with technical specifications that include the company's latest TubeLight illumination. Nyscan LT is designed for use in-line with a conventional press or as off-line module for a slitter/rewinder, E+L also introduced a codeless system into the Roll Scheduler of its Nyscan 100 percent inspection workflow. It eliminates the need for an inkjet coding system, thereby improving defect scheduling and decreasing the overall system cost.

Tectonic International launched its mid-range K3 digital inspection system. With resolutions up to 1280x1024, dual strobes and 500mm traverse as standard, it includes full data storage and retrieval functionality. Also on show was Tectonic's new generation Flexico v5 plate mounting machine, which includes, as standard, color cameras and an application roller to remove air bubbles.

Inspection specialist Nikka demonstrated its Offline Digital Reference Inspection (ODRI) proofreading system integrated with the Alis-Jet VIP unit. The ODRI operator scans one print repeat, which is automatically compared with the original PDF. The system marks suspicious spots and highlights any differences.

TO see full Sun Chemical press conference, visit www.labelsandlabeling.com

Inspection results are summarized for quality assurance documentation.Lake Image Systems' latest IntegraVision Discovery inspects and verifies both print quality and variable data, including barcodes, on all narrow web platforms, including digital presses. The system references against a 'golden' image and inspects via a high-resolution 100% line scan camera at speeds up to 1,000 feet/min. Non-western characters are included, identifying defects as small as 0.04mm. Also shown was a label inspection system for ANSI/ISO barcode grading, fitted to an Ashe Converting Opal slitter/rewinder.

INKS AND COATINGS

This Labelexpo will certainly be remembered for the first demonstration of LED curing on conventional narrow web production systems. Ink manufacturer Siegwerk was at the center of these developments with a new ink system developed to work alongside a curing system from US company Phoseon on a Gallus ECS340 press. Siegwerk's LED system includes UV flexo inks, UV screen inks and UV overprint varnishes. The company says they are a match for conventional UV inks in terms of drying speed, achieving print speeds on a suitably modified press in excess of 100 m/min.

The lamps and inks are currently 15-20 percent more expensive than those for conventional UV drying, but Siegwerk says this is offset by lower energy consumption, the elimination of air exhaustion systems and a safer work environment.

Another trend was towards the introduction of low migration inks compliant with emerging tough regulations in Switzerland. Mirage Inks, for example, launched Quartz Artemis, a cationic UV curing ink system that complies with the impending Swiss laws, without the presence of potentially harmful bi-products like benzene, itx and 4 methyl benzophenone. Tests by Pira on commercially printed shrinkable PET found no detectable migration.

Paragon launched its NC Series ink range which meets the latest Nestle migration compliance list for raw materials, and cures at speeds over 250m/min with a high color strength. The NC Series includes the LM and LO Series, all of which are Benzophenone, ITX and BDK free.

Pulse Roll Label Products launched a range of inks for food packaging applications. The company's PM and BB range of inks are the result of working closely with raw materials suppliers and end users.

Global ink manufacturer Flint Group, meanwhile, introduced Flexocure Force, a lower viscosity ink with no foaming that the company says increases print quality, improves mileage and press performance and can adhere on a wider range of substrates. Tests have shown new ink does not cause plate swell. Also new was Flexocure XS opaque white ink for shrink sleeve printing, with improved slip characteristics, and the latest upgrade of CombiWhite.

Sun Chemical promoted new UV additions to its Solaris narrow web ink system. SolarFlex Nova for UV flexo offers improved cure time, higher color strength and ColorSat color management tools to reduce downtime. Silicone-free, the new ink allows for easier post-print enhancements as well. Suncure Starluxe is the company's latest UV offset ink, offering enhanced performance on a broader base of substrates. Solar Screen Opaque Whites were launched in both silicone and silicone-free versions.

Screen ink specialist Marabu and UV flexo specialist Paragon Inks demonstrated live label printing at their joint booth on a Mark Andy UV flexo/rotary screen servo press and Franchini's SeriGon flatbed screen press. Marabu presented two new gold pastes, which join the successful high-gloss silver S-UV 296. All metallic concentrates can be used with the respective clear for rotary and flatbed printing.

Ruco introduced a line of UV screen printing inks that it says is made up of '40 percent renewable raw materials'. It showed the inks printed on a Fasson biodegradable stock. Developed for the decoration of plastic films, the inks are highly reactive and are available in high-gloss formulations. The company claims a high resistance to solvents and a high quality print result on pre-treated PE and PP.

