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L&L THE WIDER WORLD **OF NARROW WEB**

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L&L CONTENTS

FEATURES

TECHNICAL

LEADER

REGULARS

NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR PRESSURE SENSITIVE

We often forget how developments in label applicator technology can impact the label converter. The ability of a Krones modular labeler to switch rapidly between cold glue, hot melt or PS heads, for example, allowed end users to introduce PS labels to premium brands previously using wet glue, opening up a new market for added value label conversion.

In this edition of L&L we report on a new applicator development which challenges hot melt filmic roll labels – and potentially allows PS label converters to enter a new added value label sector. On PE Labellers' Adhesleeve system (see page 28) label converters add a strip of PS adhesive, in register, onto each label on a roll. The applicator cuts the roll at the adhesive strip and applies it to the bottle in one operation – eliminating the need for hot melt application on the bottling line. It will require an additional coating station on the press, and some considerable skill in multi-process, inline printing: in other words, the narrow web converter is perfectly positioned to challenge the wide web flexible packaging sector where so much of this work is currently done.

Talking of potentially paradigm-changing developments, check out also our feature on the new Pantec Rhino foiling system (page 61), which claims to bring the quality of sheetfed foiling to the narrow web press in the form on an inline flatbed module with claimed speeds up to 120 m/min on uncoated papers.

This is the truly exciting thing about the narrow web industry, compared to, say, the commercial offset sector: there are always new ideas popping up which can give you the edge over the rest of the market, and thus avoid the evils of commoditization and competition on price.

ANDY THOMAS
GROUP MANAGING EDITOR
athomas@labelsandlabeling.com

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L&L ISSUE 6

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INBOX

This month saw very interesting debate developed on the subject of **brand owners' response to counterfeiting and product shrinkage (theft).**

What is a bigger problem for brands, pilferage or counterfeits? What should brand owners attend to first? Is the additional cost involved in protection a deterrent to indulge in security applications?

Harveer Sahni
Managing director at Weldon Celloplast Limited

I guess it depends on the brand 'market'. If for example it's a pharma company and the risk sits in not only counterfeit but also diversion of the product or grey importation, then track and trace is necessary given the consequences to their relevant licences from the FDA/ BDA. Anti-counterfeit allows markets where internet-based transactions are more common to validate the product also, so in this market I think pilferage is less of an issue. This is the converse in an added value product such as Beverage and Luxury items where anti-theft protection is more relevant, but I think in most cases this responsibility sits with the retailer and the supply chain partners as well as the brand owner. Unless the brand owner, retailer and supply chain are all integrated, then it's a non-starter for obvious reasons. In either case the issue is usually how you choose to sell the technology. Often you are discussing the 'brief' with the security and brand protection officer who keeps its details confidential from other departments in his operation. This means when you have to tell the procurement team of your selling price they baulk at it; and of course you can't tell them what you're doing to add such a cost. It then becomes circular for a while until you break the deadlock. So I think in most cases it's a stall rather than a deterrent.

Will Parker
Director at MSO Labelsco

The way to sell it usually is to go and sell it to the CMO as an additional selling tool. If you can convince him that this will enable him to convey to the market that the product that the end user is buying is genuine and secure, the chances of his buying that product are higher than an unauthenticated product. I have seen that happen with a number of brands. Also creating a TCO calculation in terms of loss of revenue and the additional cost of security always is quite useful. As said by everybody, selling this to the Procurement guys is impossible. Somebody higher up in the chain has to make this decision.

Ranesh Bajaj
Director marketing at Creed Engineers P Ltd

There are three **major areas of concern for brand owners** – counterfeiting and diversion, theft, and tampering.

The importance of each of these will depend on the brand, its value, where it is made, how and where it is sold.

Counterfeiting and diversion is more likely to be carried out by organized crime gangs and can be on a major scale worldwide; retail theft is usually more local and opportunistic and on a relatively smaller scale; tampering is more likely to be undertaken for individual grudge or blackmail reasons. Each area of concern requires a different type of solution or combination of solutions.

In terms of global losses it is estimated that counterfeiting and diversion now accounts for around 7-8% of world trade and continues to grow. Almost any product of value is being counterfeited today – pharmaceuticals, cosmetics and toiletries, sports goods, clothing, electrical and electronics goods, etc, as well as items such as paper clips, copier paper and ballpoint pens. Theft and tampering are much smaller in terms of global losses and, as has been indicated, more usually sits with the retailer and supply chain.

Leading brand owners will usually have investigation and legal teams looking to track down counterfeiters and stop products being counterfeited and will spend considerable sums on these types of operations; much less tends to spent on anti-counterfeiting solutions introduced from the beginning.

The feeling of brand owners is often that anti-counterfeiting technology is expensive and that supplier companies try and push their own solution, rather than aiming to solve the problem in the most cost-effective and economical way. Having just completed the writing of an 'Encyclopedia of Brand Protection and Security Printing Technology' I am aware of several hundreds of brand protection, authentication, anti-theft, anti-tampering, etc, technologies, materials and products that are available to printers and converters.

Mike Fairley
Director Strategic Planning, Labels Group, Tarsus Exhibitions and Publishing

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

SAMUEL JONES UK RETURNS TO BUSINESS

Self-adhesive laminator Samuel Jones UK has returned to business as a private, independent company. Located at purpose-built facilities formerly owned by Scandstick UK in Sawtry, Cambridgeshire, the company returns as a 'leaner operation, with a dedicated team of specialists and a more focused product range, mostly for label end-uses,' according to managing director Staffan Hagberg.

Samuel Jones will concentrate on offering the UK, Irish and Australian markets hotmelt-based laminates for a wide range of applications.

Commented Hagberg: 'We are fully committed to helping our customers keep their business as sustainable and profitable as possible in these uncertain economic conditions. There is great emphasis on innovation, and we are looking at further developing the conversion process of our product portfolio without compromising on quality or physical properties.'

The company will deliver to the exact widths required by its customers' presses. New products in the company's portfolio include the SJ757 and chilled/permanent SJ857 hotmelt adhesives. Next year will be the 200th anniversary of the company, which began as one of the first manufacturers of gummed allies.

XEIKON ALLIANCE WITH TLMI

Xeikon, a division of Punch Graphix, has entered into a joint alliance with the Tag and Label Manufacturers Institute (TLMI). Under the new arrangement, the digital press manufacturer will offer new Xeikon 3300/3000 customers a complimentary first-time TLMI membership. Frank Sablone, TLMI president, commented: 'Our mission is to provide our members with the tools and resources needed to help them grow their businesses. With this generous offer from Xeikon, we'll be able to share our knowledge base with an expanded group and play a role in strengthening the industry overall.'

Michael V. Ring, vice president of sales and chief marketing officer of Xeikon's North American operations, said 'We are thrilled to embark on this new arrangement with TLMI. The organization's vast understanding and expertise in the narrow web tag, label, and packaging industries makes them an outstanding partner.'

PS 'BREAKTHROUGH' PUTS HOT MELT UNDER PRESSURE

NEW opportunities for narrow web converters and industry suppliers

Italian company PE Labellers has eliminated the need for hot melt adhesive on roll-fed film labels with an applicator system that uses strips of pressure-sensitive adhesive applied by the converter.

By taking away hot melt glue from the applicator, PE Labellers says the applied cost per label is greatly reduced and there are significant environmental benefits. As well as handling transparent or white film, the same Adhesleeve applicator can handle heat-shrinkable films by the simple addition of a heat tunnel. A UV curing unit is no longer necessary.

Industry expert Rob Carter has been tasked with helping label converters meet the technical requirements of the Adhesleeve system. Accredited converters will be added to a list available to end users who adopt Adhesleeve labeling.

Carter believes that this new technology could open up major opportunities for narrow web converters. 'Their experience of handling PS adhesives and inline processing makes them ideally placed to take advantage of the opportunities Adhesleeve affords.'

They would require modular servo presses able to handle ultra-thin unsupported film, potentially also with a gravure station as the last unit on the press. *For full story, see page 28.*

PRESS MANUFACTURER WERNER KAMMANN FILES FOR INSOLVENCY

The economic crisis claimed another press manufacturer victim in October as Werner Kammann Maschinenfabrik filed for insolvency. With over 250 employees, the company develops and manufactures offset/flatbed screen combination presses for label printing, as well as machinery for the printing of glass and plastic containers and optical discs.

Together with the insolvency team, the company's management is 'keen on a solution that offers a continuation of the business, possibly through the sale of the business to an external third party,' according to a statement. Potential interested parties may obtain further information from Uwe Borgers at Mentor AG *(www.mentorag.de)*.

JOHN CORRALL, managing director of Industrial Inkjet

INDUSTRIAL INKJET APPOINTS COLOURPRINT ASIAN PARTNER

LOCAL support for single pass Konica Minolta color engine

Industrial Inkjet (IIJ), distributor and technical support center for Konica Minolta IJ Technologies, has appointed Komi IJ in Hong Kong as its partner in Asia for ColourPrint, the company's single-pass print engine suited to a wide range of graphics applications. 'Komi IJ has been the official partner for Konica Minolta print heads in Asia since 2007,' commented John Corrall, managing director of IIJ. 'This agreement is a natural progression for all involved and provides customers in Asia with more options when looking to adopt digital inkjet technology in future developments.'

The agreement will lead to the opening of a dedicated training and demonstration center in Hong Kong, which will be equipped with ColourPrint and Konica Minolta monochrome print engines. Together with the appointment of a technical engineer, this will enable Komi IJ to offer locally based support and training.

The ColourPrint unit can be integrated into a customer's own production line or existing printer, which makes it suitable for a wide range of applications from web and sheetfed printing through to product decoration on 3D parts.

PAGO ACQUIRES ROMANIAN LABEL MANUFACTURER

The Pago Group, an international business specializing in the manufacture and marketing of labels and labeling technology, is acquiring Gebacolor, a former cooperation partner of Pago and a leading producer of self-adhesive labels in Romania. With the acquisition of Gebacolor, the Pago Group's position in Eastern Europe will be strengthened and its activities extended to include other national clients. In a second phase, the groundwork will be laid for cooperation with multinational clients in Eastern Europe.

In the area of labeling technology, components and complete systems to apply self-adhesive labels, the Pago Group is already represented with its own branch establishment in Romania. Pago Sisteme de Etichetare SRL in Arad manufactures labeling machines and serves the national market. This business area will remain unchanged in future. The Romanian label manufacturer will in future operate under the name of Pago Labelling Srl.

ARMOR CLAIMS SOLVENT-FREE TT BREAKTHROUGH

Armor has unveiled its SolFree solvent-free manufacturing process, which the company claims will 'revolutionize' the thermal transfer ribbon market. This follows significant investments in R&D and the equipment to ensure a high production capacity for the new ribbons.

Armor says its full wax ribbons range will benefit from SolFree, and these products will retain the same printing performance. The new production process will cause a significant reduction in Armor's carbon footprint.'This major step forward for the industry in environmental preservation, also represents a guarantee of long term availability of TTR, should local and/or international regulations impose some drastic regulations on solvent consumption at any time in the future,' says Olivier Moreau, product manager at Armor's industrial coding and printing division.

SMYTH NAMED 'BEST US WORKPLACE'

CONVERTER celebrated on criteria from work-life balance to recognition and rewards

Smyth Companies has been designated as 'Best of the Best' for 2009 by the 'Best Workplace in the Americas' program. The program is administered by Printing Industries of America (PIA) and awards are bestowed on companies that demonstrate exceptional practices in the area of human resources and employee relations.

PIA has identified eight human relations areas that employees consider when evaluating a current or prospective workplace for the program. These include management practices, work environment, training/development opportunities, financial security, work-life balance, recognition and rewards, health and wellness and workplace safety.

'Being recognized with this award publicly confirms what our company privately practices everyday,' said John Hickey, CEO of Smyth Companies. 'I am very proud of Smyth's employee focused culture, as it reflects what is truly meaningful to ownership and management at Smyth. All our stakeholders are rewarded for this focus.'

HP ANNOUNCES DIGITAL LABEL AWARD WINNERS

INDEPENDENT judges honor best in HP digital label printing

HP has announced the winners of the third annual HP Indigo Digital Labels and Packaging Contest, which recognizes customers from around the world for innovation in digital printing.

The contest witnessed significant growth in 2009 with more than 270 entries submitted – a 48 percent jump compared to last year. All submitted entries were produced on HP Indigo presses and were showcased in HP's exhibit at Labelexpo Europe in Brussels in September, while winners received their awards at a gala dinner during the show.

'Product brand owners, designers and label and packaging converters are growing in creative directions based on the outstanding quality and production flexibility HP Indigo offers,' said Alon Bar-Shany, vice president and general manager, Indigo division, HP. 'The end result is that the industry is seeing more and more top-quality labels and packaging work produced with digital – especially the winning entries showcased in this year's contest.'

Categories for the contest included label printing for wine, household, industrial, food, pharmaceutical, alcoholic beverage and nutraceutical products. In addition, the contest honored the best shrink sleeve entry and the best entry produced as a self-promotion of a converter's own capabilities.

Contest entries were judged by a panel of independent experts, including Paul Baker, principal scientist at Procter & Gamble Technical Centers; Paul Clayton, managing director of Royston Labels; Michael Fairley, director of strategic development for Tarsus' Label Group; Andy Thomas, group managing editor, Labels & Labeling; and Tony White of AWA Consulting.

Innovative Labeling Solutions, a US firm based in Hamilton, Ohio, took home three best-of-category prizes at the gala, plus four additional honors.

Category winners were: DB Tech, Korea (industrial labels, pharmaceutical labels); Forlabels, Greece (food product labels); Gold Coast Graphics, USA (wine labels); Innovative Labeling Solutions, USA (household product labels, neutraceutical labels, self-promotional work); Kalfany Süße Werbung, Germany (flexible packaging); Setprint Centro Tecnológico Digital, Brazil (health and beauty labels); Supa Stik Labels & Labeling Systems, Australia (alcoholic beverage labels); Traco Manufacturing, USA (shrink sleeve packaging).

In addition to these honors, judges presented awards to Bridge Publications, Do-It Corp, Dow Industries, Geostick, Label Solutions-Palero Impresores, Manufacturas Metálicas Canals, Osaka Sealing Printing, RFID n Print, Seiko, and Setprint Centro Tecnológico Digital in recognition of unique, high-quality entries those firms produced using HP Indigo technology.

INTELLIGENT CONTROL SYSTEM LAUNCHED BY MPS

ICONTROL system to be standard on MPS presses

MPS iControl panel

MPS has launched its iControl intelligent press interface, now available on all MPS press lines. iControl comprises a dial button combined with touch screen panels. After choosing the desired machine function, the setting figures are dialed with the button. During operation the operator gets full information from iControl printing station panels while different colors are glowing around the dial button, depending on the press status.

The touch screen display shows figures and graphs around all machine functions like register length, register width, pressure sleeve, pressure anilox,, and general machine settings like speed. When the operator wants to give new setting values, after touching the machine function he dials the button until the setting value is achieved and confirmed.

HOT OFF THE PRESS

A ROUND-UP OF THE LATEST GLOBAL LABEL STORIES

HARPER AND MARK ANDY SIGN DISTRIBUTION DEAL

HarperScientific, the printing and coating supplies division of anilox roll supplier Harper Corporation of America, has begun a partnership with Mark Andy, whereby the press manufacturer will distribute HarperScientific's full product line.

'At Mark Andy, we have long appreciated the proud background and contributions the Harper name has brought to printing and we look forward to a close working relationship in the years ahead,' said Andy Baer, vice president, customer service for Mark Andy.

Jim Harper, vice president of HarperScientific, said of Mark Andy: 'Through more than six decades they have been a pace-setter for what printing can and should represent in the marketplace.'

GERHARDT AND JET STRENGTHEN PARTNERSHIP

Gerhardt has strengthened its partnership with Jet Technologies, an Australia-based supplier of machinery to the narrow web market.

Jet Technologies operates sales offices and warehouses in Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth. 'With the success of Jet Technologies' sales in the magnetic cylinder and f exible die product range it made sense to extend this to the entire product portfolio, inclusive of products manufactured in Australia,' said a spokesperson for Gerhardt.

Jack Malki, director of Jet Technologies, said: 'The strategic alliance with Gerhardt has, in a short period of time, become one of the key partnerships for Jet Technologies and we recognized quickly that clients wanted to see the same approach across the entire range of Gerhardt products.'

Additional employees dedicated to the Gerhardt portfolio have been employed in the Sydney head office. Ian Sarney, who was previously employed as Gerhardt's sales manager in Asia Pacific, will play an integral role in the transition.

FLINT OPENS UK SERVICE CENTER

Flint Group Narrow Web has opened a new service center at the Flint Group UK site in Ruabon, North Wales. The company says that its customers will be able to profit from a stronger logistics team, as well as an enhanced customer service. 'By concentrating all back-up service functions in Ruabon, we will be able to offer an even stronger service to our customers,' explained Mark Sutton, commercial director Narrow Web UK.

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VIAPPIANI DEVELOPS TWO-FACED IML

Italy-based Viappiani has developed a double-face in-mold label for drinking cups. With this technology one design of the label is visible from the outside and another is visible from the inside of the cup, doubling the decoration surface and allowing different advertising messages on the two sides. The development was shown at the Fakuma 2009 trade fair in Germany in October, where 130,000 plastic cups with the double-face design were distributed during the show.

The labels are printed on a polystyrene substrate in order to generate a monocomponent labeled container which guarantees recyclability of both the production scrap and the used cup. The use of polystyrene also allows the crushing of the used cup into small pieces to reduce the dimensions of the waste to a minimum.

MPI INSTALLS TWO MARK ANDY P7S

MPI Label Systems, a label and packaging converter, has installed two new Mark Andy Performance Series P7 presses in its United States facilities.

The first installation is a 10-color, 17" (430 mm) water-based press with a final UV and has been running production since August. The second P7 is a 10-color, 17" (430 mm) combination UV- and water-based press with an embossing unit and hot foil cassette, along with an additional rail system that holds rotary screen, web turn bars and other value-added possibilities. This second press has been installed and running production since September. MPI, founded in 1968, has eight manufacturing facilities, 30 sales locations and more than 500 employees. It specializes in prime pressure sensitive labels, flexible packaging, RFID and automated labeling equipment, parts and service.

NILPETER SIGNS AS PRATI'S GERMAN DISTRIBUTOR

Prati has bolstered its European sales operation by signing a distribution agreement with Nilpeter. The partnership will see Nilpeter distribute Prati's label finishing machines in Germany, as well as provide technical and customer service support in the region.

'Prati's finishing machines complement our printing systems perfectly,' said Andreas Höfner, sales manager for Germany, Nilpeter.

Chiara Prati, sales director at Prati, added: 'Nilpeter has an excellent reputation for customer service and a large customer base in Germany. The new partnership means we're perfectly placed to develop new commercial opportunities and increase our market share in the territory.'

HOT OFF THE PRESS

A ROUND-UP OF THE LATEST GLOBAL LABEL STORIES

INDIAN CONVERTER HONORED WITH ENTREPRENEUR AWARD

Anjali Ramesh Deshpande, chairman and managing director, and Ramesh Deshpande of Indian label converter Renu Prints Private Limited, have been selected as winners of the Special Recognition National Award for Entrepreneurship in the medium-to-small manufacturing enterprises (MSME) category instituted by the Indian government.

The award function was held in August at Vigyan Bhavan, New Delhi, and the award presented by the government minister responsible in the presence of the prime minister. For more information on the company, visit its blog at: www.renuprints.blogspot.com

GSE APPOINTS IBERIAN AGENCIES

GSE Dispensing has appointed the Barcelona-based graphics industry distributor Ariangraf as its representative for Spain and Portugal. GSE's Spanish technical consultant, Wanderley Fàbregas, of Mataró-based Fàbregas Instalaciones, will also be available to support the new team.

FINAT SURVEY PREDICTS PS GROWTH IN 18 MONTHS

The latest FINAT climate index indicates that confidence is returning to the label industry, especially after the successful Labelexpo Europe. FINAT is expecting to see growth returning to self-adhesive labels within 18 months.

Commenting on the report, FINAT president Andrea Vimercati said it showed 'continued, but prudent' signs of recovery in the third quarter of 2009. 'The overall volume decrease on an annual basis, compared to Q3 2008, was limited to 1.7 percent, for the year to October. Our industry is back to the minus 5–10 percent range, after a disastrous double digit volume drop at the turn of the year.'

The third quarter of 2008 saw the first-ever loss of PS volume compared with a previous year – albeit by only one percent. FINAT expects the industry to show a further decline of two percent this year, followed by a static period next year and a return to modest growth from 2011. Annual growth rates over the next five years are forecast at 0.5 percent to one percent, closely following the growth in GDP.

Vimercati noted that at Labelexpo Europe 2009 in Brussels, the largest-ever number of equipment suppliers showcased their attractions and more than 40 percent of printers were expecting to invest in new equipment in 2010.

'The move to digital printing was a similarly hot topic. With a recent survey showing that 39 percent of European label printers see digital printing as their future, machine manufacturers are eager to meet the demand – 30 companies will be producing digital presses worldwide by 2010,' said Vimercati.

The move towards consolidation and rationalization, leading to the evolution of larger groups, is taking place slowly and the current world economic difficulties will contribute to that progress, said Vimercati. 'A survey late last year expected to see at least 100 companies would be subject to merger, acquisition or bankruptcy this year.' It has already happened in the labelstock market where 90 percent of Europe's output is now produced by ten companies, with the 'big three' accounting for 70 percent of the material used in self-adhesive label printing.

Looking at the key dynamics of the PS industry, Vimercati noted a flattening of the growth curve, a high penetration in key end-use markets, a slowing of innovation, declining margins and pressures on costs and a move to consolidation and rationalization. 'In short, self-adhesives have come of age.'

Given the nature of Europe, the printing picture varies region by region. 'The 'sophisticated' areas like the UK and Ireland, Scandinavia and the Western continental land mass, where self-adhesives are a well-established part of the labeling scene, are expected to see little growth over the next five years. The big areas of opportunity are eastern Europe (including Russia), central Europe and, less so, southern Europe, which are still developing the sophistication of their retail markets.'

A RANDOM INTERRUPTION

SURVIVING Breast Cancer with Laughter, Vodka, Smoothies and an Attitude. By Suzanne Zaccone

This book is a remarkable tribute to Suzanne Zaccone's tough minded struggle against breast cancer. Suzanne, together with her brother Bob, run one of North America's leading label converters, GSI Technologies, which they started 25 years ago.

In the course of describing how she 'loses her breast and fights to get it back', Suzanne reveals 'the secrets of cancer patients that are taboo and lost in translation.' *A Random Interruption* is equipped with a dictionary of the language of breast cancer and a list of provocative questions to ask doctors. World renowned plastic and reconstructive surgeon Dr David Song adds a medical perspective to the book with a 'Doctor's Corner.'

A Random Interruption is written with the wit and style that anyone who knows Suzanne will instantly recognize. All proceeds will go to the Breast Cancer Center at the University of Chicago.

Commenting on the book, Anne Ritke McCall, M.D., Edward Cancer Center, said, 'Between the lines is an important message that is relevant to all women. Suzanne took the time to research, ask questions, and take excellent care of herself—before, during and after her treatment. She radiates health from the inside out. Her story will help others to radiate their special health, too.'

GSI Technologies specializes in industrial applications and the production of medical electrodes, Smart Cards, RFID systems, and electroluminescent lamps. GSI Technologies has won the Tag and Label Manufacturers Institute Eugene Singer Award for Best Managed Companies multiple times. It has taken home the MIT Innovations Award, an IDTechEx Commercialization Award and was a Printing Impressions Top 400 Printer in 2008. Suzanne was the first female president of TLMI and is the current chairman of the board for GSI Technologies and DiTrolio Flexographic Institute.

To order the book online visit www.xlibris.com or www.amazon.com.

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SEMI-ROTARY
FLEXO EDM SHIPS

Rotocontrol has announced the general availability of the EDM200 semi-rotary, servo-driven UV flexo machine, debuted at Labelexpo Europe, which uses sleeve technology for both print and anilox cylinders and works with chambered doctor blade technology. The machine is designed to work mainly as an over-printer and has been specifically developed to provide economic production of short-runs and fast turnaround for labels, tickets and tags. With its insetting register control system it is possible to re-pass a previously die-cut and/or pre-printed web in absolute register, and due to the servo-driven, semi-rotary web advance mode the printing length is infinitely variable. 'The EDM200 provides a solution for label converters seeking finishing technology for high quality, but generally short label runs,' said Marco Aengenvoort, managing director of Rotocontrol. 'One of our clients produces wine labels for the largest and most picturesque wine regions in South Africa. Their decision to purchase the EDM200 was attributable to the high quality printing that this machine provides, as they manufacture artistic embossed wine labels that reflect the same caliber of the wineries in this renowned region.'

GALLERIA Vittorio Emanuele II, Milan

CTI GROUP ACQUIRES VIAPPIANI

CTI Invest, based in Austria, has acquired Viappiani Printing, a Milan, Italy-based printer and converter which specializes in in-mold labeling.

Viappiani produces labels for food containers like tubs, lids and buckets, as well as labels for the cosmetics and household goods industries (see page 16). The company's product portfolio ranges from one-side coated labels for bottles of mineral water and self-adhesive labels for cleaning products to sleeves and wrap-around labels for the food and beverage industry.

CTI Invest is a global company in the packaging and label industry with production sites in Canada, Spain, Colombia, Germany and now, through the acquisition of Viappiani, in Italy. 'We are very proud of our new acquisition Viappiani Printing, which is an innovative, customer-orientated and important player in the label market. It is our aim and commitment to grow the business of Viappiani Printing on a global basis,' said Christian Trierenberg, CEO of CTI Invest.

Giorgio Viappiani said: 'I am happy to have found a group like the one of Christian Trierenberg to pass this important baton. Handing over a family business with more than 80 years of history involves a lot of emotions and thoughts also regarding its future.

BOOK REVIEW

DIGITAL LABEL PRINTING

A 'How to' guide to technology, materials, markets and performance for the label converter. By Mike Fairley

Peter Renton, founder of Lightning Labels, America's first all-digital label printer (www.lightninglabels.com), reviews Mike Fairley's latest 'How to' guide.

Michael Fairley, known the world over as one of the most knowledgeable people in the label industry, has just written a new book about digital label printing. Wow. I wish I had this information when I started Lightning Labels back in 2002. Of course, back then most of the information and products mentioned in this book didn't exist.

This is jam packed full of useful content. If you are considering buying a digital label press, you have to read Chapter 2 which contains probably the most comprehensive review of digital label presses ever written.

Even though I follow developments in digital label printing closely, there were presses that Fairley reviewed that I had never heard of. It is very up to date, including new developments that occurred just earlier this year.

Like most of Fairley's books, the text is combined with many photos, charts and graphics that make the content easier to read. He even provides screen shots of software packages as well as plenty of label samples.

Now, in the interests of full disclosure, my partner Steve Smith has chatted with Mike Fairley several times about Lightning Labels at industry conferences and some information from their conversations has made it into his book. Check out Chapter 8 (page 74) for a brief description of our business model that Fairley used as an example of a label company using the internet in innovative ways. Regardless of that, I would still give this book a glowing review. It is the most thorough review ever undertaken of this narrow niche of the business world we call digital label printing.

The book can be purchased online at www.labelsandlabeling.com

LABELEXPOSURE

1. BOTTLEGREEN The new design of Bottlegreen's limited edition sparkling drink labels was chosen by an online vote on consumer websites and facebook.
The shrink sleeve was printed by CCL Decorative Sleeves on a UV flexo press. Ziggurat Brands, which designed the packaging, briefed CCL to print solid background colors and overprint them to achieve the vignette and provided color targets.

'CCL arranged a proof on press,' said senior flexographic repro operator Carl Dowle. 'The purpose of this was to have a representative of Bottlegreen attend to ensure their expectations were met. We worked together on the day by refining the color of the inks on press to achieve the targets. 'We had to overcome the problem of ink concentration on the bottle neck during shrinkage. We achieved a very good match by slightly lightening the ink to compensate for the darkening of inks when the sleeve is shrunk onto a high shrink area.'

2. CHILANO Chilano wine has been redesigned to take it into premium territory. Design agency Blackburn's said it toned down the colors of the 'C' icon to reflect the brand's increased price point.

Each varietal required its own 'C' incorporating different colors and patterns. 'We drew our inspiration from the highly distinctive Aztec culture, their textiles, ceramics and mosaics. Each 'C' becoming a unique and intricate 'work of art',' the agency said.

The labels were printed by Chilean Flexopacífico using inks from Water Ink. The top label has a water base varnish with matt finish and the bottom has a UV varnish with matt finish too.

3. UNANIME This label for Unanime wine was designed by Argentine SURe Brandesign. The visual effects were achieved using silkscreen printing, embossing and hot foiling.

4. POMP Beverage company Landkelterei Höhl has teamed up with ink supplier Sun Chemical and converter X-label to rebrand Pomp, a wine launched in 2002 that comprises a mixture of cider and sparkling Riesling. The redesigned label has contributed to a 23 percent growth in the product's turnover.

The name was changed to Pomp Classique and the logo redesigned. Sun Chemical provided its Solaris product range, while X-label produced three different versions of the new label. The final choice integrates four colors and two different varnishes. Apart from the three background colors (two different shades of orange and the violet in the Pomp logo), the label was printed using Sun Chemical's SolarFlex Nova Metallic. The label was coated with a gloss varnish and the Pomp logo added afterwards using a relief varnish from Sun Chemical's SolarScreen Whites range.

5

5 WINTER HOLIDAYS MACtac has supplied the pressure-sensitive adhesive label materials for more than 1.3 billion first-class US stamps for holidays.

The Winter Holidays stamp series was designed by artist Joseph Cudd with the direction of Richard Sheaff. The designs were sketched by hand then finished with a graphics tablet on a computer. They were printed by Banknote Corporation of America.

'The holidays are a time for sending warm wishes to family and friends,' said Allison Hazel, marketing manager, MACtac Printing Products. 'Supplying the adhesive for the Winter Holidays series allows MACtac to play a role in observing a season that celebrates joy and love for so many.'

6

6 ANIMAL MAGIC BSP Labels converted labels for the re-designed Clean 'n' Safe range of Johnson's Veterinary Products. They are printed with 4-color process or four colors plus a spot color on a Mark Andy UV-flexo press and then UV-varnished.

The initial order was for 480,000 labels over the seven different products in the range.

The labels had to fit the new bottle shape Johnson's had chosen from M&H Plastics.

BSP Labels MD Keith Gypps said: 'They wanted a clean, bright label to make an impact on the shelf. We worked with Johnson's artwork design house to make sure we came up with the required shape and that we could present it correctly on the web for application.'

7

7. CHRISTIAN AUDIGIER Sleever International received a Silver Pentaward for its production of fashion designer Christian Audigier's tattoo-inspired wine labels. Its Glassleeve range was used to reproduce the 360 degree complex artwork. Sleever says the material guarantees the decoration's integrity against shocks, scratches, rubbing and climatic changes.

Each sleeve features 9-color rotogravure enamel-cello printing. The Rosé Cuvée d'Or also has UV areas that catch the light in interesting ways in nightclubs.

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ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS

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SPEAR RECEIVES TLMI ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERSHIP AWARD

Spear has been recognized with the 2009 Environmental Leadership Award from the TLMI at its annual meeting in Scottsdale, Arizona. The company's SpearEarth program has led to a reduction of 5 million annual land-fill pounds (2500 tons) through utilizing thinner films, together with liner and matrix recycling programs that have eliminated over 13.5 million land-fill pounds annually. Spear has also reclaimed more than 3.5 million pounds of solvent and demonstrated total carbon emission savings of 9,250 tons annually through energy reduction and process improvement programs.

TLMI ADDS TWO COMPANIES TO LIFE PROGRAM

US converter The Label Printers (TLP) has chosen TLMI's Label Initiative For the Environment (LIFE) to guide the company's ongoing efforts to become 'greener'. Director of human resources and TLP's Illinois EPA compliance representative George Tommasi, the LIFE team leader, said: 'We decided that we wanted to explore an environmental program for The Label Printers because we wanted to make our existing green efforts more structured, focused, and visible. We looked at investing in a number of different environmental programs. One of the main reasons we chose LIFE is because it is designed for label converters and we felt that we would get better results from a program that came from people who understood the printing industry – specifically label printing.

'We need to look at what we have done to be a good environmental steward over the years, and then we can identify our LIFE goals, and how to accomplish and measure those goals. LIFE provides both a self audit and an external audit to help us identify areas that will allow us to reduce our environmental footprint, and lessen our environmental impact.' TLMI has partnered with public health and safety company NSF International to build the external audit.

The Label Printers, based in two facilities in Aurora, Illinois, was founded in 1967 and has customers in 25 countries.

Also awarded LIFE certification is UPM Mitsubishi Polyester Film. Frank Sablone, TLMI president, commented: 'I would like to congratulate Mitsubishi Polyester Film on their recent TLMI LIFE certification. The central objective in developing the LIFE initiative was to offer the association's members a credible and comprehensive program that addresses their sustainability requirements, and the opportunity to take their LIFE certification to their own customer base.

TORRASPAPEL PUBLISHES NEW ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT

SIGNIFICANT progress reported by paper manufacturer

Torraspapel, part of the Lecta Group, has published a new environmental report, which details the progress of the company's environmental initiatives and establishes new objectives for sustainable practices. The report has been published biannually since 2005.

Since 2002, Torraspapel has earmarked investments of more than 30 million euros for environmental objectives. During the last two years, the company has focused on acquiring environmental management certification for its mills in accordance with standards such as those established by European EMAS regulations, as well as obtaining PEFC and FSC chain-of-custody certifications which guarantee the sustainable origin of the wood used in the manufacturing of paper. In addition, Torraspapel has sought to reduce the environmental impact of its activities by eliminating the use of fuel-oil, improving process energy efficiency, reducing water disposal and improving effluent quality, eliminating odors at the Zaragoza, Spain, cellulose-pulp production plant, and reducing the amount of waste sent to disposal sites.

Torraspapel also collaborates in joint projects with NGOs and organizations dedicated to forest preservation, participates in and sponsors activities to support education and professional training in the graphic arts, and, since 2004, has adhered to the United Nations Global Compact, with a yearly progress report detailing advances made in the areas of Human Rights, Labor, the Environment, and the Fight against Corruption.

The complete version of Torraspapel's 2008 Environmental Report can be downloaded in Spanish, English and French at www.torraspapel.com.

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

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Jakob Landberg
Sales & Marketing Director

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NEW PRODUCTS

1 NARROW WEB CYLINDER STORAGE SYSTEM
SIMEC GROUP

Simec Group has introduced a new version of its Revolver handling and storage system, designed for narrow web cylinders.

The Revolver has a dual function, allowing the transfer of cylinders from the printing unit to the cleaning system and afterwards to the warehouse, while also serving as a storage unit. The system is designed to move the rollers with the utmost care in order to avoid damage.

Revolver can be customized with a company's logo and colors and is supplied either ready for use or, upon request, in a do-it-yourself version, with mounting kit, without external shell and with the cylinders on sight. This version is more economical due to the reduced transport costs. 'With the Revolver system for narrow web cylinders, we aim at supplying printers and manufacturers in the label sector with a solution to reduce production costs and to improve print quality,' said Emilio Della Torre, general manager of Simec.

2 PORTABLE FLEXO PROOFING SYSTEM
HARPERSCIENTIFIC

HarperScientific, the printing and coating supplies division of anilox roll supplier Harper Corporation of America, has launched the Phantom QD portable proofing system. The new Phantom QD is equipped with its own pressure loading system. Features include a magnetic-loaded doctor blade, quick-change anilox and rubber rollers and roller interchangeability with Echocel Junior and Phantom hand proofers. The new system requires no compressed air or electricity for operation.

'We developed the Phantom QD drawdown proofing system as an advancement that qualifies as both an exciting innovation and a practical solution,' said Jim Harper, vice president of HarperScientific.

3 UV FLEXO INK SERIES
FLINT GROUP NARROW WEB

Flint Group Narrow Web has launched Flexocure Force. The new UV flexo ink is claimed to offer easier handling due to lower viscosity and no foaming, greater adhesion to a wider range of substrates, as well as improved performance on many variable printing techniques.

Flint Group's product manager for UV inks, Par Olsson, said: 'With regards to results from the Beta test of Flexocure Force, we did get an overwhelmingly positive response with 100 percent of the customer feedback reporting clear improved properties from printability and adhesion to press performance. Obviously we are very pleased that we have managed to exceed the ambitious target of improving on all of the identified properties.'

TRANSPARENT HOLOGRAM SEAL
SCHREINER MEDIPHARM

Schreiner MediPharm, a Germany-based provider of pharmaceutical labeling products, has developed a transparent hologram seal that provides evidence of tampering and counterfeiting to ensure the safety of packaged pharmaceutical products. The seal is fixed with a heavy duty adhesive and any attempts to peel it off would damage the packaging surface. Also, the seal features a 2D single–image design and dynamic special effects that would make counterfeiting especially difficult.

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4 PHARMA VERIFICATION SYSTEM
VIPCOLOR TECHNOLOGIES

VIPColor Technologies has created a pharmaceutical system claimed to reduce medical errors through the use of a VIPColor 485e digital printer linked to dedicated software. The application permits the pharmacist to compare the actual medication against a color image of the product. The patient can also verify if the image on the label matches the medication in the container and any difference between the two can immediately be identified. The combined technologies of printer and software can be used by any hospital or pharmacy.

The software can be programmed to access databases and retrieve and print variable data, such as prescription and record numbers, patient names and personal information. In addition data such as dispensing date, quantity, frequency and duration of medication can also be included along with safety instructions and warning signs. The result is full color labels showing the appearance of the medication that can be used to cross match the product, complete with all the necessary text and data required.

'We have already supplied twenty VIPColor 485e printers for this application to hospitals in Taiwan,' said Dr Jules Farkas of VIPColor Europe. 'Major hospitals in the region are transitioning to color in order to print labels that can be compared against the medication. Hospitals and pharmacies can print on label blanks the same day that they are required avoiding the problems, costs and waste associated with traditional pre-printed labels. More importantly, this application is enabling them to reduce medication errors and save lives.'

5 R990 GRAVURE PRESS
CERUTTI

Italian gravure press manufacturer Cerutti has launched the R990 press, dedicated to the short run market and designed to satisfy the needs of customers requiring quick job change-over and high printing quality. The machine reportedly 'received very encouraging feedback from the label printing community' when a unit was demonstrated at Labelexpo.

New features include automated cylinder loading, automated wash-up and an innovative layout for the drying hoods.

Labelexpo Europe was the first time Cerutti has targeted a press specifically at label converters. 'The number of promising contacts was high, and the fair for Cerutti has been an important occasion to strengthen its interest in this highly dynamic market,' said the company in a statement.

Hot melt under pressure

AN APPLICATION system using registered PS adhesive strips applied by the converter could replace hot melt roll-fed label applicators and create new opportunities for converters, suppliers and end users. Andy Thomas reports

Through radically new engineering technology Italian company PE Labellers has eliminated the need for hot melt adhesive with an applicator system that uses strips of pressure-sensitive adhesive applied by the converter to roll-fed label films.

Their new Roll Adhesleeve system is designed to use roll-fed label films which are pre-glued in register during the reel printing/conversion process. By taking away hot melt glue from the applicator, the company says the applied cost per label is greatly reduced and there are significant environmental benefits.

As well as handling transparent or white film, the same Adhesleeve applicator can handle heat-shrinkable films such as the ExxonMobil ROSO by the simple addition of a heat tunnel. A UV curing unit is no longer necessary.

'The drawbacks with hot melt applicators are well known,' says Rob Carter, film industry consultant to PE Labelling. 'One of the main operational issues is the downtime resulting from the need to clean the machine during and at the end of shifts. Glue contamination on the vacuum drum requires cleaning with solvents. In addition, there are glue feeding problems, glue tanks have to be cleaned, glue scrapers replaced, and glue tank and rollers overhauled.'

In terms of working environment, the need to heat the hot melt glue to temperatures up to 150degC creates oily fumes which need to be removed. 'There are significant energy

'TRIBLOC' system, developed in conjunction with SIPA and Berchi, integrating a PE Labellers' Roll Adhesleeve two station label applicator with a bottle blower and filler/capper

requirements to heat the glue, run the re-circulating glue pumps, and for the motors for the fume suction hood,' continues Carter.