Security ink manufacturer Luminescence introduced its 'metameric' optically variable ink. The system uses two inks that appear exactly the same when viewed directly, but one changes color when the viewing angle is changed. The system can be incorporated into designs or make a message emerge from a flat image. The inks are available in several different colors and are suitable for flexo, gravure, intaglio and screen printing.

CTI presented its full line of screen, gravure, flexo and offset thermochromatic inks, along with value-adding inks including glow-in-the-dark and color shifting options.

On the inkjet front, Roland DG was claiming a first for its metallic silver ink. When used in combination with CMYK inks, this new color in the ECO-SOL MAX range allows the creation of a range of special colors, including gold and various metallic colors.

ANILOX SYSTEMS

Sandon Global Engraving launched HOC, an anilox roll technology for label printers looking to use high opaque color UV flexo printing as an alternative to rotary screen. The HOC technology joins the company's high opacity white HOW anilox brand for printing screen quality whites using UV flexo, which also showed for the first time in Europe. The company's HVP high volume process and Ipro high process print anilox roll technology also made their debuts; the latter designed for high print speeds and high line count applications in process printing.

Pamarco Global Graphics launched E-Flo, an anilox roll designed to compliment CTP plate technology for high-end flexible packaging. A new cell structure and different cell angles have been applied to provide a more consistent ink lay down. This system is designed to help printers using high definition (HD) systems maintain color density and the integrity of the anilox and printing plate.

Apex Europe showed its new 2G anilox rolls with a lightweight steel body and stainless steel journals. It also introduced to European converters its Genetic Transfer Technology, which

combines a ceramic layer with a new laser engraving method. The idea behind Genetic Transfer Technology is to use only a few standardized metering rolls and still be able to print the whole scale of print possibilities. Also new was the BioJet LabelBlast for anilox and metering roll cleaning.

Simec Group showed its 'gold' light-weight rollers with anodized treatments for high resistance against chemicals and inks. Bodies can be in tube or full steel version. The company also showed its Revolver anilox sleeve handling and storage system.

Turning to proofing and measuring systems, Harper Corporation launched the Phantom QD Quick Drawdown Proofer. Users easily clip the hand-held anilox system into a portable table, complete with pressure gauges to provide consistent drawdown proofs, removing the variability of operator loading. The Phantom QD has a magnetic doctor blade that can be easily removed for cleaning.

Troika Systems showed two variants of its AniCam anilox measurement tool: AniCam-P for flexographic print producers and AniCam-M for anilox roll manufacturers.

Graymills displayed its new variable-speed electric centrifugal pumps, which save energy and costs by only pumping the necessary amount of ink. The 'Chillter', a chilling filter that combines heat exchange and a filter in one, provides better color and density control, and improves consistency, says the company.

MATERIALS AND SUBSTRATES

Down-sizing film laminates was a key theme at the show. As well as saving raw materials, thinner gauge materials reduce transport costs and energy useage, while increasing the efficiency of the print and labeling operation, with more meters of labels before roll changeovers.

Avery Dennison Roll Materials Europe introduced a thinner 23 micron PET release liner to its Fasson range. Avery hopes this will extend the use of film liners beyond clear-on-clear film applications to areas where glassine is the current choice. Fasson PET23 is launched initially with two Fasson film facestocks – Fasson PP Light Top Clear and White – as well as a paper facestock, the multi-purpose Fasson MC Primecoat. Fasson PET23 release liner is fully recyclable, complete with its silicone release coating.

UPM Raflatac introduced its Thin Range, comprising 10 labelstock combinations. Under this program, the company's PP30 liner is available with a range of paper faces, while a PET25 liner is offered in place of a standard paper liner with PE and PP faces. Additionally, a selection of thinner Lite paper faces is coupled with a thin Honey Glassine 50 liner.

Ritrama presented its light weight Evolution PE60, designed as an alternative to standard PE 85 micron films in cosmetics and personal care applications. As well as the environmental and production efficiency advantages of thinner films, Ritrama says the material exhibits improved flexibility, allowing labels to 'conform' on a wider range of applications.

Looking to eliminate liner altogether, Arca Etichette and Ritrama presented a complete linerless self-adhesive label solution for applications like labeling boxes, shrink/wrap trays and multipacks. The facestocks comprise a 60 micron white matt BOPP film and a 76 micron direct thermal paper, both with permanent adhesive. The 'Bi-Fuel' print/apply system developed by Arca Etichette incorporates a thermal transfer printer.