'Operators on hot melt systems require a high level of training to optimize glue usage, and to adjust the cutting system for varying film thickness,' says Carter. 'The normal cutting system on those machines involves interaction between fixed and rotary blades, and it can take 4-6 hours when replacing and adjusting blades.'

The cutting system on the Adhesleeve labeler, by contrast, uses one cylinder to both cut and apply the labels. In operation, film from the reel is held on the cylinder, the system automatically locates where the rotary blades need to cut the web, and the label is then applied directly to the container.

The key advantages over the fixed/rotary blade system are that the cutting unit no longer has to be adjusted for different film thicknesses, and the number of divisions in the application cylinder can be rapidly changed to alter the label length without replacing or modifying the labeling unit. In addition there are no friction-generated changes in ambient temperature, no static, and no worn out blades, while labeling speed is no longer affected by label height. When the blades do need to be changed, the operation takes about ten minutes – and without tools or the need for further adjustments.

After the labels have been applied to the containers, there are no longer downstream problems created by glue traces on the label overlap.

The Adhesleeve web transport and tensioning system is designed specifically for thin films, allowing the end user to take full economic advantage of down-gauging to higher yield label substrates. Adhesleeve's minimum film thickness for transparent BOPP is 20 microns against 35 microns on typical hot melt systems. This allows 70 percent more labels to be carried on a reel for 1.5L and 0.5L bottle sizes – 35,000 and 47,000 respectively – increasing the efficiency of the label converting and application process, with the associated environmental benefit of raw material savings.

The efficiencies of the Roll Adhesleeve system make it exceptionally fast, with production speeds, according to Carter – dependent on container size and shape – up to at least 1,000 bottles per minute. Additionally, the machine can be stopped with bottles still in the carousel and re-started without emptying and cleaningthe machine.

THE ROLL ADHESLEEVE applicator system in operation. The rotary cutting blade locates the gap between the PS adhesive strips, cuts and applies the roll label to the bottle in one operation

THE SAME ADHESLEEVE APPLICATOR can handle shrinkable roll-fed films without the need of an additional UV station

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WORKING WITH CONVERTERS

Rob Carter has been tasked with helping label converters meet the technical requirements of the Adhesleeve system. Accredited converters will be added to a list available to end users who adopt Adhesleeve labeling.

Carter is well qualified for the task, having pioneered the international use of single web BOPP roll-fed labeling, conceived and led the development and introduction of Exxon Mobil's ROSO films, and with a long history of key roles in other major film producers like Hoechst and AET.

"The main technical requirement for Adhesleeve compatible label reels is to lay down in register a strip of acrylic PS adhesive to a specific dry weight"

For converters, the main technical requirement for Adhesleeve compatible label reels is to lay down in register a strip of acrylic PS adhesive to a specific dry weight using, normally, a gravure cylinder. This can be achieved on- or off-line. Another key requirement is the ability of the press to handle films down to 20 microns.

The reverse-printed transparent OPP label reel – whether shrink or non-shrink - does not require any release on the unprinted exterior surface. The white opaque label reel – which is surface printed – has a release lacquer applied over the ink to prevent the adhesive from sticking, either in the reel, or during the unwind.

There are already several accredited European converters, and Carter is currently working with a number of others internationally in connection with Adhesleeve labelers destined for delivery to new customers.

Depending on the converter's level of experience, and available machinery, the process of accreditation can take anything from a few weeks to a couple of months.

Rob Carter believes that this new technology could also open up major opportunities for narrow web converters. 'Their experience of handling PS adhesives and inline processing makes them ideally placed to take advantage of the opportunities Adhesleeve affords.'

They would require modular servo presses able to handle ultra-thin unsupported film, potentially also with a gravure station as the last unit on the press.

Part of Carter's excitement about the Roll Adhesleeve system is the further opportunities it will open up, not only for converters, but also for films and converting systems manufacturers.

'Adhesleeve technology affords films producers an extra impetus to refine or develop, test and introduce new products to reduce the costs of the label reels. Printing machine manufacturers have a unique opportunity to create new machinery encompassing the application of the adhesive in register during the converting process, inline without production slowdowns.'

An additional environmental benefit is that there is no hot melt to contaminate the label. The Roll Adhesleeve system utilizes recyclable acrylic adhesives, meaning the label can be fully recycled together with the bottle and cap.

The introduction of Adhesleeve in North America could facilitate change in the widespread use of laminates for roll-fed labeling applications. 'While single webs have always been the European norm, I see particular opportunities in North and South America to substitute roll-fed laminates by single web films and dramatically reduce the cost of the labels,' says Carter.

USER REPORT

With PE Labellers' Roll Adhesleeve now being rolled out as a commercial system, what are the experiences of early adopters?

The Senoble group in Spain was a development partner, installing its first machine two years ago for shrinkable film applications. Jose Pinto, performance and technical monitoring manager, says he is achieving 'an application and quality level that is very close to that of a sleeve, moreover with an economic advantage in the cost of consumables.' Today the company has two additional similar machines installed in its facility in France that are working in tandem at 60,000 bottles per hour.

The Italian Spumador Group installed a Roll-Adhesleeve machine at its plant in Spinone al Lago in April. Cristian Ducoli, value engineer at Spumador, says the labeler does not have to be stopped during production. 'All we need to do is dust off the small amount of powder left by the friction of the labels.'

Ducoli says that no cutting blade changeover has been necessary since production started. He has simulated a change, which took 20 minutes for four cutting blades. 'After the changeover, no adjustments need to be done.'

His operators were able to run the machine one week after installation. 'Considering the absence of ordinary maintenance, the high reliability and the high level of cleanliness with the new machine, we cannot help but be fully satisfied with our choice.'

A 'Tribloc' system, developed in conjunction with SIPA and Berchi, integrating a PE Labellers' Roll Adhesleeve two station label applicator with a bottle blower and filler/capper was recently demonstrated at the Munich Drinktec. The whole line sits in a compact, 70 sqm footprint, and the labeling stations work without slowing the line.

PE Labellers recently ramped up production capacity with the opening of a new plant in Italy. The company is already a major global supplier of applicator systems, with over 6,000 machine installations worldwide.

A typical application for Adhesleeve in the mineral water segment

Die suppliers show flexibility

GLOBAL SUPPLIERS are pushing flexible die technology into areas previously the preserve of solid tooling, while handling challenges converting thinner gauge film liners. Andy Thomas reports

DIE SYSTEMS

Before looking in more detail at current die technology developments, it is worth noting the launch by leading player Kocher + Beck of the company's next-generation die cutting module. Responding to the reduction in run lengths in the narrow web sector – necessitating a high number of job changes per shift – the company's new module features two stations to allow for off-line preparation of the next job. The stations can be slid rapidly in and out of the press unit.

The Kocher + Beck development demonstrates how die manufacturers have had to respond to a far more challenging production environment in narrow web print shops. Another example - recent R&D efforts have led to a new range of coating technologies to handle abrasive substrates previously the preserve of solid dies.

RotoMetrics, long a solid tooling specialist, typifies this trend with the launch of its FlexPremier technology, designed for longer die life on abrasive materials such as thermal transfer labels. Gerhardt has launched three new coated dies for extended use, high abrasion and non-stick applications, while Bunting Magnetics has launched two long-life flexible die coatings, Diamond and Black Diamond. 'These coatings allow our flexible dies to run four times longer than ordinary dies,' claims 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.

Israeli company Suron now has its NHT Hardened Gold Die, with a new coating designed to handle tough and abrasive stocks. Dies are also being developed to handle the new generation of thin film laminates. RotoMetrics new AccuFlex dies, for example, are engineered to convert material on thin film liners with calipers of 30 microns or less. Electro Optic is now marketing a die claimed able to handle liner materials down to 20μ thickness.

Re-sharpening is a critical issue, and a recent development is Wink's XtraCut anti-ageing system, where flexible dies are re-sharpened automatically by a new, patent-pending process. The repair is claimed to be within a tolerance of +/- 2 microns.

One of the most exciting developments at Labelexpo Europe in September, was the simultaneous launch by Gerhardt and wink of rotary cutters which combine the features of a solid and magnetic die. The design matches air holes cut through the flexible die with

TOUGHER coatings on f exible dies shown by Gerhardt at Labelexpo Asia

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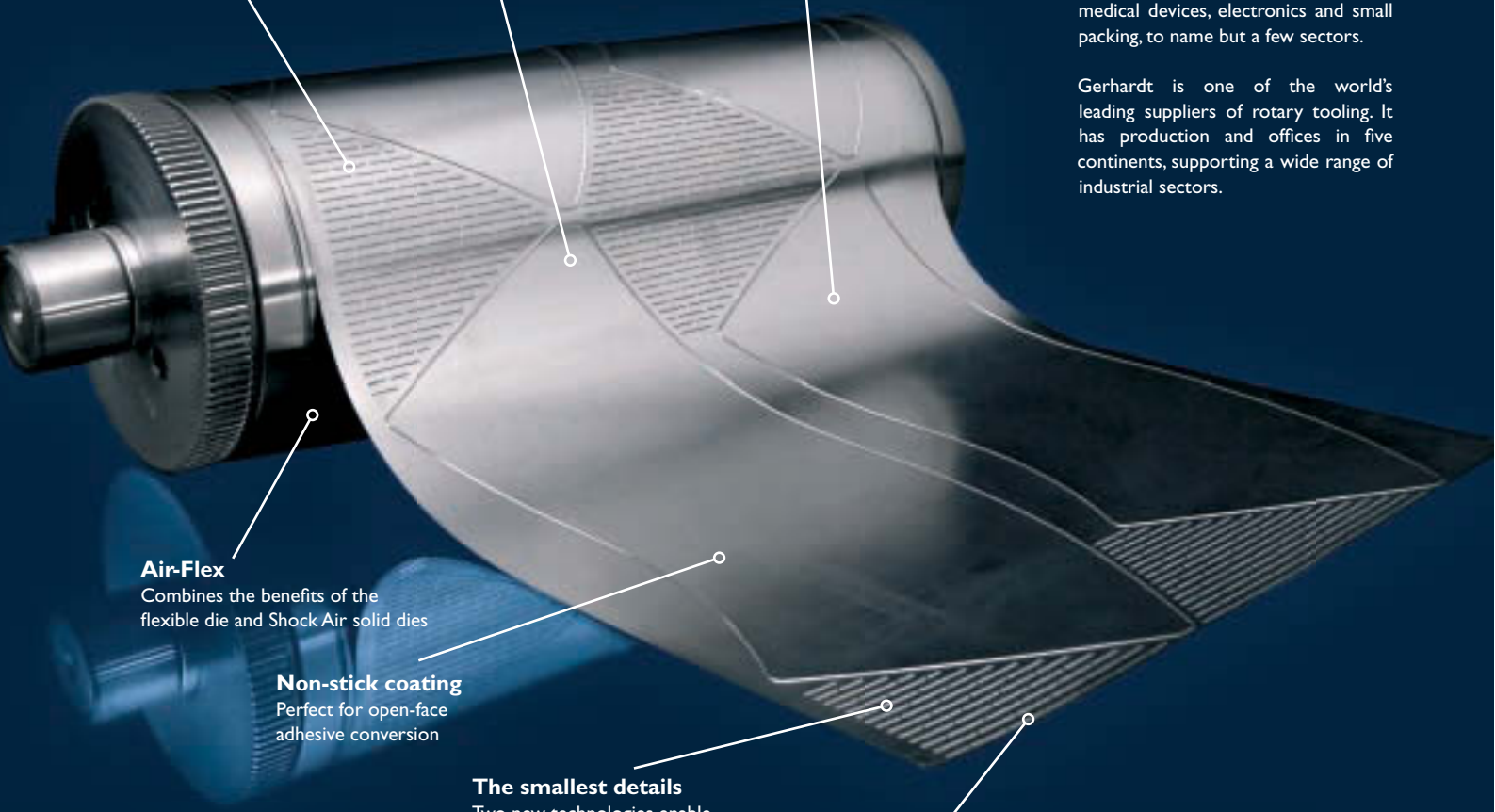

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KOCHER + Beck has increased UK production capacity

AN example of a specialist die application from wink

NEW Lartec dies create short runs of textured substrates

SCHOBER IML die cutting and stacking system

air passage holes on the surface of the magnetic cylinder. Cut-out waste is ejected through the aligned holes and carried away by a suction funnel. The systems are marketed as cost-effective and time-saving alternatives to solid air dies, particularly for long run jobs.

Gerhardt calls its system Shock Air, and points out that efficient removal of the waste also provides higher cutting tolerances. Wink's variant is called FlexAir, and is available with all wink's standard finishings, including laser, MC and non-stick.

BEYOND PS LABELS

Of course, it is not only labels where developments in dies are taking place. There is the whole area of adhesive or non-adhesive die cut parts. Gerhardt, for example, recently launched its High Blade flexible dies, able to convert up to 5mm material for medical products, booklet labels and more, while its Continuous Cutting Line dies, through 45 degree overlapping, wrap entirely around a solid image to produce a no-break cut.

RotoMetrics is targeting these more specialist die cutting applications with the launch of a heavy duty die station designed for presses converting folding cartons, blister boards and tickets - as well as 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.

In-mold labels is an area which presents great challenges for die cutting and stacking. Schober's RSM 520-MSV, launched at Labelexpo, unwinds label rolls, die-cuts labels, counts, stacks and delivers labels, and rewinds waste matrix under tension control. Three different stacking devices are included: M stack for very shorts runs, S stack for long runs and V stack for very large products – making the RSM 520-MSV suitable for a variety of in-mold labeling applications.

An interesting development by Spanish-based Lartec, are the company's Art & Cut die 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 economical for converters to order large quantities of pre-textured material.

Along with these technology developments, die manufacturers are making it easier for a global converter base to order and track their products on-line. Wink recently unveiled a more sophisticated on-line portal, mywink.net, which includes a preview function and plausibility checks, file upload, order tracking and searchable secure archives.

Finally, in a market which seems saturated by high quality tool suppliers, it seems there is still room for new entrants. Lieben Dies is a South African company which recently launched a European operation with after sales support and re-sharpening through its agent Mario Zearo.

ENCAPSULATED OIL

RotoMetrics is now distributing 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.

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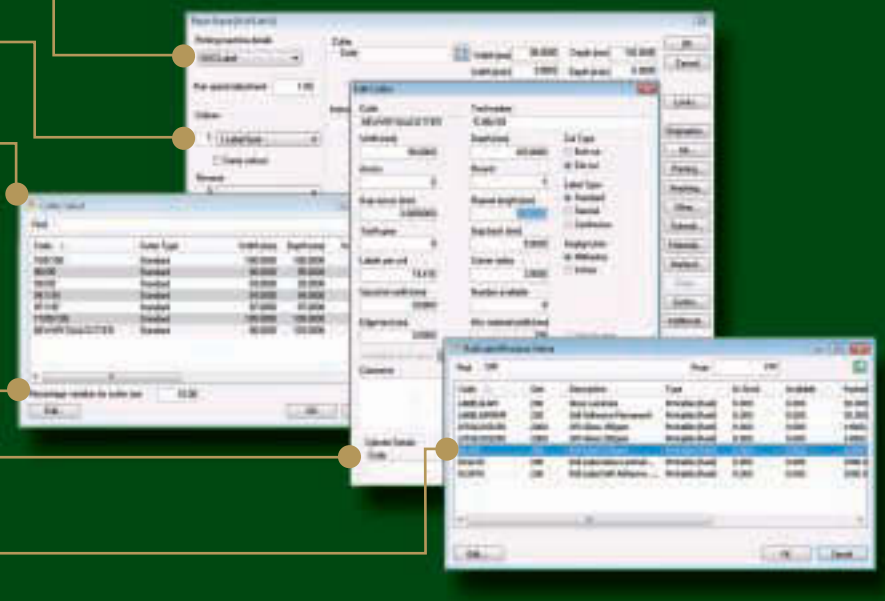

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NEW Nilpeter FG

The Printing Plant

WITH the purchase of a new Nilpeter FG-line press, The Printing Plant is looking to pass on the benefits, along with an advanced food safety solution, to its customers. Danielle Jerschefske reports

The competition is fierce in a city with as high a concentration of label industry players as Cincinnati, Ohio, the international headquarters for the likes of Procter & Gamble and the Kroger Co. The Printing Plant is a label converter that finds success in producing complex coupons and other specialty products for large grocery retailers and international fast food chains. With the recession lifting, a new Nilpeter FG-line press installed, and advanced ink technology to be integrated into its food packaging labels next year, the converter looks set to achieve significant growth.

The Printing Plant was purchased by its parent company Technicraft (now Tech/III, Inc.), an offset printer, from The Kroger Co in 1979. At the time The Printing Plant was capable of a number of printing process, but has since been developed into an entirely flexographic business. Owner James O'Connor creates a family-like atmosphere and is keen to invest for the future.

SPECIALIST applications on FB3300

The company operates out of a 37,000 sq ft facility. Forty-five employees work over two shifts, four days a week. Seventy-five percent of the company's business comes from specialty markets, and the 10-color 16in Nilpeter FG-line press will allow the company to expand this offering, while delivering improved productivity and increased capacity.

The Printing Plant needed a wider web press so it could capture business such as shrink sleeves, bags and pouches that are profitable only with wider machines. All of the other presses on the shop floor are 10in wide. 'We were finding it difficult to go after certain markets with narrow web,' explains Tod Leonard, vice president. 'There is a lot more opportunity with the wider width press. Prior to the investment we were forced to turn away a lot of business that we just couldn't run.' Many of the converter's current customers are meanwhile requesting more complicated work, which requires more advanced machinery with greater flexibility.

The FG press is specified to allow The Printing Plant to expand its film mix. The line includes a corona treater, a GEW e-brick UV system supporting eight units and the Nilpeter CC1 auto-registration system, which delivers a tolerance of .003in. 'There is very little movement with this machine,' explains Terry Glaser, production manager. 'It pretty much holds registration, and combined with the re-registration feature and multiple servo motors to hold tension, we can run two passes inline at high speeds.'

The first work completed on the new press was a kid's sticker

TERRY Glaser, Tod Leonard, James O'Conner, Bob Howe

promotional job using card stock and PS material. The card stock was printed with 4 colors and turned. A release coating was printed on the card stock, then the PS was delaminated and laminated onto the card stock. Lastly the PS was printed 4-CP, die-cut and sheeted.

The converter is extremely pleased with the quality as well. 'Tension control technology has improved so much in recent years that we are producing tighter, better shaped dots, and can run higher line screen print from 150 – 200lpi,' explains production controller Bob Howe.

INVEST FOR PROFIT

Maintaining profitability has been a rising challenge for The Printing Plant, like many others in the industry. Leonard says: 'The price pressures are intense and we are often not able to pass along price increases. It has become imperative that we make our internal operations more efficient. The press is part of this. By reducing set up, changeover time, and waste we'll be able to minimize some of the pressures eating into our profits.'

The FG press is matched with a KTI turret rewinder, and each press has a two-man crew. The assistant helps the operator run the turret rewinders and prepares work for the next run. Efficiencies have improved with this team-based system, which reduces down time.

Looking for new ways to add value, The Printing Plant has now formed a strategic alliance with an 'intelligent ink' manufacturer which has designed a cost-effective environmental monitoring system. Using an IWA thermochromatic ink combined with a barcode, the system indicates when products have breached programmed temperature thresholds. The converter discovered this technology when it was first shown at Labelexpo Americas in 2008.

'This will have a major impact on perishable food labeling,' Leonard says. 'This ink defines smart. It tells you when expired food breached set parameters, and reports it for you. It's very impressive, measuring the time and temperature relationship. Retailers are looking for a price effective way to monitor food safety and we think we have found the solution.'

By February of 2010 the activation system will be in place and The Printing Plant will be operational with this innovative technology.

NICHE PRODUCTION

The Printing Plant uses a 10-color Nilpeter FB-line with a semi-rotary module and re-registration unit to produce many of its most complex coupons. Variable data work required with these orders is applied using a Digital Print Inc. inkjet system with three print heads that cover the width of the press. 'There is lots of VIP business out there that we intend to capture over the coming years,' Leonard says.

The Printing Plant did look into digital options prior to purchasing the FG, but felt that the technology did not fit into its business plan. Leonard explains: 'There are many advantages to digital and there is certainly a place for digital within our business, but it is not the right time for us to invest.'

AWARDS

The Printing Plant has won two PIANKO (Printing Industries of America serving Northern Kentucky and Ohio) Printing Excellence Awards: a Pianko gold award for M&M's Homestyle Cookie coupon, printed for the Kroger Company, and a Pianko bronze award for the 'save $1 Now' folded coupon, printed for Stephen Gould Corporation.

GREEN

Much has been done around the plant to reduce energy consumption. A new roof was installed last year for better insulation. The light fixtures have been switched from T12 to the T8 and a new air circulation system was put in. Leonard says: 'We're doing these things to be green, but also to lower costs and increase efficiencies.' The converter will look into SFI certification in 2010. And despite not being a direct supplier to Wal-Mart, the Printing Plant will take the test for the scorecard to benchmark itself against the competition.

The Printing Plant likes the idea of the inline hybrid technology and also likes the efficiencies found with the 7-color process option.

In addition to expansion into the new film markets, The Printing Plant will continue to drive deeper into the unique areas that it already plays in. From the company's extensive experience in producing intricate coupons, for example, the converter produces 'table art', used as a marketing tool by a large fast food chain. With a micro-encapsulated, releasable adhesive, the table art has become a valuable sales tool for brand promotions.

The company has taken this experience a step further with its patented 'Peel & Learn' worksheets for children. These worksheets are much like a bingo board with pull-able tabs that reveal educational messages for kids.

The converter also works with varnishes and unique inks to bring custom, non-traditional solutions to its customers. It has recently found a winner with a Soft Touch varnish that gives a substrate a fuzzy feel. Combined with something catchy like an odor-releasing ink, the ability of these complementary technologies to stimulate the consumer is endless.

The Printing Plant has taken advantage of long industrial experience and strong management skills to develop a platform for growth – possibly including an entirely new way of labeling perishable foods.

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OMET Varyf ex at Clemson University

Clemson showcases Omet Innovator seminar

ITALIAN press manufacturer Omet has hosted its first Innovator Seminar series in the Sonoco Institute of Packaging Design and Graphics at Clemson University. Danielle Jerschefske reports

Omet's recent Innovator seminar at Clemson University was designed to highlight how new technologies can impact a converter's business to make it more profitable.

Steve Leibin, Omet sales manager for Matik says: 'We are very excited to be collaborating with Clemson to advance technology and to develop the industry. It's great that our customers will have the opportunity to problem solve at the school, working together with the institution to achieve better print. This will ensure the success of flexo in the future.'

"Clemson University is using its Omet Varyflex to conduct valuable research on extended gamut printing and printed electronics – including lighting and sensory printing"

'Flexo is more than just decorating,' explains Chip Tonkin, director of the Sonoco Institute of Packaging Design and Graphics at Clemson. 'It is a manufacturing process.' Clemson University is using its 7-color 21in Omet Varyflex to conduct valuable research on extended gamut printing, printed electronics - including lighting and sensory printing - sustainable materials and more.

At this first seminar, sponsoring suppliers presented on a variety of topics, each stressing the need to collaborate. On the second day attendees were able to apply what they learned in the press room and EskoArtwork computer lab. The school's Varyflex ran four demos: 1 – 4CP + 2 spot, 2 – 4CP + 2 spot, 3 – 7CP, 4 – film. The first three demos were completed on carton stock. The changeover between demo 3 and 4 showed attendees the press' ability to quickly change between two very different gauges of substrates.

CLEMSON'S PRESS DETAILS

The Omet Varyflex, first launched in 2001 and now in its third generation, is a gearless, shaftless sleeve press that can handle 12–33in repeat lengths. The press has a 32in repeat chill drum for multi-substrate flexibility and a donated GEW UV e-brick system with units for each station. There is also hot air drying units for each print head.

The Varyflex has a pre-registration system with digital recall for print consistency. Quick changeovers are possible with the slide-out ink unit cassette systems that allow for simple anilox changes. Once cassettes have been changed, the press automatically finds the zero position, slides the sleeves to the appropriate point, adjusts the impression settings, and recalls the tension settings. The tension control system automatically calculates the details of the chosen substrate.

The gamut of repeat changes is possible because of the Cam System on each unit. The Cams allow for precise impression and help even out the anilox pressure adjustment. A new gravure unit has given the university the opportunity to conduct more advanced research on printed electronics.

'The key to having our press at Clemson is to support our current customers and help them make their production

CLEMSON'S Omet Varyf ex has a 32in repeat chill drum for multi-substrate f exibility and a donated GEW UV e-brick system at each station

QUICK changeovers are possible with the slide-out ink unit cassette systems that allow for simple anilox changes

more profitable,' Leibin says. 'At Clemson our customers will be able to complete development work. They'll also have the ability to hire Clemson to train their operators at the Institute.'

Having a press at the university is also critical to establishing partnerships to promote Omet equipment. The company offers both sales and parts support in North America and will use the Sonoco Institute as its North America demo facility. It now has an electronic engineer located in the States to support the maintenance of the electronics and provide timely troubleshooting.

SUPPLIER COLLABORATION

ANILOX ROLLS

Tony Donato and Alex James from Harper Corporation spoke on the importance of selecting the right anilox to produce high quality print. The angle of the cell, the cell capacity and the number of cells per inch all must be taken into account when making a selection.

The trihelical anilox shape was described as best for laying down thick layers of ink. And it was pointed out that a 30 degree – hex channel – anilox cell is best for high viscose inks because it allows ink to spread out and does not trap in the air. 'It offers a more linear flow of ink into cells and helps push the ink out onto the substrate,' Donato explains. The 45 degree diamond shaped cell was said to be best for dispensing metallic and specialty inks while the 60 degree anilox is what was recommended for most flexographic work.

With each of these cell shapes there is a different volume (measured in billion cubic microns, bcm) and different numbers of cells per inch (CPI). 'You have to narrow down how each variable affects the print,' adds James. The supplier recommends a ratio of 6 to 1 anilox to polymer as a rule.

A scratch in a roll, dents or unclean cells can greatly affect the outcome of a job. Because ink volume is what gives the color match, Harper stresses the importance of cleaning anilox rolls, especially with solvent- and water-based inks. 'There can be a difference of .82 bcm between a clean and unclean anilox roll.'

Printers have the opportunity at the Institute to test new anilox cell shapes and volumes on an advanced press that's compatible with a variety of substrates. 'It's great that the industry has access to this facility. With higher end machines like the Omet, you can really push the limits of flexo,' says James.

The pair finished with a demonstration of Harper's new QC Phantom Proofer, a hand held pull down proofer with pressure gauges for increased consistency. Yet even with a proper anilox selection process, Donato and James stressed the importance of QC, especially on press. They said that many customers work with Harper to set up their own system while others prefer to simply mimic the Harper system.

CHANGING the print cylinder

ULTRA THIN PLATES

Peter Fronczkiewicz from the Flint Group discussed the company's ultra thin .030in plates that are washed down to polymer. He generalized that in North America printers mostly use .067in thick plates while European printers traditionally use .045in plates.

The Flint Group has found success with thin plates recently because of the progression of temperature control in the drying process and the higher quality exposure units that are available.

Fronczkiewicz explained that one of the benefits of using a thinner plate is the waste reduction. Since the raw plates are about half the weight, it's possible to ship many more in each box. Finished plates weigh about one third of the mass of thicker plates. Printers can also find productivity improvement since the exposure time is cut by over half with the ultra thin plates as compared to the time required for .067in plates.

The floor consistency of these ultra thin plates is said to be 0.001in (25.4μm) thick and they are found to be more flexible than .045in thick plates. 'There is surface stretch so there is less distortion, giving a

OMET Varyf ex at Clemson

more even print,' Fronczkiewicz explains.

He added that thin plates have the largest effect on highlight and midtones because with thinner plates there is a dot gain decrease. When making the change from thicker plates to the ultra thin plates it is recommended to use print sleeves. To successfully make the transition to ultra thin plates the difference in plate thickness must be made using a harder tape to build it back up (which does not increase dot gain).

PRE-PRESS

EskoArtwork color consultant Mark Samworth discussed color matching with the group and briefly described the software provider's new Equinox system. Equinox has been developed to support extended gamut process printing. Within the packaging industry, 7-color is gaining speed quickly. 'Quality and economics are the biggest things driving 7-color process forward,' Samworth says. 'Our goal is to make it easy to do 7 color process.'

Working with expanded gamut the color gamut is wider, but it is much more difficult to reproduce spot colors. Still, printers that have implemented this process have found pre-press to be less expensive and have found great productivity improvements in ganging jobs, reducing makeready by almost two-thirds.

EskoArtwork has built 7-color support into its optimal vector & image conversion systems. It uses different algorithms for reproduced versus spot colors and matches colors with tint builds. It is working with Clemson to build standard profiles for 7-color with a user adjustable gamut expansion.

Most notable was Samworth's introduction of a new way of looking at color matching. He says: 'Do not match print to the original, rather match print to the preferred reproduction. When looking at lightness, hue and chromo, people like the look of print when the colors are further out in the chromo sphere. Matching images should not be purely matched by the change in delta E mathematically.' And while he admitted that chroma expansion is subject dependent, in general his research has shown that people prefer working with it.

EskoArtwork is looking to change the rules on how the industry evaluates package color. Samworth says: 'If the change can be made, the industry can ultimately empower package designers.'

EXPANDED GAMUT SUCCESS

John Fulcoly of Packaging CPR (Client Productivity Resources) strongly supports 7-color printing because of the value that it brings to printers. In fact, Fulcoly could be described as the initial driver of the trend. He says: '7-color process printing gives increased capability, improves productivity and improves supply chain management.'

Designers can be let loose to create, make ready time has proven to decrease by at least 30 percent, and increased throughput in the supply chain can be achieved. The large packaging companies that have adopted this printing model have experienced all of these benefits and more.

For further information on 7-color process printing and what John Fulcoly has to share, review the article written by Jay Sperry of Clemson University, published in L&L4 2009 p106-110 and 136.

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NILPETER MO-4 offset press

Barthel targets offset growth

BARTHEL was the first label converter in Germany to install Nilpeter's MO-4 offset press, successor to the 'industry standard' MO3300. Andy Thomas asks the company for its experiences with the press and discovers a strategy built on offset and digital

It is fair to say that Nilpeter's MO3300 was the press which brought rotary offset to the narrow web market in the 1990s. So when Nilpeter announced a successor, the MO-4, at Labelexpo Europe 2007, at a time when other press manufacturers were targeting the offset market, it was clear the machine would have a tough job maintaining Nilpeter at the forefront of the offset sector.

So there could be no better commercial testing site than Barthel, one of Germany's leading pressure-sensitive label converters and the first in the country to install an MO3300.

Barthel was founded in 1984 to convert price-marking labels. In 1990 the company moved to the premises in Essen it occupies today and a year later installed its first Nilpeter, a B280 letterpress.

Today the Barthel group of companies has a turnover of 50m euros and converts around 100,000 sqm of PS material a day with 190 employees working three shifts. It services the cosmetics, drinks, food, pharma and technical label sectors.

'We had a demand from our customers to print their food labels offset – not flexo'

Barthel installed its first Nilpeter MO3300 – 6-colors plus flexo varnish unit - in 1994 after having seen the press at Labelexpo Brussels. Offset was a 'steep learning curve', says company owner Joachim Barthel, but once the technology was mastered Barthel never looked back, installing two more MO3300s in 6+2 and 6+1 configurations and including cold foiling, turn bars for reverse printing and de-/re-lam stations. The first two machines were lineshaft driven, while the third, an 'S' machine, was fully servo driven.

'We had a demand from our customers to print their food labels offset – not flexo,' says company managing director Detlef Klusmann. 'In Germany offset is the main process and marketing people think offset – and no longer only in cosmetics. Now end users want the whole package, including cartons, printed to the same standard and it's harder to match this with UV flexo.'

Aldi Germany's latest print specification document, for example, requires all labels and cartons to be printed offset, with only flexible packaging specified (wide web) flexo.

This is an interesting development. Food labels have long been regarded as

BARTHEL owner Joachim Barthel (R) with *L&L* editor Andy Thomas

THE 'mark 2' MO4 Nilpeter now uses aluminum sleeves, which are less prone to deformation than polymer sleeves

BARTHEL'S MO-4 has a web width of 418 mm, and is configured with six offset and two f exo units, cold foil, de- and re-lamination

'commodity' products, but Barthel is producing some very sophisticated designs using up to ten offset/flexo stations. One label shown to L&L, for example, used two flexo whites, CMYK offset, cold foil and gloss and matt varnishing. 'We do not use screen,' says Joachim Barthel. 'We use Sericol UV flexo whites which give a high degree of opacity, are cheaper than screen inks and allow us to run the presses faster. This all helps our goal to have short reaction and delivery times.'

So why did Barthel opt to be one of the first users of the Nilpeter MO-4 press? 'We still wanted offset but with a wider web width,' says Joachim Barthel. 'Put simply, now we can get two 180 mm labels – front and back – across a web.'

The company's MO-4 has a web width of 418 mm, and is configured with six offset and two flexo units, cold foil, de- and re-lamination.

A key feature of the press is its 'easy load' sleeve technology. 'Sleeves are cheaper than using different size cassettes, and they are faster to make ready,' says Joachim Barthel. 'We have half the down time with sleeves and they are as stable as cassettes.' Nilpeter has now changed from using polymer to aluminum sleeves, which are less prone to deformation.

'Another important factor on the new press is automated ink/water balance, which greatly reduces waste,' says Barthel. 'On our older offset machines, we have to manually adjust ink/water balance as the machine gets faster and slower.'

FLEXO AND DIGITAL

Barthel is not only an offset house. The company also runs 13 UV flexo presses. It has a fleet of Nilpeters - three 5-8 unit FA3300s, one 4+1 FBZ4200 capable of switching between water-based and UV flexo, and one 10-color FA-4 configured for unsupported film converting.

Barthel inherited a battery of MPS presses when it acquired Dutch converter Kien Label. These include an 8-color EF 410 dedicated to film printing, with cold foil, varnishing, reverse print and lamination; an 8-color EP410 with inline booklet making, an EC330 and an EF330 10-color press set up for constructing multi-layer 'sandwich' labels.

A water-based flexo Arsoma EM220 is dedicated to ID labels along with a Leomat S400 converting machine. All Barthel's PS presses are fitted with Kocher & Beck Gapmaster die pressure setting systems.

Barthel further expanded its packaging production capabilities with the purchase of Etipro, which specialized in water-based flexo thermal label converting using Prati and ABG equipment. A Windmoeller & Hoelscher 850 mm-wide flexo press and a Nordmechanica two-component laminating plant were installed to handle heat sensitive materials down to 10 microns, allowing Barthel to extend its capabilities into flexible packaging and shrink film labels.

"We use the digital presses for one-off short run jobs and for jobs up to 2,000 meters with offset quality"

Barthel moved into the digital label printing business three years ago with the installation of an HP Indigo ws4000, which was followed by ws4050 and 4500 presses. Recently the company installed HP Indigo's latest, more productive WS6000, and a second machine is on order. Barthel Digitalprint GmbH has been set up as a separate division of the company.

'We use the digital presses for one-off short run jobs and for jobs up to 2,000 meters with offset quality,' says Detlef Klusmann. 'Digital is also ideal for jobs with multiple variants, like one job which had 96 sorts with 100 of each design.' Digital web finishing is carried out on Leomat SFR410 and SFR330 machines.

'The digital division has been very successful,' says Joachim Barthel. 'Offset and digital are the future for Barthel.'

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AUTO. LABEL PRINTING PRESS

TESA Bandfix's first Nilpeter MO3300 – note inline coating tower after print units

In-house innovation drives tesa Bandfix

BUILDING on the coating expertise and global reach of its parent group tesa SE Hamburg, tesa Bandfix has become an industry leader in high value added conversion of pressure-sensitive materials. Andy Thomas reports

Tesa will be a household name to anyone who has bought adhesive tapes for DIY home decoration, plate mounting, splicing, or for sealing packaging containers. Less well known, perhaps, is that tesa SE comes under the wing of global fmcg giant Beiersdorf, and has a subsidiary – tesa Bandfix AG – which is one of Europe's leading PS label converters.

With a turnover of 55m euros – 45 percent of which is outside Switzerland – and more than 200 employees, Swiss company tesa Bandfix has an interesting corporate history.

The company Bandfix was founded in 1954, focused on the sale of tesa adhesive tapes and labels. In 1984 Beiersdorf AG, the owner of tesa tapes and manufacturer of the Nivea brand among many others, acquired half of the tesa group, and the Bandfix division moved from Zurich to a new building in Bergdietikon.

In 2001 tesa in Hamburg became an independent operating company, tesa SE (Société Europenne), and Bandfix AG became a wholly-owned subsidiary, renamed tesa Bandfix AG in 2004.

Tesa Bandfix reaps major benefits from its links to tesa's global distribution network and expertise in adhesive coating. We turn first to the coating.

INLINE COATING

A walk around tesa Bandfix's press hall reveals complexly engineered, moveable inline curtain coating units – developed with the expertise of tesa engineers – on top of the company's three customized Nilpeter MO3300 presses. The prime use of these coaters is to develop and manufacture specialty PS laminates which take full advantage of the flexible configuration of the presses.

The Nilpeter MO3300s are specified with Martin Automatic flying splices, nitrogen-inerted corona, gravure, 9-color offset, UV screen and UV flexo heads, with 100 percent inspection cameras on each press. An example of what can be achieved using this flexible system are the 'Mirror' labels developed by tesa Bandfix as an alternative to the hot foil stamping process. The labels are first reverse printed on transparent films using a metallic gravure ink unit. This is followed by an offset printing process then application of a transparent adhesive. The face film is finally laminated to a PET liner, and tactile text is UV screen printed onto the front side of the label.

The 'mirror label' technique opens up a wide range of design options, including vignetted metallic screen tints and metallic effects in silver, gold and other colors, as well as haptic features. It is capable of fine lettering and logos, and there are none of the 'dot fringes' caused by hot stamping and raised images on the label face. The reverse intaglio process offers effective protection to the print and reaches food contact standards.

Since there is no tooling, stamping foil or lamination, there are cost and waste savings along with higher processing speeds compared to hot foil, while the PET carrier supports high-speed labeling machinery.

Tesa Bandfix sees applications not only in toiletries and cosmetics, but also in areas where foiling has been too costly, such as food and chemicals. Around half of tesa Bandfix's laminates are bought in and half are manufactured in-house. 'Our

KURT Walker, MD tesa Bandfix

in-house materials can cost 40 percent less than buying directly,' says managing director Kurt Walker.

SOLUTION SELLING

As well as PS labels and security solutions, tesa Bandfix supplies the full range of Herma labeling machinery and offers a turnkey coding and marking solution. 'We do not sell labels, we solve our customers' problems,' says Walker. 'If you just sell labels, you can be replaced tomorrow. It is essential to be service-oriented.' The company deploys three R&D staff full time on developing new ideas and managing customer projects.

But for this approach to work, Walker points out that customers also need to change the way they operate: 'Customers' purchasing and supply chain management must deal with the printer as a team. We need to talk to the person who needs the technical solution, and this may be the product designer, marketing or the labeling line engineer. Very often problems with application of the label can be solved when the label is designed.' The solutions approach can radically reduce the lifetime cost of a label, says Walker: 'The earlier we are part of the process, the more we can influence the total applied cost.'

A perfect example of this approach was the recent roll-out of a toiletries & cosmetics brand into Mexico and Brazil. 'We developed common global specification for inks and materials, set the jobs up and proofed them, and after they were signed off by the brand managers, we took the labels through production,' recalls Walker. 'I spoke to Nilpeter and we found excellent label printer partners who were using the same combination offset presses as us.' These partners were Flexprint in Mexico and Baumgarten in Brazil.

'Working like this means we have complete control over the label specification and enables us to compete directly with global packaging converters,' says Walker. 'It means we can service a worldwide client without having to invest everywhere in the world. And because we all use the same technology, we can support them from here.' This global networking has other benefits for tesa Bandfix. 'We were informed by our partners that a Brazilian brand wanted to set up a European subsidiary. Now we shall print the labels for them!'

PRESS TECHNOLOGY

'We have always been linked to offset, though people at the time said we were crazy,' laughs Kurt Walker. In fact, tesa Bandfix was the first label converter to buy the Gallus Q-2000 offset press in 1973 and the first to use Nilpeter's MO3300 in Europe. The latter is still running, 15 years after installation, and has converted 90,000 kilometers of labels - enough to reach twice around the world. The offset lineup is completed by an Edelmann narrow web 20 inch press and a Gallus TCS250 intermittent press, used for shorter runs.