Ritrama also showed its Roll Indigo range, currently undergoing HP certification.

The Specialty Packaging and Films division of Dow Chemical introduced Opticite, a new line of polystyrene films designed specially for the ROSO market. The target market for this product is beverages. 'Traditional roll fed shrink films have a 10-15 percent shrink,' explained Chuck Carn, business development manager for the division. 'Our Opticite line provides 50 percent shrink. It's perfect for applications on high contour bottles – the brands can use their existing application machinery and simply add a shrink tunnel.' The company received strong interest in the line at the show.

Flexcon showed a number of new materials at Labelexpo Europe, including Flexmount Advantage, Pharmcal PM 15156E, Pharmcal PP 16856E, and its DigiPro range. The company's products can be used in a wide range of applications, including electronics, security, telecommunications, automotive, pharmaceutical, petroleum and chemical, packaging and graphic advertising.

Gascogne Laminates extended its range of synthetic face materials and liners. The company also introduced PEFC- and FSC-certified substrates, and a recyclable PP 30 micron liner. Gascogne is trialing an expansion of its partnerships for liner collection for recycling.

Girona, Spain-based Gombau launched its Wash Off material aimed at the beer market – a plastic material that will fall off after two minutes in 80 deg C temperatures, allowing the bottle to be reused. The company also showed its IE08 adhesive, which avoids wrinkles on wine labels when the bottle is in an ice-bucket.

Hanita Coatings showed a new line of topcoated polyester films for UV inkjet, solvent-resistant thermal-transfer films for industrial and under-bonnet applications, tamper-evident security face stocks and a broadened range of RFID antennas.

Innovia Films expanded its NatureFlex range to bring the pressure-sensitive label converter a choice of clear, white or metalized sustainable label facestock films. As with the clear NatureFlex facestock film NVL, the new films in the range, white NVLW and metalized NML, are based on renewable wood pulp sourced from managed plantations, which either have or are working towards FSC, PEFC or similar certification.

NatureFlex films are manufactured from 95 percent renewable raw materials from sustainable forestry sources.

Still on the 'sustainability' theme, Mondi extended its Sustainex product range with a 'biodegradable and compostable' polymer-based release liner certified to EN 13432.

Intercoat launched a material for its range of HP Indigo-certified coatings – a PP 60 micron on a 30 micron PET XP-Liner. A new adhesive was also introduced at the show, P6hl, for high shear and luminescent applications.

Intercoat was joined on its booth by Italtack, a recently founded company which distributes Intercoat's label materials in Italy from its base in Padova, near Venice.

Itasa promoted its ranges of silicone coated papers. The company recently invested 9 million euros in 10,000 sq meters of land, adding 4,500 square meters to its production facility. A new rewinding machine for narrow web rolls is due to be installed in the near future. It will join a further five rewinders, two 2-color flexo printers and three silicone coating lines at the company's facility in San Sebastian, Spain.

Mactac Europe revealed a new proprietary universal polyolefin filmic face material developed with the flexible packaging division of the Bemis Group. The new film is available in white and clear gloss and is coated with the acrylic multi-purpose adhesive MP128N. The company also launched a semi-gloss paper,

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called Velvet EF, made from 60 percent recycled fibers.

Mactac Europe also emphasized the capabilities of its new hot melt coater, CL9, aimed at manufacturing products for targeted niche markets. This new tool is claimed to enable Mactac to be more flexible for low volume orders and more supportive to roll label printers targeting specialty applications.

MDV showed a range of digital media including Robuskin PET 50 B/S, a thin film supported by most digital printers, and a range of Robuskin PVCs for digital dry toner machines.

Technical film specialist Polyonics promoted three new products: XF-509 is a 1 mil black polyimide label material which can be printed with a white thermal transfer ribbon. XF-300 is a 5 mil nylon cloth label with high chemical resistance, printable with thermal transfer, dot matrix and even with a ballpoint pen. Typical applications include electrical and laboratory applications. XF-596/7 and XF-597 high gloss labels, matched with the proper thermal ribbon, will withstand the high temperatures, harsh chemicals, and solvents typically used in circuit board manufacturing processes.

Sihl launched four new grades of PicoFilm for xerographic and Indigo printing, as well as new coated films based on PP and PVC for the digital and litho market in the 200-350 micron range. Within the EnDURO Ice range two PS grades were launched, one for conventional roll and one for digital printing, 'giving the advantages of transparent papers with the performance benefits of film'.