Flexo is still important. Tesa Bandfix has standardized on Gallus, running five EM 410s, an EM510 with adhesive coater, and an EM280. One EM410 has been converted into a specialized booklet machine for what is a fast growing part of tesa Bandfix's business. Promotional label applications have included competitions, promotions, recipe suggestions and customer loyalty schemes, using up to 26 pages on a single label base.

The presses are tightly integrated into tesa Bandfix's wider plant management systems. Data for press set-up comes direct from the MIS system, and shop floor data capture sends production information back to the MIS. 'On repeat jobs the presses can be pre-set to within a few percent,' says Walker.

Pre-press is fully digital, based around EskoArtwork platforms, with flexo and screen plates made with in-house CTP. tesa Bandfix runs a CDI Spark 4835 imager feeding a DuPont FAST thermal processor. 'FAST has improved our throughput. We no longer have to "age" our plates for 24 hours. With FAST it's 30-45 minutes a plate,' says Walker. All the finishing units are ABG Omegas with 100% inspection, once again showing the tesa Bandfix requirement for standardized equipment.

Digital printing and RFID are not on Kurt Walker's agenda. 'We were involved in RFID in the early days along with GCI and MIT, but we soon decided that item level RFID was not viable. We can provide it if customers need it, but RFID remains a commodity product with little know-how required from the label converter, so is not of interest to us.'

Walker takes a similar attitude to digital. 'Digital printing is a fantastic technology, but if it's sold for much less than flexo, then it just tears down prices. We are in the added value offset, silkscreen plus gravure market, not in 4-color work and we heavily use pantone colors. Again, where customers request digital, we have our partners and we will farm it out. But our USP is global accounts using multiple combination print and developing special self-adhesive applications.'

GLOBAL NETWORK

Tesa Bandfix benefits hugely from belonging to a group with global reach. As an example, the converter's security tape and label solutions are marketed worldwide through the tesa SE global network. Recent orders have included scratch-off security labels for China Mobile's pre-pay mobile phone cards. 'Tesa's Chinese operation can "warm up" local clients about our products and we provide the technical sales back-up,' says Kurt Walker. 'There is no doubt that being part of the tesa group helps us when we talk to companies the size of China Mobile.'

ENVIRONMENTAL PRESSURES

Environment pressures have certainly had an impact on tesa Bandfix, which is already accredited to ISO14001. 'The tesa group as a whole is moving away from solvents wherever technically possible – for example towards hot melt acrylics,' says Kurt Walker. As the next president of FINAT, Walker believes the PS industry needs to move fast on the liner recovery issue. 'The liner waste is a perfect resource for "cradle-to-cradle" recycling. Linerless label are also a very good solution which needs further development,' says Walker. The company's own matrix waste is recovered using a Matho recovery and compacting system, and the resulting brics are burned for energy recovery.

Tesa Bandfix also has a BRC-certified clean room for producing its pharma and food-related labels. 'Our customers now demand it,' says Walker.

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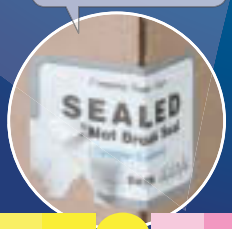

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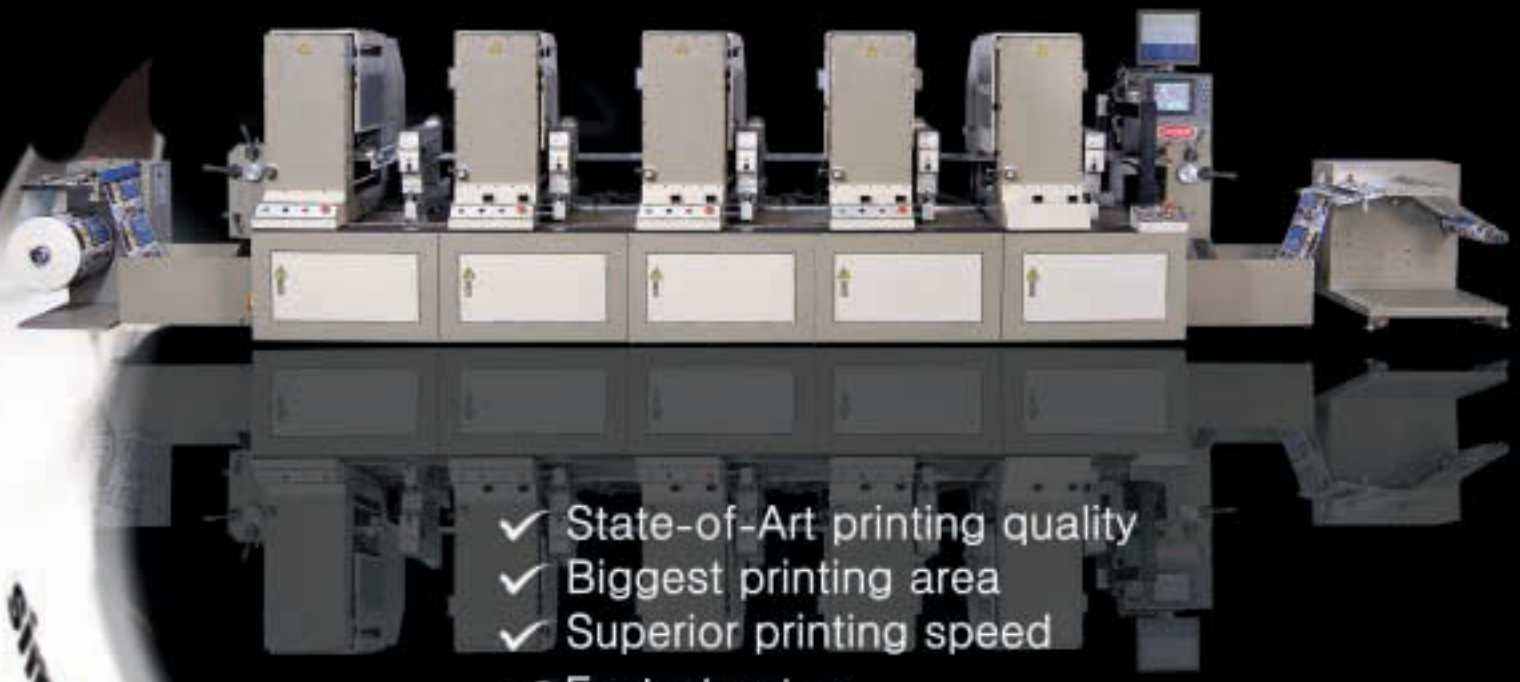

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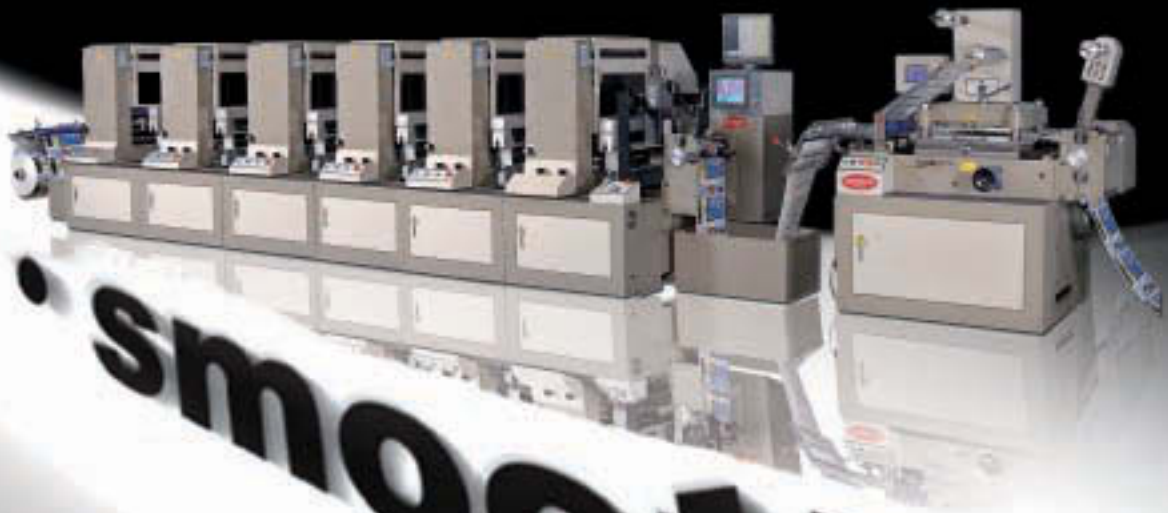

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Project unravels TT mysteries

ARMOR AND AHLSTROM have undertaken a project to discover the 'fundamental laws' governing ribbon and substrate interactions in the thermal transfer printing process. Andy Thomas reports

Thermal transfer (TT) printing technology uses inks that are resistant to most types of potential aggression in industrial environments, including heat, humidity, chemicals, mechanical abrasion, or a combination of all of these. This has made TT a robust printing solution for barcode labels and other types of ID labels containing critical information.

The TT process is a simple one: ink is transferred from the surface of a thin PET film to a paper substrate by applying heat from a thermal head to the back of the ribbon. But the relationship between these components – ribbon, ink and paper - is a complex one, driven by variables including print speed, printer technology, paper quality (coated or un-coated) and the structure of the ribbon. With self-adhesive constructions further variables are introduced by the lamination process, which impacts the paper's characteristics in different ways.

In a bid to better understand what happens at the interface between ink, ribbon and paper, industry heavyweights Armor and Ahlstrom have combined their resources in a unique research project. Armor brings its expertise in thermal transfer ribbon technology and Ahlstrom in manufacturing speciality face papers and release liners. The goal was to develop a new generation of complementary ribbon/receptor systems which work optimally with any printer system.

TESTING PROCEDURES

A lot of time was spent developing sound test protocols. Representative prototypes for ribbons and printers were matched with coated or uncoated papers – a flat head printer was used with uncoated papers, and a near-edge printer for coated papers, for example. In the latter case, adapted wax or pure resin ribbons were used rather than 'simple' wax ribbons. An important part of these tests were standardized settings for the thermal heads and measurement of the influence of thermal conductivity.

A major breakthrough was the development of a test protocol for plain papers that allowed an accurate forecast of TT printing performance after lamination – and with any combination of ribbon or paper, including A4 sample structures.

Both companies' labs focused on studying the mechanical and chemical interactions between inks and papers at the full range of surface energy conditions, taking account of different surface treatments and modifications to smoothness and porosity.

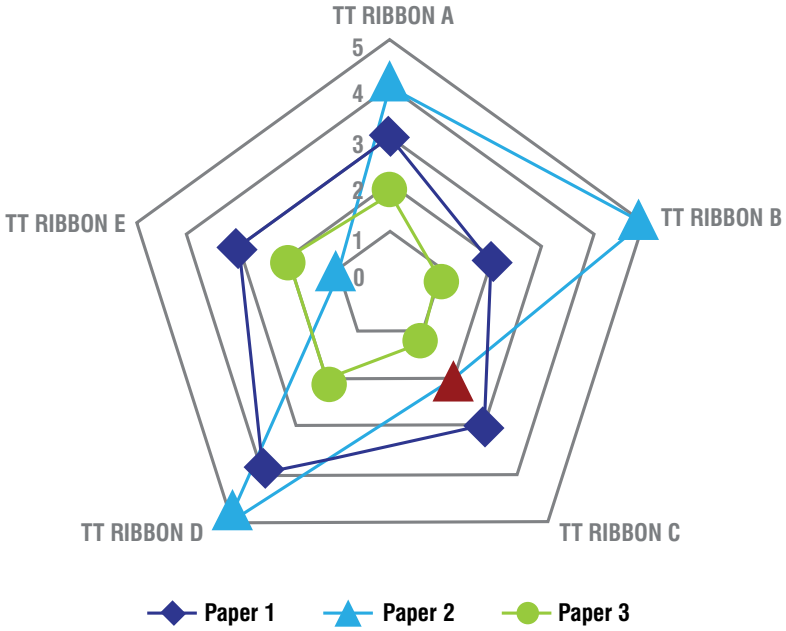
Ahlstrom used SEM analysis to visualize how the ink layer is applied and anchored to the paper or coated paper surface, using surface treatments applied on its pilot line, with different coat weights, coating processes and surface topography.

'We demonstrated that, surprisingly, the paper's surface structure was not the single parameter capable of playing an active role in TT printing,' says Olivier Moreau, product manager at Armor. 'Also, the process used to design the base paper has an influence on final TT printing performance.'

A wide range of factors were measured on the final product, including transfer of ink correlated with energy applied, the optical density of transferred ink, ANSI-rated readability of barcodes, and mechanical resistance of the transferred ink.

In practical terms, Armor was able to optimize its prototype wax and wax resin ribbons before their market launch, and Ahlstrom has developed a new Vellum with improved TT performances compared to its existing 73 and 80 gsm grades.

THE ENERGY LEVELS OF VARIOUS PRINTER TYPES WERE ONE FACTOR USED TO ANALYZE DIFFERENT COMBINATIONS OF PAPERS, INKS AND RIBBONS



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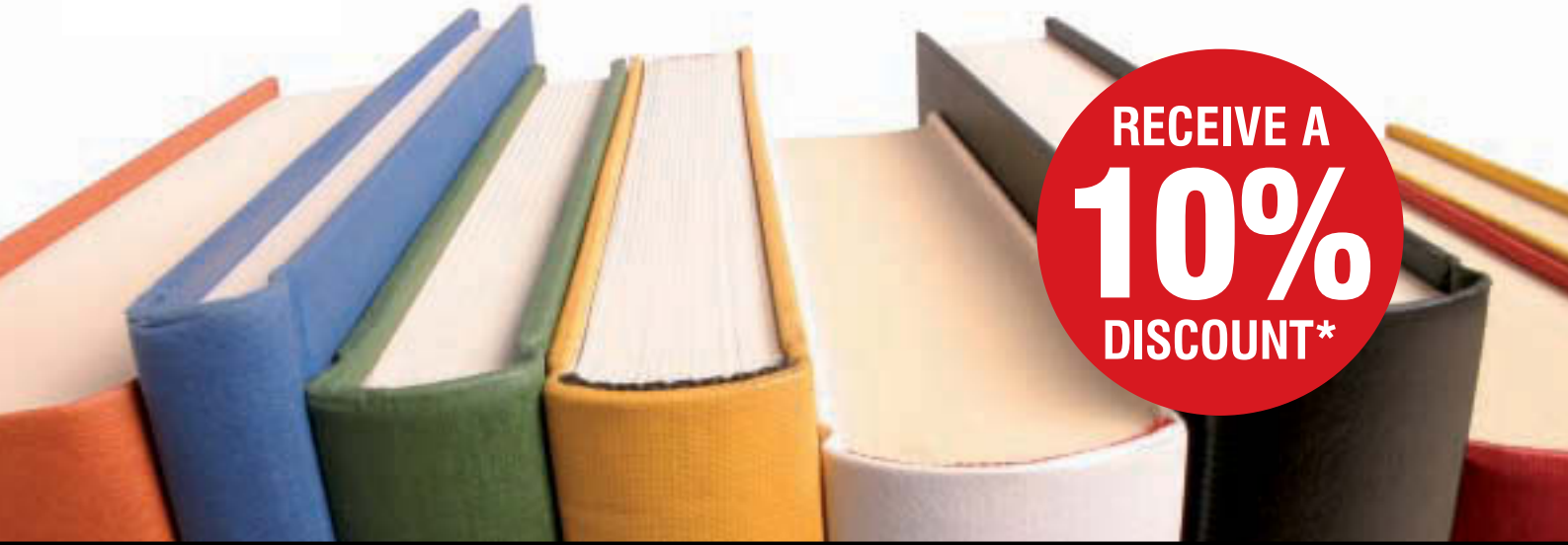

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Double investment

NILPETER opened the doors to its new Service & Technology Center, demonstrating to its partners the recent investments Made in the USA. Danielle Jerschefske reports

Nilpeter USA celebrated the opening of its new Service & Technology Center with an Open House at its headquarters in Cincinnati, Ohio over the first week of November. Beginning with a Supplier Appreciation Day, the US subsidiary of the Danish press manufacturer invited its vendors and industry suppliers to experience the new press-filled facility that the company plans to share with the label industry.

The 12,000 sq ft center houses three Nilpeter presses: an FB-line, FA-line and FG-line. Open House attendees saw the FB press run a multi-process, high-end job, the FA press produce work on lenticular material, and the FG demonstrate its quick changeover capability.

John Coleman, technology center manger, invites Nilpeter's partners to schedule time for R&D and to conduct application-based seminars at the new site. He said: 'We strongly believe that this new facility will stimulate the industry so that it continues to find growth, innovation and success.'

The center also features a diagnostics lab where the customer service team provides remote training and support to operators, and a classroom that can fit up to fifty people.

Nilpeter USA president Andy Colletta commented: 'We wanted our partners to see the facility, and we want them to know that the investment is available for their use – together we'll advance the industry. After all, it is because of their support that we are able to provide a high standard of service to our customers.'

The entire Nilpeter team is excited that, when its suppliers or clients want to test a new process, they now have a place to go – with presses and the people. 'This gathering was an effort to facilitate more communication amongst our supporters and to strengthen industry relationships in order to manage solutions together in a shorter time,' said Colletta.

The week closed with Nilpeter sales staff from North and South America showcasing the support center to current and potential customers. A number of orders from these regions were placed in the week leading up to the event and during. Live demos will be conducted regularly throughout the year.

MANUFACTURING

Nilpeter USA has made a significant investment in capital equipment for its US manufacturing location over the last two years. The plant offers 57,000 sq ft for manufacturing and assembly and has been set up similarly to Nilpeter international headquarters in Slagelse, Denmark. Common tooling, machining and engineering are used on both sides of the pond. This helps with managing capacities and lends more flexibility to scheduling for on-time shipments.

One-off parts, service parts and custom work are completed for service, and R&D support in a designated area so regular production is not interrupted.

Nilpeter plans to continue investing in equipment to increase efficiencies within the plant and will look more closely at specific assembly processes that can help its time to market without affecting the flow of stock.

LARS ERIKSEN and Andy Colletta cut the ribbon

NILPETER Open House demo center

Total inspection

BARRY HUNT examines the developments that are changing 100 percent print inspection

Video web viewing and 100 percent print inspection have evolved into extremely efficient quality control tools with clearly defined objectives. Both have benefited from improved camera optics, more powerful microchips and faster data processing methods. But while many converters are familiar with the more mature video web viewing techniques, less is generally known about 100 percent print inspection. Perhaps understandably, since its more specialized – and relatively expensive – functions have restricted usage to applications where 'zero defect deliveries' and 'total quality control' are essential objectives. But things are changing. A broadening of these objectives into more markets, plus the successful integration of print inspection into digitized pre-press to delivery workflows, are beginning to change converters' perceptions.

That's not to say such systems will displace video web viewing. Its well proven technology can monitor shifts in register, ink streaking, color hue variations and similar defects and compare them at press speeds with a master image, or reference print. It also has an important time-saving role during press set-ups and reducing materials wastage. Most systems use motorized one or three-chip CCD cameras that traverse the web width, while zoom lenses magnify register marks and other details on split-screen monitors. However, it is an area scanning technology that scans across the web taking a series of snapshots of a label's repeat length. In other words, it monitors only a relatively small part of the total label job. Furthermore, the onus is on the operator to identify and take prompt action against defects that have already happened.

In a wider industry context, this type of random sampling is acceptable for the majority of color printing jobs, including primary labels. More demanding applications require the rigor of 100 percent print inspection. Here, three-chip color line cameras scan the web's entire width line by line in real time (it is incorrect to think it detects 100 percent of all

NIKKA L2 camera on RotoControl rewinder


E+L Nyscan system

defects all the time). Detected defects include random missing or damaged letters, ink spots and splashes, filled-in bar codes, register inaccuracies, web creases, and color variations. This explains why pharmaceutical label printers were early adopters of the first grayscale (monochrome) systems, and remain a good market for today's advanced color versions. They offer resolutions of between 2,000-plus pixels and 8,000-plus pixels using single or multiple CCD color cameras operating at a frequency of 20 kHz. Higher resolutions pick up more detail, but require lower press speeds, which can vary between 50 m/min and 250 m/min (160 ft/min and 820 ft/min).