In the field of synthetic papers, Arjobex introduced its Polyart Wet Glue range designed for cold glue cut-and-stack labeling on glass or plastic bottles. It consists of a cavitated HDPE film and a water absorbent coating, and has a touch and feel close to premium coated paper, says the company. Polyart Wet Glue can be printed on both sheetfed offset presses and UV machines. The company also launched Polyart Digital, certified for use with HP Indigo's ws4000 and WS6000 presses. It is available for both adhesive labels and tags.

Valéron Strength Films showcased its new Valéron RxS PE-based cross laminate. One or both film surfaces are grafted with an adhesion promoter. The company also unveiled its extended range of Valéron TLP products, developed for integrated pharma label applications.

Yupo launched a tamper evident material, SAR 60, which allows double sided printing and gives converters the flexibility to use different designs instead of the traditional 'void' image. Also introduced was YupoTako, a material which sticks to flat surfaces, due to its mirco suction structure, using no adhesive. Tako means 'octopus' in Japanese. The material leaves no sticky feeling on label or surface. It can be washed with water to enable reuse after the adhesion is weakened by dust. The company also launched an HP Indigo-certified synthetic paper, called YupoBlue. Water proof and tear resistant, it needs no top coating before printing.

PAPERS

Environmental sustainability and new coatings were the central features of new paper offerings at Labelexpo.

Ahlstrom announced FSC and PEFC Chain of Custody certifications for its manufacturing sites in France and Italy, so its Silca supercalendered release papers and Silco papers – widely used for VIP labeling applications – are now available with both accreditations. Also announced at the show was Ahlstrom's cooperation with Armor on thermal transfer printing technology for self-adhesive laminates.

Arjowiggins launched a range of papers made from 60 percent

recycled FSC-certified pulp and 40 percent FSC-certified virgin fiber pulp. Arjowiggins Graphic's Maine 1 Face Green is claimed to be the first recycled 1-sided coated paper. It is said to meet the same technical and aesthetic quality requirements as a 1-sided coated paper made from virgin fibers. According to The Carbon Neutral Company, production of Maine 1 Face Green, compared with non-recycled paper, reduces water use by 35 percent, electricity by 20 percent and carbon dioxide emissions by 20 percent.

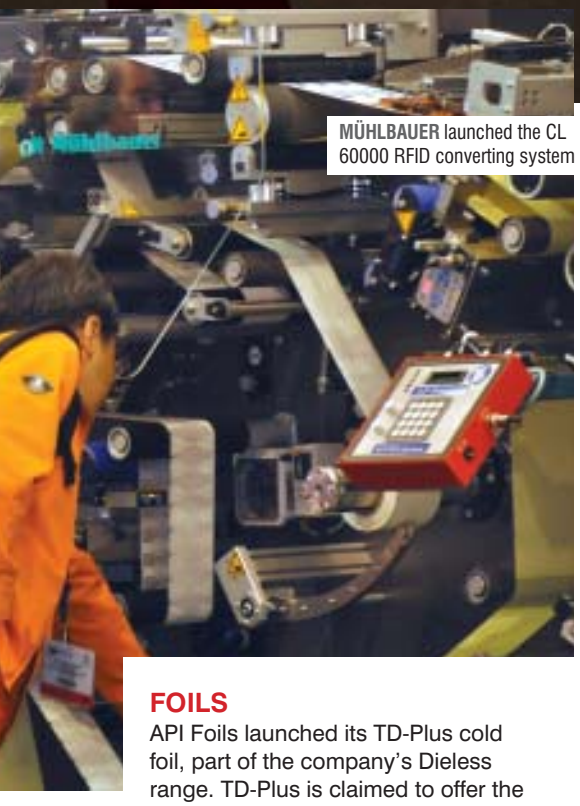
UPM launched a range of new products including LabelCoat lux, a woodfree, one side coated paper, with improved whiteness for product and information labeling. UPM CCK is a one-side coated woodfree kraft, said to combine good silicone holdout, dimensional stability and lay-flatness and suitable for solventless and solvent-based siliconizing. The backside can be printed and it is suitable for PE-coating.

Cham Paper Group launched Adicar Fluo for anti-counterfeiting applications. The paper makes fraud immediately visible under ultraviolet light by means of ultraviolet identification marks. Turkish supplier Bella Kagit, meanwhile, showed its range of speciality label papers, release liners, films and adhesives.

Papeterie Zuber Rieder introduced its Bagasse 'eco' paper grade, produced using by-products from sugar cane production, as well as linen and hemp grown on fallow land. As Bagasse does not include the use of trees in its manufacturing, it is a low-energy consumption product in terms of both production and for transformation, and is also fully recyclable, says the company. Linen and hemp are also natural crops, which require the use of very little pesticide or weed-killer, as well as little fertilizer and irrigation.

Bagasse is suitable for offset, letterpress, engraving, embossing, hot-foil stamping, laser engraving, thermography, silkscreen and die-cutting applications, including all desktop printing, such as laser, inkjet and photocopier.

Torraspapel, part of the Lecta Group, promoted its Metalvac metalized papers for beer and beverage labels, and the Adestor self-adhesive product line.



MÜHLBAUER launched the CL 60000 RFID converting system

FOILS

API Foils launched its TD-Plus cold foil, part of the company's Dieless range. TD-Plus is claimed to offer the printer increased running speeds and high levels of coverage. Developed for through-carrier cold foiling on UV curing narrow web presses, TD-Plus can bridge ink and substrate.

The new product strengthens API's range of cold foils, which is available in a selection of gold, silver and metallic colors and holographic patterns.

In addition to the Dieless cold foil range, API promoted its range of hot stamping foils, including metallic, holographic and pigment foils, as well as a range of holographic laminating films.

ADHESIVES AND SILICONES

Dow Corning Corporation introduced a new solvent-free release coating system, consisting of a base coating, an anchorage additive, a choice of crosslinkers and a platinum catalyst, targeted at filmic pressure sensitive laminate and labelstock applications.

The company's new Syl-Off system uses proven thermal-cure technology, with a bath stability claimed to give manufacturers more processing flexibility while reducing waste. A wide range of release force values can be achieved, says Dow Corning, and a high release stability is achieved against both solvent and a wide range of water-based acrylic adhesives.

Bluestar, formerly Rhodia, announced additions to its Optima Concept release products family, which offers customized products with fast cure, low temperature and low platinum formulations. The company also exhibited its Silcolease silicone pressure sensitive adhesive range and latest Silcolease film coating formulations. 'The latest additions to our Optima concept product family target solventless thermal and emulsion technologies,' said Sean Duffy, global market manager.

Novamelt introduced its PS 1210 PSA-hotmelt adhesive for labeling food products such as refrigerated cheese, sausage and meat, where labeling takes place on plastic substrates at 0-5 °C and in a moist environment. The labels are attached by being rolled down or by using modern blow label applicators, which require a high level of initial adhesion and a virtual overflow of the adhesive to obtain a high level of adhesion, even on rounded surfaces. PS 1210 demonstrates low penetration behaviour on basic paper without a primary coat, barrier or top coating, says Novamelt. Food contact certification has been obtained from ISEGA.

Slovenian manufacturer Aero DD introduced its new line of ultra-removeable adhesives and Aerotac self-adhesive materials range.

For those label converters looking to manufacture their own laminates, using combinations of release liners, face materials, silicones and adhesives, ETI Converting demonstrated its new generation Cohesio converting machine. The machine is fully servo motorized, offers a new coating head, a corona treatment system, an integrated adhesive coat weight measurement system, and a new adjustable anvil. ETI president Frederic La Brie said: 'We have a great location and we are meeting more and more of the right people. We've never had so many orders at one show.'

PLATES AND PLATEMAKING

Water-washable plates continue to make advances in terms of print quality and ease of use, as this Labelexpo made clear. Toyobo showed its Cosmolight water washable flexo plates and Printight water washable letterpress plates on the AV Flexologic stand. Cosmolight plates are produced in less than one hour. The plates will hold a 1 percent dot at 175 lpi and are compatible with water-based, solvent-based and UV inks. Three different levels of thickness allow use with a variety of substrates.

Jet Europe launched the UVW-114 CtP digital flexo plate which can be washed out with tap water. Following CtP exposure, the plate requires just 20 minutes' processing time to be press ready. Jet says the UVW-114 achieves rasters of 60 lpc, with clean and smoothly blended halftones, without break-outs in the 0% area of the tonal range. The plate can be used with UV inks.

Also water-washable is Flint Group Flexographic Products' nyloprint WS 230 S digital stencil plate for letterpress security printing applications. This allows conventional film processing to be replaced by digital mask ablation.