In most cases, automatic control over multi-directional web illumination, such as LED light sources, allows the inspection of a wide range of paper, clear or opaque films and metalized substrates. Unlike video web viewing, there are fewer problems or false alarms in picking up defects on reflective materials. Successful operation is, however, heavily influenced by the minimum detectable defect size as equated to camera pixel size, in turn defined by a system's sophisticated algorithms. In essence, larger-sized defects are certain to be detected and not just by chance.

By implication, 100 percent print inspection requires high levels of data and processing throughput, typically based on costly hardware. According to Ivan Bonev, manager of Nikka Research in Germany, many vendors compromise with image resolution in order to reduce data volume. 'Only recently have 100 percent inspection systems achieved resolutions above 200dpi, which has opened the possibility to add web viewing functions to traditional inspection functions. The viewing functions resemble those for video web, but are radically different because full-width scanning allows operators to simultaneously view and measure multiple regions from anywhere in a single print repeat.'

Bonev cites his company's ALIS L2 on-press inspection system. It can simultaneously show 300dpi images of gear and operator-side register cross hairs, as well as regions of the label with critical color trapping: 'Up to nine such regions can be selected from the print repeat and displayed with selectable magnification on the system's second monitor. The image set is extracted from the same print repeat. To produce a comparable set of images with video web involves moving the camera traverse several times and acquiring each image separately. The problem is that these images originate from different print cylinder revolutions and may not reflect the actual spatial information, crucial to the decision of the printer.'

Print inspection systems obviously cost more than mass-produced video web systems. In fact, the top range video models may well offer superior resolution quality, especially for wider webs. But times and applications are changing. For just under 30,000 euros, European narrow web converters can install the Nyscan Web:Inspector LT from Erhardt + Leimer. It has a mid-range camera resolution of 4,096 pixels and like larger models it stores data on printed defects in a database, or 'roll map' for further analysis. As on Web:Inspector 2, the system includes E+L's TubeLight lamp, which allows users to also inspect embossed metalized surfaces and holograms.

INLINE OR OFF-LINE?

Print inspection offers two choices: do you integrate it with the press, or do you inspect on the slitter/rewinder? The latter choice is now served by newer models that seamlessly incorporate 100 percent web inspection, rather than treat it as a bolt-on function. As the quality control backstop, it allows operators to remove and/or replace defective labels. Arguably, press output should be higher, although the risk of producing higher volumes of defective products is also higher.

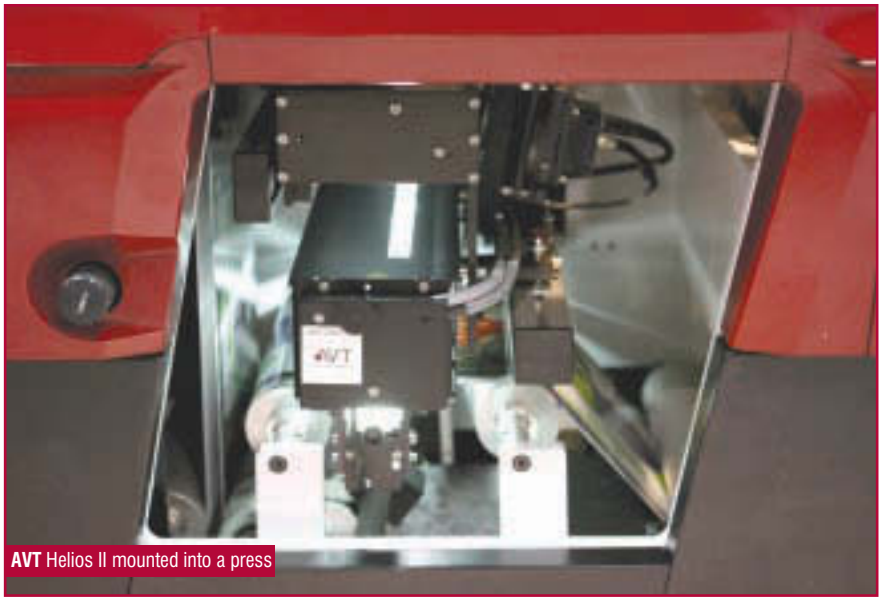
Bonev unequivocally supports off-line: 'The benefits of inspecting off-line are easy to understand and bring direct results. Off-line inspection stops defects from reaching the print buyer, which is a decisive argument for zero defect markets like pharmaceutical, cosmetic, technical and security labels. Another important argument is the cost of inspection. Not all products require this level of inspection, so it is sufficient to equip a few rewinders with inspection systems and use them for the critical jobs. The inline alternative, by contrast, will require installing inspection systems on all presses where these jobs are printed.'

Guy Yogev, Advanced Vision Technology's labels market manager, broadly agrees: 'Off-line inspection will become the norm when it comes to critical applications. But for other applications, inline inspection is becoming an acceptable solution, gaining the various advantages from inspection on the press and detecting the faults on time, saving waste, preventing reprints, and increasing productivity. Closing the loop to the rewinder using a workflow link makes this solution even more attractive.'

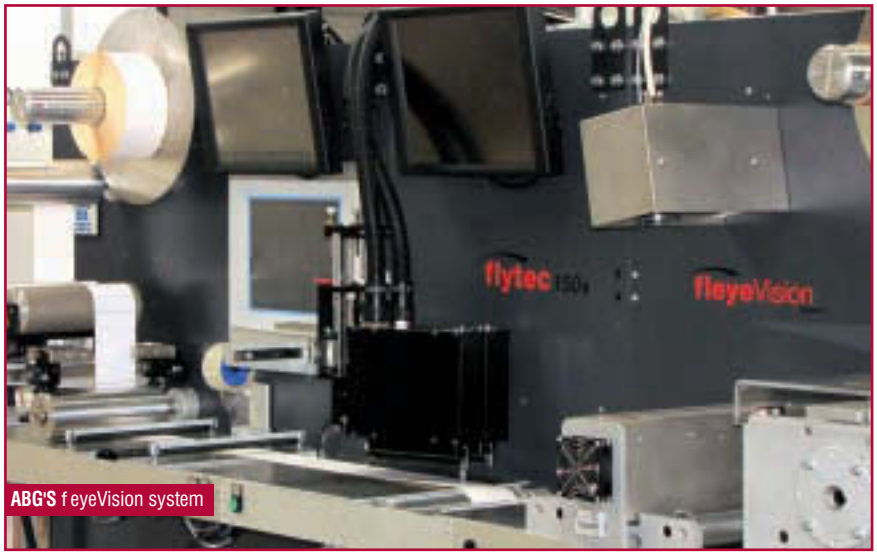
Donald Lewis, international business development manager for E + L, feels the balance is already tilting more towards on-line inspection: 'The industry has realized that moving web inspection to the press can provide greater press efficiency. That's why such actions, in conjunction with roll scheduling, are going ahead at a solid pace. However, the problem for pharmaceutical users is that the final stage of checking and roll packing must also be inspected. These converters therefore have a tendency to adopt a "belt and braces" solution to press and rewinder inspection. In fact, combinations of inline and off-line inspection have become more commonplace.'

INTEGRATION AND NETWORKS

E+L has developed a workflow method based on on-press print inspection that avoids the need to allocate printed



AVT Helios II mounted into a press



ABG'S f eyeVision system

reels to a specific finishing machine. The pioneer adopter was X-label in Germany, which fitted Nyscan systems on its Gallus RCS-330 presses. It begins with directly accessing the customer-approved digital PDF artwork files via an existing EskoArtwork workflow. The files are adapted to exactly match the actual print to form a reference. All printed and inspected reels are identified with scannable coded labels containing job-specific data for allocation with the reel report. The data is transferred to a central server for retrieval by quality control personnel who undertake a defect editing process, after which the 'clean' reel moves on to finishing (see L&L2 2009, p58).

PDF artwork files cannot drive a line scan camera (on-line or off-line) to 'inspect' color or densities on the press. But as Yogev points out, PDF files can drive the inspection system in terms of content for comparison and verification purposes, as well as identifying areas of interest in the label during set-up and runtime. 'When it comes to color, PDF colors are very different from the actual printed results. They are not used as color references, unlike such options as CIP3 files and similar solutions. I believe that in the near future we will be able to use digital color information as a reference to print and inspection.'

Examples of integrated web inspection include AVT's WorkFlow Link for PrintVision/Helios II systems. It automatically stores detected defects in a standard SQL database on PrintFlow computers before transferring them to an editing and sorting stage using PrintFlow Manager units. Edited defects are directed to a suitably equipped slitter/rewinder, which acts upon the roll report. A new product is the optional Microcolor NW ink management system. Developed by AVT's Graphic Microsystems subsidiary, it identifies color shifts and automatically alerts the press operator. All ink settings are stored for job re-runs.

Widely known for its video web systems, BST Pro Mark also supplies the wide-web Shark 4000 print inspection system and Shark 4000 LEX version for narrow web presses and slitter/rewinders. The optional PowerLink allows users to combine a Shark system with BST's video web system, which feature more comprehensive zoom functions. The company also offers Lector reporting software to generate on-press inspection reports for integration with a slitter/rewinder.

The generation of extensive production and job data has prompted vendors to consider interfaces with management information systems. Yogev says including MIS with other workflow solutions is a key to making production more efficient and controlled. 'We had very good feedbacks from customers, prospects and OEM's on the MIS Connection presented at Labelexpo. Many customers showed a lot of interest in connecting their MIS system to Helios II, and even suggested interesting ideas of their own for future developments and enhanced information exchange.'

All of Nikka Research's ALIS products support MIS as an 'electronic job ticket'. Entering a job number for an on-press inspection system will automatically retrieve all relevant production information for job set-ups. The inspection system warns if plates or colors do not match and keeps track of good printed product. Automatic checks and the extent of available information combine to reduce production time, minimize waste and help avoid mistakes. 'The main problem is the lack of a standard for such information interchange. A JDF-like data exchange inter-vendor format is long overdue in the narrow web industry. We currently use XML-based data exchange and have cooperated to develop interfaces with several popular MIS systems,' says Bonev.

VIP INSPECTION

Most print inspection systems can adequately monitor and verify fixed or variable data barcodes, 2D Data Matrix barcodes, as well as variable alphanumeric data. For its PrintVision/ Helios II system, AVT offers the new E-Pedigree FDA unique codes to track and trace pharmaceuticals from manufacturer to customer. Another new entrant is GS1 Data Bar symbology, which carries more data in a smaller space than conventional barcodes. Applications include marking fruit and vegetables in high-volumes. Lake Image recently introduced a version of its IntegraVision line camera system designed to identify sub-standard GS1 labels and trigger controlled stops on the slitter/rewinder.

Another development closes the loop between variable data printing and 100 percent inspection of critical zero defect labels. Nikka Research recently added a Braille inspection capability in combination with Atlantic Zeiser's Braille Jet. The company is also examining fully variable text and graphics content as applied to digital printing. Apparently the challenge with variable data is to establish reliable communication between the printing system, its controller and camera modules, while automatically synchronizing the content. Multiple font and small font OCR always bring speed penalties when high resolutions are required.

AB Graphics International offers its fleyeVision line scan inspection system and database fitted to a flytec 150 rewinder equipped with two of Domino's K series inkjet printheads. It is intended for high-volume pharmaceutical label printing with full verification of OCR numbering, barcodes and Braille. It is also compatible with HP Indigo digital presses using HP's Smart Label & Packaging Solution. Unusually, it combines a line scan camera with a resolution of 2,048 pixels, as well as an alternative area scan camera with a lower resolution.

Collectively, the various 100 percent inspection developments, not least fully-integrated workflows, will ensure it plays an expanding role in meeting the industry's more stringent quality standards. They have also sharpened the distinctions between this method and complimentary video web viewing systems. So while it remains a specialized technology with many pros and cons to consider, it is one that accords with the zeitgeist of today's digitized age.

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ROTATING head means foil can be applied across and down web direction

RHINO f atbed hot foil embossing unit

Flatbed foiling goes inline

IS ROTARY THE ONLY STRATEGY for hot and cold foiling inline? Pantec believes it has found a better solution for uncoated papers using an inline flatbed system. Andy Thomas reports

In a major challenge to rotary foiling technology, Pantec GS Systems has demonstrated an inline flat bed hotfoil embossing unit at an open day at its factory in Kradolf, Switzerland.

The development is particularly interesting as Pantec has a complete portfolio of both rotary and flatbed technology – as well as foil saving systems for both – so approaches the new technology from a 'neutral' viewpoint.

Rotary hot and cold foiling systems are today well established technologies for inline label decoration. Cold foil is considered good enough for many applications despite the considerable wastage when foiling small areas, which, claim the cold foilers, is compensated by low tooling costs.

But according to Peter Frei, managing director at Pantec, both processes have problems with uncoated, textured label surfaces. 'On unstructured surfaces such as a typical wine label paper, the cold glue disappears into the fibers. Label printers work around this by priming, or, like wine label printers, they change to hot foil. Either way, both quality and speed suffer in comparison to coated surfaces.' Even rotary hot foiling is not ideal for uncoated materials, says Frei, as the gloss can disappear after subsequent embossing.

Sheetfed foiling systems, by contrast, produce 'brilliant, foil embossed, wet glue labels,' says Frei. 'Mostly, this is achieved with cheaper tools and cheaper foils than can be achieved with rotary or semi-rotary presses on self-adhesive labels.'

The thinking behind Pantec's Rhino technology was to bring the quality of sheetfed foiling to the inline process by inserting a flatbed system into a rotary or semi-rotary press.

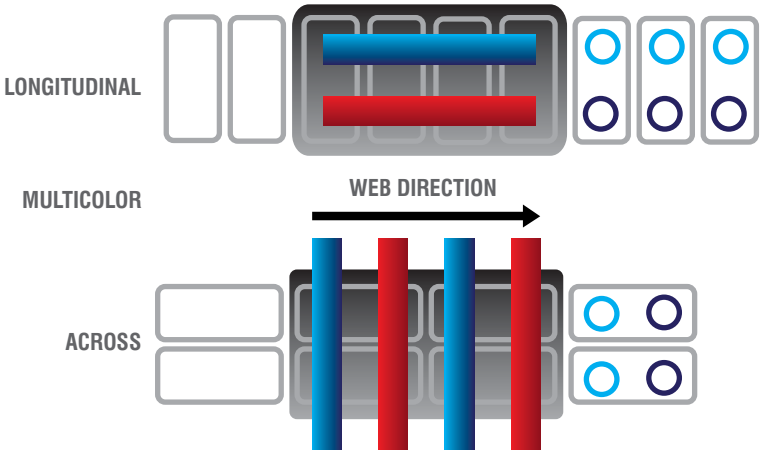
'This approach sounds contradictory at first,' concedes Frei. 'However, flat bed systems for embossing are already successfully integrated into high-end rotary presses with proper web tension interfaces. Flat bed hot foil embossing systems, designed for inline (rotary) integration, achieve 60 m/min output easily.'

The key process difference between flatbed and rotary foiling systems is the dwell time – the length of time the foil is in contact with the web - which for the flat bed stamping process is up to 16 times longer. 'This enormous time difference explains why less sophisticated, and thus low cost, foil can easily be used without loss of speed,' says Frei. 'Semi-rotary machines also run very slowly when using rotary foiling. With flatbed, this is no longer the case.'

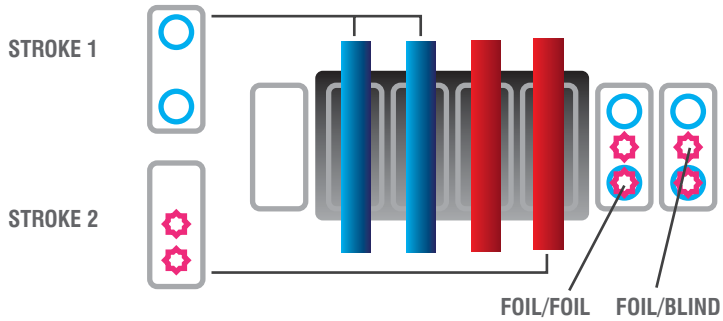
Frei claims Pantec's Rhino inline flat bed system achieves the relief heights of traditional sheetfed flatbed foilers. 'The brilliance and perfect registration of this single step hot foil embossing process is outstanding.'

Pantec is predicting that the Rhino unit will deliver a significant reduction in the total cost of ownership (TCO) for foiling. 'Rotary

MULTI-COLOR, LONGITUDINAL AND ACROSS WEB



INSETTING, FOIL2FOIL AND BLIND2FOIL



A rotating head on the Pantec Rhino foiler allows the lay down of multiple colors in either web direction (top) and multi-stroke intra-foil embossing (below).

presses using the flatbed system can utilize lower-cost magnesium tools for market segments somewhat below the top end, and thus generate immense savings,' says Peter Frei. 'For perfectly-shaped reliefs with the best light effects, of course, milled brass tools remain unbeatable.'

Flatbed systems can work with lower cost foil because of the longer process time. 'Furthermore, we can save foil within the design, lengthwise or across with a turning head,' says Frei.

So is this the end of rotary foiling? 'Yes and no,' replies Frei. 'For some open, structured substrates, it may well be 'the end of rotary'. But the world is not black and white. For sectors requiring coated, glossy labels, where foiling units need to be employed at multiple positions on the press, inline rotary foiling is the way to go. However, foil consumption is higher compared to a flat bed with foil saving. For rotary hot foiling there is no 'fast' foil saver – if there was, what would happen to the TCO calculation of cold foiling?'

RHINO IN OPERATION

Pantec's Rhino inline flat bed hot foil embossing unit operates at web speeds up to 120 m/min, and Pantec says the 2-eccentric shaft hub ensures uniform embossing pressure under extreme conditions.

It is designed to work on rotary, semi-rotary and intermittent machines and is available in widths of 410mm (16in) and 250mm (10in). The infeed and outfeed are fully de-coupled from the press, allowing a constant and tightly controlled contact between foil and web.

An interesting feature is a rotating foil head, which means foil can be applied lengthwise and crosswise to the web. Feeding foil at a 90 degree angle to the web allows multiple foil colors to be embossed successively, so more complex designs can be produced in one cycle. Pantec Rhino also allows multi-stroke embossing, so one layer of embossing is applied to another.

Changeover in the space of a few minutes will be possible with the new 'qTool' system.

INSTALLATION ROUND UP

A ROUND-UP OF THE LATEST GLOBAL LABEL INSTALLATION STORIES

TIPOGRAFIC
HEIDELBERG SPEEDMASTER XL 105

UK label converter Tipografic will take delivery of its second Heidelberg Speedmaster XL 105 press in December, this latest one a seven color with coater.

'We needed to replace an older CD 102, and the choice of an XL 105 was inevitable since the first we installed last December had proved to be a superb investment,' says Jeff Cornell, managing director.

'It does what it says on the tin, running at 18,000sph even with lightweight label papers. The first press has been given all the long runs. This second XL 105 will handle more short runs, putting the makeready improvements to the test.'

Tipografic, a round the clock producer, puts 'quality and reliability' as its priorities. The company has a seven-color press in use at its Blackpool special products plant, so having a seven-color in Liverpool, where it produces wet labels for the cans and drinks markets, gives it a good production match. Seven colors gives it maximum f exibility and edge to edge coverage for labels production.

The XL 105 will run with conventional rather than UV inks, a ref ection of changing market attitudes and a greater concern about environmental factors. The coating unit helps speed output and gives rub resist which is important in some packaging sectors.

Jeff Cornell believes the biggest challenge from an operator's perspective is adapting to a new level of speed. 'With the XL 105, operators can make ready at 15,000sph and then push up the speed to 18,000sph where before they have made ready at 5,000 to 6,000sph and then notched up to 13,000sph. Once they see the principle works it will make a big difference.'

The company produces labels on paper and plastics, with embossing or gold foil options in square cut or shaped (by ram punch) formats. In addition to wet labels the company produces reel fed labels, self-adhesive labels, cartons, paint cards and security print.

PEMARA LABELS
MARTIN STS AND STR AUTO UN/REWINDS

Pemara Labels, headquartered in Melbourne, Australia, has ordered Martin Automatic equipment for its new Gallus press. The Gallus machine will be fitted with Martin STS and STR automatic unwind and rewind units when it is installed at the company's Jakarta production facility, one of three sites in Asia – the other locations are Kuala Lumpur and Ho Chi Minh City. This latest investment in Martin equipment follows on from the installation last year of the American manufacturer's MBS and LRD non stop unwind and rewind units at Pemara's Australian production facility in Melbourne.

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Aura of success

FINLAND'S largest converter is booking new orders with its first digital narrow web press, Elinor Zuke reports

When a freshly graduated Tero-Matti Kinanen joined Auraprint in 1995, 80 percent of the company's turnover came from business forms, and 20 percent from labels – now he is the managing director and those figures are reversed.

Auraprint, Finland's largest self-adhesive label converter, became the country's first to install a Xeikon digital label press in December 2008. It already had two Xerox digital sheet-fed machines, which it uses for small magazines, stationery, labels and other personalized print jobs, but decided it was time to go digital for narrow web.

"Moving existing small jobs from flexo to digital proved harder than expected, despite continuity of substrate"

The company narrowed its shortlist down to the Xeikon 330 and HP Indigo 4500 and carried out tests devised by a visiting postgraduate student. 'The interesting thing in general is when we compared the tests to flexographic printed labels, people who knew nothing about the printing industry thought the digitally printed labels looked better, whether HP or Xeikon,' Kinanen says.

Auraprint's tests found HP's overall visual look was better, but Xeikon closed the gap with the release of its 3300 at drupa 2008, offering improved print quality – printing at 1200 dpi, up from 600, and using its proprietary FA (form adapted) toner. With no visual difference between the two, it was better productivity that gave Xeikon the edge, printing five colors at nearly 20 m/min and a promised up time of between 80 and 90 percent.

'In HP when you add colors the drum goes around all those times and it really slows the machine down. Xeikon only has one speed. What was also limiting with the 4500 HP was the blanket size. In some cases our labels fit so badly for the blanket it slows the process down again,' he adds.

Sharing materials with flexo was another attraction. 'I think if we had got HP here we'd have to have our own inventory or warehouse for special coatings and material. And on the sales side, it's difficult to sell something as being exactly the same but on different material,' says Kinanen.

In fact, moving existing small jobs from flexo to digital proved harder than expected, despite continuity of substrate. 'If you start from scratch and decide a label should be printed with four colors digitally it is very easy to convince a customer they should do it, but if they have a product with Pantone spot colors all over the place, it's more difficult to convince them to change the colors.'

Installation took one week, including the GM finishing line. Staff received five days' training on Xeikon's X800 front-end before installation, and a further two weeks on operating afterwards. 'We've been rather independent since then,' says Kinanen. 'But when we have needed them they've come the same or next day. They really know what they're doing.'

As well as covering technical problems and training, Xeikon's service contract includes sessions for Auraprint's sales team on promoting the added possibilities of digital printing. 'It definitely

HISTORY

Finland's largest self-adhesive label manufacturer did not enter the market until the 1980s. Auraprint was founded in 1886 to publish a newspaper called Uusi Aura (New Aura, named after the local river), and went on to find most of its turnover in business forms. In 1987 it set up a business unit for reel labels, and its 1995 acquisition of Paragon Tarra made it Finland's biggest self-adhesive label manufacturer.

Auraprint's turnover in 2008 was 16.2 million euros. It has two production plants and six sales offices.

AURAPRINT'S digital labels are finished on a GM line

EUROPEAN PARTNERS

Auraprint is one of five members of the Concordia Labels Group, along with Arca, Labelpak, Sinel and tesa.

While the group was founded for its purchasing power against large global converters, it has evolved a close technical cooperation, meeting at least twice a year. None of the members operate in competing markets. MD Tero-Matti Kinanen says: 'Technically it's much better than FINAT because there is a lot of competition so they don't share as much information as we do. In Condcordia people are open and we really like to help each other out.

'If we figure out something new we tell them how it works, and either they can produce it themselves or they can buy it from us. For example, in multi-layer labels, Sinel has helped us a lot, and so has Arca.'

TERO-MATTI Kinanen, managing director, Auraprint

gave our sales people ideas. Mainly we had to tell our customers what was possible, and then they started to think if it was wise to do,' says Kinanen. 'Some customers used to have a pretty dull image on their label, and now they are interested that they can change the layout anytime at no extra cost.'

One area of added value Auraprint is taking advantage of is variable data. Before installing its first digital label press, Auraprint printed flexo labels for a small food company, which contained the company's name but were left largely blank. The customer then used its own thermal transfer printers to print the product name, ingredients, production lot number and expiry date when they packaged the goods. Now Auraprint's client tells it what they are producing, and it prints all the necessary information.

'The label itself costs them more, but they get rid of their printers, they don't need thermal printer ribbons and expensive to replace thermal, no computers, or operators,' adds Kinanen. 'I believe they actually save with this kind of system.' Auraprint supplies labels once a month to this local customer, but Kinanen says the company aims to print weekly, or even daily.

Added value labels such as these remain the minority, however. 'It's very easy to sell a normal label in small quantities and that's where the bulk of our workload from digital printing comes,' says Kinanen. 'Selling value-added labels is not so easy because you have to convince customers that the total cost is actually lower, and they'll end up earning money from it. The marketing manager can see the benefit, but it's the purchasing controller who takes the decision at the moment.'

This situation reflects how badly Auraprint's customers have been affected by the economic crisis. Finland's GDP in the second quarter of 2009 was down 9.4 percent on 2008, according to the country's national statistics agency. Value added manufacturing was 23.8 percent lower than the previous year, and exports shrunk by 30.2 percent, though only 0.7 percent compared with the previous quarter.

'The Finnish market is so small we have to deliver to all sectors. I would say you can read the overall situation from our figures. I think we have seen the bottom but it will be a long recovery,' Kinanen says. Auraprint predicts a further two or three years to return to 2008 growth levels.

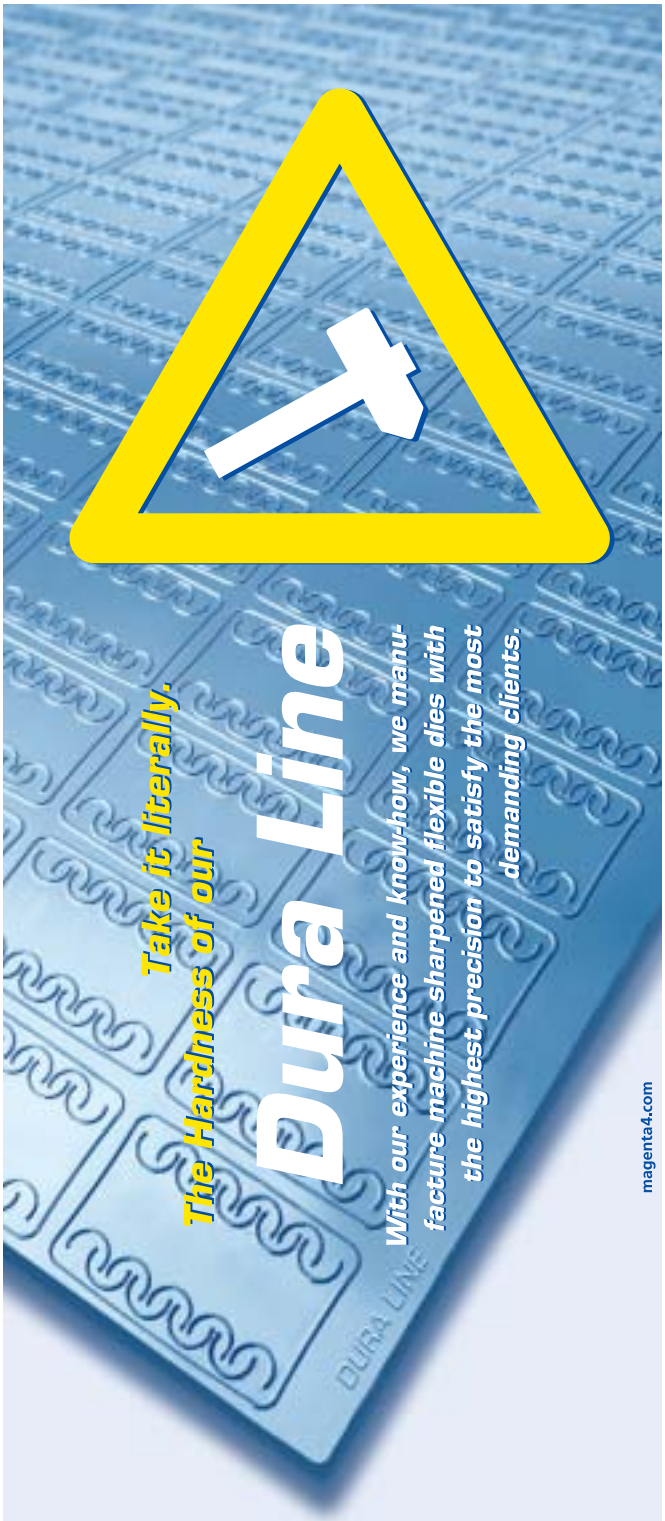
In spite of this, the Xeikon 3300 runs one 8-hour shift. 'It's definitely producing new jobs for us. That's for sure,' says Kinanen. The next stage will be running it for two shifts, and to help fill the press, Auraprint will introduce a web-to-print service before the end of the year.

Auraprint's label division weathered the storm better than its business forms department, and none of the ten redundancies made in spring were from labels. Kinanen says: 'That's also because we believe in labels and we are willing to take slightly slower times for a while.'

PRE-PRESS

Kinanen's advice to printers thinking of investing in a digital machine is to build a solid pre-press system. 'If you have medium and long runs, then you have to be aware that when you add digital, you get a lot of short runs and you won't be ready in reproduction to handle that amount of new jobs. You will get a bottleneck before the machine and then you will have a bottleneck afterwards in slitting because there are lots of job changes.

'I think we already had an excellent job structure for digital printing, because we had a lot of small jobs and short runs in f exo and letterpress. To be honest we sometimes have big difficulties with pre-press but I think now we are in quite good shape.'



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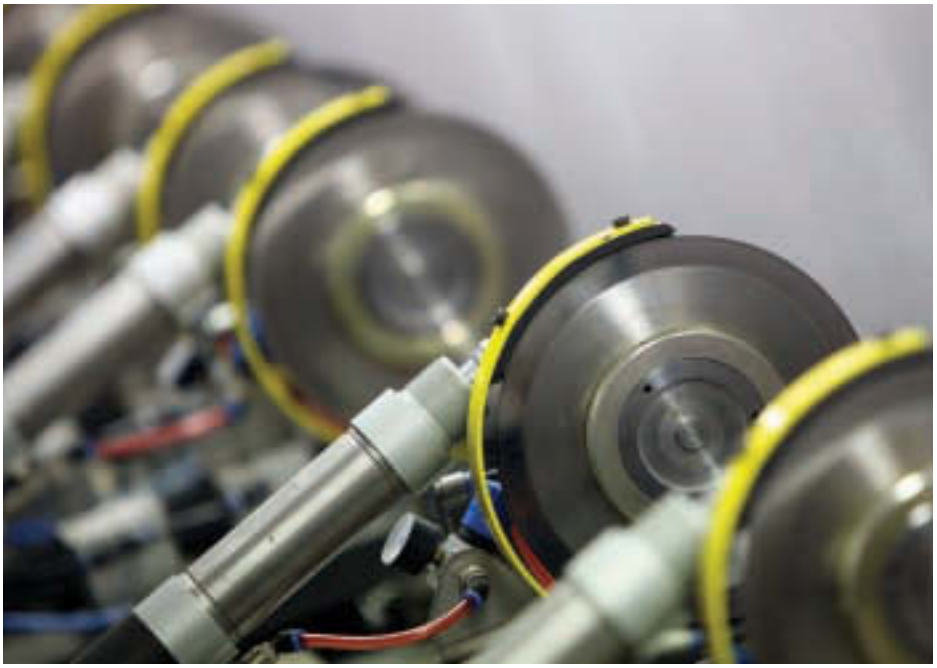

The vital role of release liners

RELEASE LINERS are an essential element in the quality and performance of self-adhesive labels. Mike Fairley visits one of the world's leaders in liner papers production – Ahlstrom – to review the latest technical and sustainability developments

Over the past forty years or so the use of the self-adhesive label has grown from a minority labeling process to become one of the world's leading label technologies – and is still growing above national, regional and international GDP growth rates almost everywhere in the world.

This is perhaps not surprising given that self-adhesive labels can offer more opportunities and solutions than any other form of labeling. More different face materials; more different adhesives; more different inline converting options – and solutions that range from high quality prime product labels on food, pharmaceutical, health and beauty products to high performance industrial applications in the automotive, chemical and aeronautics sectors, as well as a multitude of solutions requiring variable information printing (VIP) and track-and-trace capabilities.

At the heart of this phenomenal growth in self-adhesive labels is a pressure-sensitive face material, an adhesive coating, and a release liner construction made up of a speciality release substrate and a silicone coating with desired release properties. First conceived by Stan Avery back in the 1930s, this complex pressure-sensitive laminate construction is today undoubtedly unique within the world of label technologies, providing a reliable material to carry the label through conversion and then release it at the point of application to the end product.

While the face material and adhesive is perhaps of most immediate concern for label converters and end-users, the silicone release liner is undoubtedly the unsung hero of all pressure-sensitive constructions. It plays both a vital role as the carrier of the pressure-sensitive adhesive and is essential for the quality and performance of the end product – not just of PSA labels but of many other self-adhesive materials. Without it there would be no self-adhesive label industry.

But release liners are at times also viewed as a challenge for the future growth of the industry. Historically seen as a disposable waste material – and making up some 50 percent of the self-adhesive label construction that goes to the customer – the release liner has come under increasing attention in recent years as the environment and green issues have come to the fore.

Certainly, the world's leading release paper manufacturers are well aware of the challenges they face in continually aiming to improve the quality and performance of liners while at the same time to working towards reducing and minimizing the impact of release liners on the environment.

It was to look at some of these issues that *Labels & Labeling* visited the Turin papermaking plant in Italy of the Ahlstrom group. Headquarters of the Ahlstrom Release & Label Paper business area, the Turin facility employees over 500 people and is one of over 30 Ahlstrom mills worldwide, five of which are producing two product families of supercalendered and clay coated release papers in a variety of basis weights, versions and qualities to suit any market need.[from here after chips]

'We are the number one global supplier in the speciality papers market,' said Daniele Borlatto, senior vice president, Release & Label Papers, 'and offer the widest release papers range on the market, covering all PSA applications. Indeed, we have been producing release papers for as long as they

RELEASE PAPER slitting and supercalendering operations (left). Above, state-of-the-art testing facilities

have been on the market, while today our manufacturing capabilities and know-how make us one of the world's most reliable and flexible suppliers. With the need for high-quality release papers still growing rapidly we are certainly very much committed to the future of the pressure-sensitive industry and uniquely positioned to do that with production in two continents.

'To this end, the Turin site hosts a large R&D center for release papers, providing a pulp and paper materials laboratory, a chemical analysis laboratory and a paper laboratory for technical assistance to customers, as well as a pilot center that can reproduce PSA converting processes. We are also at the forefront of working with renewable materials and developing sustainable practices.'

Major changes have occurred in this later area as Ahlstrom is definitely determined to make a key contribution to sustainability. A holistic approach to environmental responsibility starts from the choice of the raw materials and then takes into account the manufacturing process, the product and its end of life.

Looking at raw materials, over 95 percent of the pulp Ahlstrom buys today is under Sustainable Forestry Management (SFM) Chain of Custody certification. As all five plants producing release and label papers are likewise PEFC or FSC Chain of Custody certified, all these products can be supplied with PEFC or FSC certifications.

When buying a certified paper, label converters too can join in these chains if they want to add certification to their own operations and supply chain, making it possible for the label user to trace the raw material from the forest right through to the end product. Issued by a third part auditor, the certification is valid for up to five years.

Talking about the manufacturing process, Ahlstrom has undertaken constant monitoring and improvement of Key Performance Indicators (KPI) for environmental performance and all five plants producing release and label papers are also ISO 14001 certified to meet the highest environmental standards.

The product itself can contribute to the "green challenge". Constant quality improvements over the years have permitted the use of lower grammage papers for labelstock applications. A reduction from 67 to 60 g/sqm saves for example over ten percent of liner material for each million sqm of labels converted. Longer rolls allowed considerable savings on core and wrapping materials as well as on roll-change-related waste at converters. Finally, improvements of surface properties enabled significant reductions of silicone coat weights over the years, or lower curing temperatures. Add all these elements and that's quite an achievement in today's environmentally challenged world.

So what about the issue of liner waste after label application? 'Siliconized liner can be recycled into industrial and packaging grades including for example cardboard, tubes, some tissue papers and into folding board boxes.

'Recent academic studies show that silicone coated papers could technically be recycled also into printing grades, if mixed in small percentages with other post consumer recycled papers' explains Borlatto. 'Nevertheless, liner recycling is only done in quantities of perhaps 5-10 percent at the present time. The big challenge is to get the used liner waste

AHLSTROM'S Turin plant

DANIELE BORLATTO, senior vice president, Release & Label Papers at Ahlstrom

from where the labels have been applied to where it can be recycled – and it must not be far away or transport will be unaffordable. If the supply chain is able to overcome this issue cost-effectively, much more liner waste could be recycled in the future. Technically it is achievable – and already being achieved in some areas – and may eventually be applied for virtually any of our final end-user markets.'

Certainly, if you look at Ahlstrom's Silca supercalendered release paper grades (see table) for example, it can be seen that they suit pretty-well all applications and markets, from prime label applications in food, beverages, consumer and durable products to VIP labels and labels for retail price guns. Additionally, specific Silca Industrial grades are designed for a range of specialty tape and industrial uses. Whatever the application, these papers are optimized for superior performance and trusted by siliconizers worldwide to meet the most rigorous demands.

'Available in a variety of basis weights, versions and qualities, our range of liners papers suits any market need' adds Marco Martinez, marketing communications director, Release & Label Papers at Ahlstrom. 'The Silica Speed grades for example, offer optimum silicone coverage, reduced silicone coat weight, a stable release, superior anchorage, maximum flexibility of silicone formulations and improved die-cutting performance.

'Outside of the Silca range of supercalendered release papers, we also offer the Silco range of coated release papers that are used for office labels, self-adhesive graphics, promotional stickers, hygiene and medical products, self-adhesive postage stamps and many other self-adhesive materials.

'The development of release papers for the label market requires these to be optimized for successful processing through several converting steps:

- Silicone coating and lamination
- Label printing and die-cutting
- Label dispensing.

Our technical customer service & development team in Turin is constantly working to ensure an even better performance from our liner papers. This also means regularly co-operating with the world's leading silicone and adhesive suppliers, as well bringing benefits to all our customers and end-users.

'But we don't stop there. Indeed, each of our other release liner mills in Brazil (Jacareì), France (La Gère, Stenay) and Germany (Osnabrück) have their own development centers too, fully equipped for testing all release paper properties and customer end-user requirements. Additionally, we can rely on the support of Ahlstrom's world-class corporate research center near Lyon.'

So where does Ahlstrom see its business over the next five years or so? For Borlatto the challenges are quite clear: 'We will continue to support our PSA business worldwide; we will continue to offer close, long standing support to customers; we will continue to create competitive products to help customers succeed in their own businesses; we will continuously improve the quality and the global reach of our worldwide service network, and we thus aim at growing our global market share.'

There seems little doubt that Ahlstrom will meet these challenges and remain at the forefront of release liner technology, markets and applications for many years to come.

TABLE OF AHLSTROM SILCA RANGE LABELSTOCK

PRODUCT	COLOURS	g/m²	MAIN APPLICATIONS OF THE LINER	RELEASE PAPER PROPERTIES
SILCA CLASSIC		57-90 g/m²	Paper and non-paper PSA label rolls for primary labeling of food, beverages, consumer and durable products. Roll VIP labeling.	High smoothness High density High caliper consistency High transparency for photo-cell detection
SILCA SCK		62-72 g/m²	Paper and non paper PSA label rolls for primary labeling of food, beverages, consumer and durable products. Demanding die-cutting applications due to filmic face material	Optimised density Very high caliper consistency Very even formation Highly controlled cleanliness
SILCA SCK		67 g/m²	Tailored to North American standards. Paper and non-paper PSA label rolls for primary labeling of food, beverages, consumer and durable products. Roll VIP labeling	Tailored to North American standards Exellent siliconability Medium density Medium transparency
SILCA SPEED		57-65 g/m²	Specially developed for top speed converting. Paper and non-paper PSA label rolls for primary labeling of food, beverages, consumer and durable products.	Unique surface properties Very high smoothness Outstanding silicone anchorage Controlled silicone consumption at high coating speeds
SILCA LIGHT		50 g/m²	Speciality application PSA label rolls like portable price labelers, supermarket scales corrective tapes	Low basis weight/thickness High transparency High mechanical strength

SILCA release papers are suitable for all silicone systems: solvent free, solvent, emulsion and uv.
All Ahlstrom release papers can be supplied with FSC and PEFC certifications

TLMI catches rising wave

DANIELLE JERSCHEFSKE reports from the TLMI Annual Meeting in Arizona as North American converters look for new ways to profit from the ending of the recession

The TLMI 2009 Annual Meeting was titled From Crisis to Confidence: Capturing Opportunities out of Volatility. Delegates listened to Dr Barry Asmus, senior economist for the National Center for Policy analysis, who analyzed the current economic climate, future possibilities for the United States and the nation's global relationships. Dr Asmus stirred up controversy by claiming 'sustainability' is just a trend.