For plate mounting on process work, combination printing, line and solid runs, Rogers Corporation showed its R/BAK SA 3000 cushion mounting tapes with three levels of compressibility. The company says the open-cell urethane cushion offers more consistent print results with fewer press adjustments.

RFID

Mühlbauer launched the CL 60000 RFID converting system, suitable for a variety of products including wet inlays, self-adhesive labels, tickets, hang tags and baggage tags. Its speed of up to 90 m/min leads translates to an hourly rate of up to 54,000 tickets (ID1 format), 110,000 labels or 11,000 baggage tags.

SWEDISH MANUFACTURER MAKES FLEXO DEBUT

A new press manufacturer made its debut at Labelexpo. Wasberger' company Sepac launched its smart-looking UV exo press at the show. The press is built around an ergonomic frame with everything – including control cabinets and power lines – built inside the machine. This means that once power, compressed air and exhaust are hooked up, the press is ready to run. This gives the press a very compact footprint, while customers can be shown the press working through plexi-glass panels on the back of the machine.

To press has been designed to minimize waste through features such as plate cylinder zero point positioning and servo register. A lot of thought has gone into press ergonomics. As an example, each drop-in print cylinder is provided with a handle for ease of positioning and removal.

The Sepac press can handle a wide range of substrates from labels to light cartons and has internet connectivity for support and remote diagnostics. The press will be available in three widths, 340mm, 420mm and 530mm, in a cylinder size 12-25ins and a print speed up to 200 m/minute.

Options will include sleeve systems as well as the full range of combination print options including chill rollers and screen units.

A variable input spooler enables a two row parallel mode, either to double the throughput or to handle up to four layers.

bielomatik announced during the show a collaboration with Smartrac, a manufacturer of RFID components, for the development of bielomatik's RF-LoopTag UHF chip module technology. 'bielomatik converting machine owners will greatly appreciate the simplification and improved process reliability as well as a significant cost savings,' said Martin Bohn, RFID division manager at bielomatik. RF-LoopTag is a miniature 'smart' label, the size of a postage stamp, operating in the 840-960 MHz frequency band. The system is intended for near field ranges up to three inches, mainly serving as an electronic seal for retail security applications at item level.

Melzer showed its SL-1 smart production line, which can produce up to 7000 RFID labels per hour. Utilizing Melzer's patented in-line selection technology, SL users are able to read and verify the functionality of each inlay prior to its application to the final substrate. Those deemed defective are removed from the process before application. Optional equipment includes a proprietary hot melt application system for spot or full coating of the finished inlays, a punching system and magazine delivery for ISO sized cards, add-on modules for the production of luggage tags, and special configurations for exotic web constructions or extra layers.

Schober demonstrated its RFID-CP system for medium and short label runs. UHF and HF inlays are inserted under die-cut blank or pre-printed labels, which are then validated. New features include a new tag dispenser. Pre-printed labels with widths from 101.6mm to 203.6mm can be applied at rates from 5,000 to 20,000 labels per hour. An automatic control system keeps transponders and printed labels in register.

Also on display was the RFID-TI Combi, which is designed to insert/apply wet and dry RIFD inlays in registration at high speed onto a continuously driven release liner. A dual reader verifies the transponder on finished RFID labels.

UV CURING

GEW showed its C3 retractable cassette system, developed as a replacement to the XC reflector used on the VCP and eCP platforms. The new reflector uses a multi-layered dichroic coating applied to replaceable reflector inserts. A cold filter has been added to block IR radiation from the lamp and a 'cold shutter' eliminates the risk of heat damage to substrates when the press stops.

GreenTime is a new stand-by system that allows the operator to program a remote re-start. This means no time is wasted waiting for the UV system to warm up and eliminates energy wastage while the operator is away from the machine.

GEW also introduced an inert gas atmosphere UV system for curing inks in food packaging applications. The system enables curing of inks formulated with low levels of photoinitiators. Finally, GEW announced it can now monitor and troubleshoot a customer's UV system via the internet from its UK headquarters.

IST Metz majored on the energy-saving features of the MBS-5 UV curing system (see p.102). Also shown was a prototype rig demonstrating LED-based curing technology; plus the BLK-U system that operates under oxygen-reduced conditions; the FLC (Fast Lamp Change) system; and the mobile UMS unit for measuring irradiation.

uv-technik meyer presented its new generation electronic power supplies for medium-pressure UV lamps. The ALP-3G is compact – with dimensions of just 482 mm x 114 mm x 40 mm – in a water-cooled housing with step-less power regulation up to 8,000W.

Its compact design allows the ALP-3G to be installed in positions that were 'previously impossible', for example near the UV head or in restricted spaces within the chassis of the label press. This also minimizes the need for extra control cabinets. A networkable CANopen-interface ensures the ALP-3G can plug directly into the existing machine control system.

Exfo Life Sciences & Industrial Division introduced Excelerate PIN-101, a UV 'pinning' system for one-pass UV inkjet systems. The system delivers a dose of low intensity UV light matched to the UV ink's photochemical properties between each print head. The ink moves into a more viscose state, but is not fully cured. This process manages the drop size, which is claimed to enhance image quality. The PIN-101 system has a 71mm pinning area.

PRE-PRESS

With no Kodak presence at Labelexpo, EskoArtwork further established its dominance of the labels pre-press workflow arena, not only on its own stand, but though workflow alliances on multiple partner stands.

The company's 'big idea' was the launch of Platform 10, which brings together a number of existing Esko programs under a single brand, and features five software 'engines' for workflow automation, color and image management, supply chain management and dynamic content, so brands can easily and securely update the information on their labels. Other products included HD Flexo, which matches 4000 dpi optics with cutting edge screening technology to push the limits of flexo print quality.

Hardware included two members of the CDI platesetter family: the new entry-level CDI Spark 1712 and the CDI Spark 2530. The former has a small footprint for imaging digital flexo plates and films to a size of 420mm x 300mm in under ten minutes.

EskoArtwork also demonstrated how color management can be integrated into every step of the workflow. Featured were Equinox for extended gamut printing, the Kaleidoscope color engine and FlexProof/E with Proof Verification. Also shown was the Variable Data Printing Module, which expands the company's capabilities in digital printing on HP Indigo presses.

One of Esko's partners, Dantex, was imaging digital letterpress plates on an 'own brand' CDI platesetter, as well as was also demonstrating the results of HD Flexo imaging.

Lüscher was claiming a world first for its XPose! 4FLEX platesetter, which can image printing forms for letterpress, flexo, screen and offset plates on the same machine. The system is aimed particularly at label converters using hybrid printing presses, who need to combine multiple print processes.

4FLEX incorporates two different imaging systems: high power thermal diodes with a wavelength of 940 nm ablate the mask to image digital flexo and letterpress plates. Blue laser diodes with a wavelength of 405 nm expose directly with UV light analog screen plates and conventional offset plates. Printers using non-chemical ablative thermal offset plates can produce their printing forms with XPose! 4FLEX as well, since the ablated layer is safely removed by vacuum, in the same way as for flexo and letterpress plates. Finally, ablative film can be imaged, replacing film setters.

Luescher 4-flex CTP images letterpress, offset, flexo and screen plates

Screen demonstrated a new halftone dot for the flexo and letterpress industries which fully exploits the company's 4,800 dpi resolution imaging technology, and is claimed to produce gradations as smooth as those achieved by offset litho printing at 200 lpi.

The Flexodot 4800 can be utilized both by Screen's PlateRite FX870II and PlateRite FX1524 thermal CTP platesetters for the flexo and letterpress sectors. These models feature a newly developed, high power imaging head and an auto-balancing function that stabilizes drum rotation.

Flexodot technology reinforces the halftone dots that stabilize the relief structure in the highlight areas, while the increased resolution improves the smoothness of curves and diagonals, reducing the jagginess associated with flexo printing.

Dalim Software made its debut appearance at Labelexpo, introducing the Enterprise Solutions (ES) line, which offers a range of web-based tools from on-line approval to production management. Two new modules were shown: 'milestones' maps business processes with production data, and 'metadata' for media management and interaction with file processing workflows.

BG-Pack, one of the leading providers of premedia services for flexo printing in Switzerland, purchased Dalim's ES platform at the show. 'Today printers, retailers and brand owners expect us to visualize our services and processes on the web,' said BG-Pack CEO Victor Götsch.

Flexolaser demonstrated Graphic Republik's MaxPro workflow driving its Flexolaser digital imagers for both flexo and letterpress plate production. MaxPro provides editing, color correction and high-end trapping – including transparency trapping – and manual or automated step & repeat to create stepped, final plate layouts. New features include a contone trapping function, composite/separation postscript export, full ppd functionality, monitor profile and CFF2 CAD file format support.

Flexolaser demonstrated its piccolo small-format laser system for plates sizes up to 635 x 500 mm with exposure taking 12 minutes at a resolution of 2540 dpi. For digital production of letterpress plates, the piccolino is provided with a magnetic vacuum drum.

Sistrade, the Portugal-based MIS supplier, launched a new version of its Sistrade Print system, which now includes improved handling and management of design and label production from raw material to finished product. New components include an estimating tool by type of product versus real-time production control.

LETTERPRESS PROGRESS

Despite the rise and rise of exo/UV exo, letterpress retains a significant installed base in Europe, and letterpress continues to advance technologically – see for example the new digital letterpress plate imaging systems elsewhere in this article.

Among letterpress manufacturers showing new machines was Orthotec, which demonstrated its new servo-driven CSL3022 intermittent letterpress with a three-section automated inking system. The press incorporates automated tension control and a scanner allowing tightly registered second pass printing at high speed. The press has a maximum print area of 300 x 220mm and speeds up to 15,000 impressions/hour for a six station machine, and up to 12,000/hour for nine stations or when using the new rotary die system. A hybrid inking system allows the same station to double as a letterpress or a exo unit for varnishing or spot color application. Orthotec also introduced a rotary hot-stamp station which uses a exible plate – an innovation on intermittent letterpress machinery. Options for the CSL3022 include a lamination station doubling as a cold foil unit, and the SLT300 slitter, which can work both in- and off-line. The SLT300 unit has two rewinding shafts with electronic tension control while operating in-line, with forward and reverse winding. A counter is also available.

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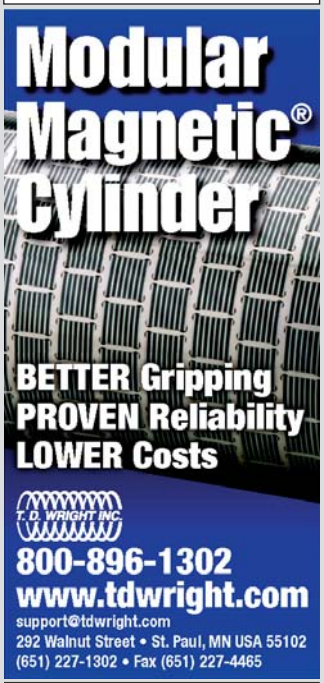

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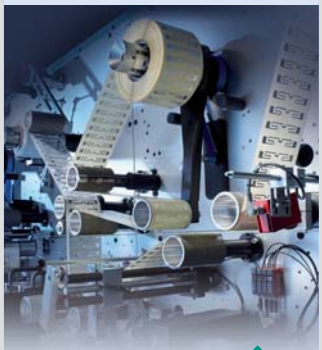

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CORPORATE CULTURE

8 Key Budgeting Tips

RUN a more effective business through effective budget planning

Profit planning, or budgeting, is far and away the most effective way to consistently meet profit targets and avoid costly surprises. Here are 8 tips for your consideration:

1. Take the time, take the team. A budget must be the result of coordinated input and effort by you and your top management team.

2. It takes practice. Regardless of how tough it may be to estimate the future, your forecasting accuracy will improve, and you'll be better able to control the results.

3. Any business can be budgeted. The only question is how much practice it takes to strike a balance between time invested and forecasting accuracy.

4. Use a Gantt chart – an expanded timeline – to track deliverable dates for budget completion. As with any project management tool, it will tell you if you've scheduled too much to be completed in too short a time.

5. Don't try to budget to the last penny. Accurately predicting actual results is not the objective, nor is the creation of an immovable object. It's all about giving your company a direction to use for course corrections, and at the level of detail where it matters.

6. Make the tradeoffs when necessary. If you must spend money for something you didn't budget, then decide what budgeted expense can be removed to "finance" the new item.

7. You need both profit and cash flow targets. Every budget should have profit targets and cash flow targets. Every year businesses with smashing profit pictures go out of business for lack of cash.

8. Three questions: At the end of each month, ask your team:

- How are we doing compared to budget? Why did actual results differ from the plan?
- What must we do NOW to have a better result next month?
- How can we keep the positive differences and avoid more of the negative ones?
- What are we learning that will make next year's budget better?

Congratulations. Doesn't that feel good?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:
Gene Siciliano, CMC, CPA, is an author, speaker and financial consultant who works with CEOs and managers to achieve greater financial success in a dramatically changing economy.

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