Tim Sanders, previously a solutions officer at Yahoo! and a specialist in evaluating the interaction between a business and society, countered that sustainability and social responsibility will be areas critical to future business success. The event wrapped up with a presentation designed to provoke 'breakthrough thinking' by artist Erik Wahl.

A number of awards were given out. 3M and Spear, Inc. each received TLMI Environmental Leadership Awards (see page 22). The award recognizes TLMI member companies that have consistently demonstrated a commitment to progressive environmental practices across a range of areas including solid waste reduction, recycling, waste or energy recovery, the implementation of new 'clean' technology and/or processes, and the implementation of an education program.

Calvin Frost, CEO of Channeled Resources Group and TLMI environmental committee chair, commented: 'This is our seventh year in presenting these awards and recognizing leaders of environmental awareness in our industry. We have begun and will continue to change the culture of our industry, and this year's winners should be proud.'

TLMI selected Dave McDowell, chairman of McDowell Label and Screen Printing, as Converter of the Year. McDowell began his industry career with a decade working for Avery Label. In 1981 he founded McDowell Label and Screen Printing and for 13 years the company served as a label brokerage supplying organizations like the Dallas Cowboys and Apple Computer. In 1994 McDowell Label and Screen Printing purchased its first press and over the course of the next 15 years grew into what is today one of North America's premier prime label converters, printing high quality labels, serving the health and beauty, nutraceutical, wine and spirits, beverage, food and pet care sectors.

McDowell joined TLMI in 1995, and has been involved with the association's environmental, liner recycling, and health and safety committees. He currently chairs the membership committee. He has been a member of the TLMI board of directors for the past half decade and is currently TLMI's vice chairman.

Gary Smith, vice president, sales, for RotoMetrics, was meanwhile named Supplier of the Year. Smith also started his career with Avery Label Company, helping pioneer the sale of ultra-clear pharmaceutical labels, battery labels, four color process and multilayered promotional labels. Smith joined RotoMetrics in 1990, where he developed a strong leadership role and a close rapport with the company's global customer base. Smith recently served a term on the TLMI's board of directors and was previously involved with the association's membership committee.


Brian Wenger, Ari Wanderwalde, Roger Pellow and Ken Stack
Bill Hickey and David Kaylor
Environmental Leadership Award Spear USA
Dave McDavell converter of year
Environmental Leadership Award 3M
Gary Smith supplier of year
Dennis Trice, Sandy Wurzburger, Kathleen Alaimo and John Wurzburger
Mindy + Jim Kissner and Judi Jackson

inks

TO make the most of the flexographic process, Steve Utschig, flexographic printing instructor at Fox Valley Technical College, argues that more attention needs to be paid to ink handling and management

Flexography quality has improved exponentially over the past several years. Advances in anilox roll technology coupled with the doctor blade metering system provide a very controlled ink film thickness to the plate. Together with new pre-press technology as well as improvement in plate image capture and transfer, flexography is able to achieve print results near to litho and gravure quality.

Unfortunately, the same improvements that are seen in the mechanics of the printing process aren't always tied to the training that operators need to work within this more complex environment. Think of a two foot diameter target on a wall five feet away from a person with a dart. Throwing at that target and hitting it is fairly easy. Now replace that target with one about three inches in diameter and see if the target can be hit. That is analogous to how the flexo process is now. Demands are made for higher and higher quality and the target of acceptability gets more and more of a challenge to hit.

The components in the printing process dictate how that process works. After all the work has been done to get a job to the press, it is up to the press operator to produce the product. The biggest variable that the operator has to deal with is getting an ink film from the anilox to the substrate. This is where major complications can occur. Many of these operators may know a bit about ink control but may not have a good grasp of why they need to do what they need to do.

INK CONTROL – BACK TO BASICS

• COMPONENTS

Flexo ink is made up of four component parts. These parts are the colorant, the vehicle, additives and solvent.

The colorant gives the ink its hue or the color seen. It is usually made up of pigments which are inert and solid by nature. That means that they don't dissolve. By rule, the more solids you have in a liquid the more of a challenge it will be to get them across the ink train to the substrate. The reason process inks in flexo are a challenge is that these inks will be printed at the thinnest ink films and highest pigment content.

The vehicle performs two functions. It is made up of various resins which provide transport for the pigment across the ink train and also many of the properties that ink needs to have to meet the end user's requirements. It is these resins for the most part which will dictate the working conditions of the ink.

The additives in an ink will be present by no more than 3 percent of volume. The functions of additives are to help the ink transfer better and sometimes to add an additional property to the ink. The most common additives for a water ink are pH adjustors, defoamers and glycol.

The solvents are mostly water and sometimes alcohol or other surfactants to help the ink to flow or wet out.

A simple analogy to understand how a flexo water ink works is to think of pigments as people by a roadway. The people get into vehicles that surround them. The solvent is the roadway the resin/pigment travels on and it is the additives that make the highway smooth.

Ink systems are put together in such a way that the components are in certain percentages or in balance with each other for the ink to work at its optimum. What the operator needs to do when operating a press is to maintain that balance.

• RESOLUBILITY

When the ink fills the anilox cell and is then metered by the doctor blade, not all of the ink within the cell is released when plate contact is made. And not all of the ink that is metered to the plate makes it to the substrate when contact is made. This is called an ink split, and the ink that is left behind begins to change.

As the ink sits in the cell or on the plate, the resin will begin to separate from the pigment. Once the pigment particles touch, precipitation occurs, trapping ink in the cell, causing plugging or 'stay' on the surface of the plate, which leads to dirty print - or the condition called 'bridging' if working with process printing. The ink is not drying; it is resolubilizing.

As the ink stagnates, it is up to the operator to make sure that the additional ink brought to the anilox and plate has the proper balance to reverse the resin pulling away from the pigment. This will draw ink that was stagnating back into the stream to be moved forward in the ink train, and ultimately the substrate.

The key ingredient to maintaining the pigment is the pH. As the pH goes down, the resolubility reaction will be compromised and can easily be misinterpreted as a drying issue. The operator, seeing dirty print, might think that the ink is drying too fast. In

reaction, the operator may add glycol, which is the worst thing to do. Glycol is a very slow additive that hinders drying to the point of causing blocking, trapping, and other transfer problems.

KEY TERMINOLOGY

- **Reducing:** The process by which pH-adjusted solvent blend is used to lighten up the color of an ink at the expense of the pigment, vehicle and additives.
- **Extending:** Adding the complete ink system to the ink minus the pigment to lighten the color of the ink. This is the preferred method of adjusting color strength short of changing the anilox roll.

WORKING ON THE PRESS

With this background information on ink control, the operator is able to run the press more predictably and for optimum quality.When you think ink, think: pigments, vehicle, additives, solvents. Anytime anything is added to the ink, think what component is being added and how is it affecting the other components, or the balance that makes the ink work. Before moving ink from one container to another it must be thoroughly mixed. Flexo inks tend to separate. The pH of the ink needs to be checked before making contact with the anilox roll. If this is not done the anilox could plug almost immediately. Once the pH has been checked and is found in range, then the viscosity can be checked.

The ink supplier must provide the pH range and viscosity range of the ink systems used. This is the only way the operator will know how to maintain balance of the ink. The ink supplier also needs to make known to the operator what additives can be used, for what and how much.

As the settings are being made, it is important to set the ink to keep as little on the plate as possible. The correct procedure is:

- Achieve full print on the substrate;
- Pull back on the ink setting until the print misses completely - this will clean the plate. Then go back in to get full print and do the impression setting;
- Only pull back until print breaks and go back in.

This procedure only works if the ink is under control or in balance. Operators need to do everything they can to avoid washing plates, which can cause plate damage and/or plate lift. If the plate requires washing, a soft hair bristle brush and a pH-adjusted solution should be used. The plate should be blotted, never rubbed, with a lintless cloth or towel. This will help to prevent the plate surface from wearing or roughening, which ends up causing a whole slew of printing issues.

DEALING WITH PROCESS INKS

For many print runs the process colors remain in the decks for multiple jobs. These inks tend to go out of balance over time, not only because the solvent and pH adjuster is used up, but also the other components as well. It is a balance issue again. With these inks - and others where not a lot of ink is being used - small adds of fresh ink should be made. In the olden days of printing this would have been called sweetening the ink. This helps to bring the ink back into balance.

If the above procedures are followed, there will fewer printing problems. Most problems with inks come not from the inks themselves, but from how they are handled on press.

ADJUSTING COLOR STRENGTH

The best case scenario is when a color is put into a print deck in its proper pH and high viscosity range (as supplied by the ink manufacturer) and the color is too strong. The ink should be reduced, but only to the midpoint of its viscosity range. Remember that a finite ink film is being used and the balance of that film needs to be maintained. If an ink is reduced too much, it will at the expense of the vehicle that is so important for the transport of the pigment across the ink train.

If the color is still too dark at viscosity midpoint, then extender should be used to lighten the color. Extender is by definition the complete ink system without the pigment and could be used by itself as an overprint.

The final point is that if anything is added to the ink - other than normal reducing and pH adjustment - it must be documented on the container.

Flexographic printing is an easy process. Yet with the advances that have been made in quality to better compete with other methods, it has become more of a challenge. Incorrect procedures make the process more difficult. If flexo quality is to continue to improve and remain competitive, it is vital that the press operators and everyone involved in the printing process are knowledgeable in the practical methods of flexography.

STEVE UTSCHIG is f exographic printing instructor at Fox Valley Technical College

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Steve Utschig is f exographic printing instructor on the package and label printing program at Fox Valley Technical College in Appleton, Wisconsin. Fox Valley has narrow web, wide web and corrugated f exo presses and also provides training at customer sites. The presses are available for R&D by printers or industry suppliers. Steve has been working at Fox Valley for 20 years, following college and ten years employment in the f exo industry. His responsibilities include developing and implementing training programs. Steve has participated in FTA Forums, was a technical editor for Converting Magazine from 1996 to 2004, and is a recipient of a NISOD Excellence in Teaching Award from the University of Texas – Austin.

TECHNO NEWS

DOOR OPENS TO FLEXO LENTICULAR PRINTING

Printing and converting companies now have the ability to manufacture 3D and motion images with flexographic lenticular, by utilizing a combination of lenticular roll-stock from Pacur and interlacing technology with Kodak's new Flexcel-NX plates provided by Pixalen Studio.

While printing lenticular effects on flexographic presses has been attempted before, issues around print resolution, dot size, and press registration have prevented its success, says Pixalen. The introduction of higher resolution imaging devices such as Kodak's Flexcel-NX Imagine System, combined with prepress and interlacing technology from Pixalen Studio, and rolled lens stock from Pacur, has now made 'direct-to-lens' lenticular flexographic printing a reality.

'The Flexcel-NX system is amazing. The dot size is extremely precise - and combined with our Chromalen interlacing technology, it's what you need to produce great looking flexographic lenticular,' says Tim Goggins, director of Pixalen Studio. 'Preparing the art files for lenticular, and supplying the high-resolution plates is crucial to making this a viable printing option for many of the companies that couldn't afford to go out and buy the new Kodak system.'

The Chromalen technology developed by Pixalen Studio is the keystone of the process. Chromalen is claimed to eliminate the registration problems of conventional lenticular flexographic printing while simultaneously eliminating 'refresh' or 'parallax shift' in images. Pacur is currently stocking four standard roll widths including, 10", 13", 16" and 20" with 6" cores, and can manufacture custom roll widths based on order volume. Pacur and Pixalen have also established a starter package including, roll-stock, art-files, Flexcel-NX plates, and press-side support to give companies a jump start printing lenticular.

'Adding motion or 3D effects to a label is going to be a great way to give a package design added value,' commented Bruce Hammerbeck, vice president of marketing for Pacur. 'There is no doubt brand owners will see the value of motion graphics for higher-end packaging options, new product introductions, or a stealth tool to deal with a crowded category space.'

MM LENGTH CORRECTION SYSTEM COMBATS STRETCH

Muller Martini claims its new StretchCorrect technology combats the tendency of web offset presses to stretch thin films during the printing process, ensuring that the printing image is the correct length.

Extremely thin films are stretched in the web offset printing press and behave like a rubber band that has been pulled tight. When an image is printed onto the stretched film, the image is the correct length when the film is in its stretched state. When the product leaves the press, the printed image appears too short because the material is no longer stretched – the film has returned to its original length and the image along with it.

Thanks to the StretchCorrect package, Muller Martini says it can guarantee that images printed on its Alprinta V web offset press will be the correct length, even for materials with highly variable elasticity, and using a single format set for a wide variety of products. The Alprinta V uses carbon-fiber blankets and plate cylinders driven by an additional servo drive, which allows the length of the printed image to be modified without impacting quality and without the need for formatting or change wheels.

Offset printing technology uses inks with a significantly higher tack value than flexo or gravure inks, which results in the ink being more resistant to decomposition in the printing gap. The ink tries to climb up the web on the rubber blanket. The stickiness, or tack, of the offset printing ink is responsible for this effect. Web tension control must be applied in web offset printing presses in order to counteract the effect. Muller Martini says differential ink supply to individual units or different configurations of draw rollers, can cause the material web to be stretched unevenly in places, but StretchCorrect allows the operator to correct these deviations, enabling web offset presses to penetrate new market segments.

To demonstrate the technology in action, Muller Martini has set up a six-color Alprinta 74V with two flexography printing units in its demo center in the southern German city of Maulburg.

Focus on latin america

JAMES QUIRK reports on material manufacturing in Central America; the region's first installation of a Nilpeter Caslon unit; MPS's continued expansion and Avery's new appointment

SAN SALVADOR city early in the morning

COMARCA SEEKS INVESTMENT IN CENTRAL AMERICA
SELF-ADHESIVE MATERIAL MANUFACTURING

There have been many victims of the global economic downturn. But as seeds of growth begin to sprout – and, in the label industry, perhaps it was at Labelexpo Europe where they were first sown – there will be opportunities to be found among the ashes left by recession.

One example is in Central America. In circumstances that will be familiar to many, the only self-adhesive material manufacturer in the region has been forced to cease production after being hit by the downturn. El Salvador-based Comarca, which in recent years started manufacturing self-adhesive materials and distributing throughout Central America and planned to do so also in the Caribbean, is now seeking investment (or investors) in order to return to production.

Until a few years ago, the region's converters had to import materials from a variety of countries, such as Colombia, Mexico and the USA, as well as from Europe. In 2005, however, a group of professionals in San Salvador, El Salvador's capital, founded Comarca (Convertidora de Materiales Recubiertos de Centro America) in order to cater to the region's self-adhesive material consumption with local production.

The economic crisis, however, as in many parts of the world, has hit Central America hard. Comarca, struggling for liquidity, has been forced to suspend its manufacturing, and the company is now actively seeking investment in order to be able to return to business.

Despite the recent economic difficulties, Jaime A Ordóñez, Comarca's president, remains convinced of the region's potential: 'Central America alone [the region from Guatemala down to Panama] has a monthly consumption of more than a thousand metric tons of self-adhesive materials – from basic paper labels to advanced filmic substrates,' he says, a figure confirmed by the Salvadorian Association of Industrial Companies (Asociación Salvadorena de Industriales, ASI). 'There is also a burgeoning interest in RFID-enabled and smart labels. The Caribbean, meanwhile, is more of an emerging market, but already displaying signs of good growth in self-adhesive material consumption.'

Ordóñez describes the main applications for self-adhesive materials in the region as being price tagging in shops and supermarkets; barcoding; pallet identification in the supply chain; and in industries such as beverages and fruit. Furthermore, he identifies a strong textile and garment industry throughout Central America which also offers opportunities for label material supply.

'There are many label converters in the region,' says Ordóñez. 'But now they have to return to importing materials, at a greater expense. With local production, we were able to offer competitive prices, quick delivery times and – crucially – smaller orders – allowing companies to have a lower inventory which then frees up money for investment in other areas. At the moment, in order to get competitive label and freight prices, material must be imported in containers of a minimum of 20 metric tons by boat or lorry.'

Comarca was founded with an initial


JAIME A ORDÓÑEZ, Comarca's president

share holders investment of USD $150,000, and subsequent investment has taken that figure to a total of USD $500,000. Ordóñez points to a lack of liquidity for the purchasing of prime materials as the main reason behind the company's recent struggle. 'With the rapid growth we were experiencing, the need for extra capital became our weakness – due to the politics of local banks, which shut their doors to new enterprises and only support companies that are already established,' he says.

The company has put together a comprehensive business plan to discuss with potential investors, and Ordóñez believes there is potential for the tripling of material production and sales if money is raised.

'Our financial advisors tell us that if new partners are able to obtain credit for 120 days just for purchasing papers, the investment needed for the company to pull itself back up will be around USD $200,000,' says Ordóñez. 'But if adhesives and silicones can also be bought on credit, then that figure would be greatly reduced. Because of the economic situation we find ourselves in, the owners are open to any negotiation with potential investors.'

Contact jordonez@comarcasa.com for more information.

HARPERSCIENTIFIC APPOINTS DISTRIBUTOR FOR CENTRAL AMERICA

HarperScientific, the printing and coating supplies division of global anilox roll supplier Harper Corporation of America, has appointed Brasal S.A de C.V. as exclusive distributor of HarperScientific products in Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama.

Jim Harper, vice president of HarperScientific, said: 'By expanding our distribution in this way, we hope to make our products available to more printers who can benefit from cost savings associated with the excellent pressroom preparation our products offer.'

INDUSTRIAL INKJET OPENS LATIN AMERICA OFFICE

Industrial Inkjet 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, an industrial inkjet specialist, single-pass print engine manufacturer and distributor and technical support center for Konica Minolta, has appointed Esteban Marin to head up the new operation, which will offer sales and technical support to the region.

Managing director John Corrall said: 'The region 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.'

MPS CONTINUES TO EXPAND LATIN AMERICAN PRESENCE

MPS has continued the expansion and consolidation of its operations in Latin America with the opening of an office in Santiago, Chile. Headed up by MPS Latin America director Jaime Dagnino Jr, the site becomes the press manufacturer's regional headquarters.

In Mexico, meanwhile, MPS partner ProFlexo International, an independent Latin American distributor of a variety of label printing equipment, has taken over the exclusive sales and support for MPS presses in the country, aided by an experienced sales team and two dedicated MPS engineers.

These developments are all part of the company's growth strategy throughout Latin America. 'We are strengthening the market with sales and service offices throughout the region,' reveals Dagnino Jr. 'We are at the stage now, in terms of machine installations, where we need local presence in anticipation of further growth.' Existing distribution deals in Argentina and Brazil have also been strengthened, he says.

The company's two most recent installations in the region have been 8-color MPS EF packaging presses, with web widths of 26 inches, to printers in Mexico and Colombia. Dagnino Jr reports a trend in narrow web converters seeking wider machines that can offer both an increase in productivity and access to new markets. 'There are huge cost savings, in terms of productivity and reduced set up waste, with the mid-web machines,' he says. 'Converters are looking increasingly for multi-substrate presses which can help them develop new products and target new markets.'

Two other recent sales, of MPS flexo presses, have come from existing customers. Flexoprint, a converter based in the Brazilian state of Parana, installed its first EF 410 in March this year – its first investment in foreign printing equipment. Impressed with the press's speed and productivity, and the new products it was able to produce, the company ordered a second machine at Labelexpo Europe, just six months later. La Etiqueta, founded in 1934 and one of Mexico's oldest print shops, also purchased a second MPS press just nine months after the installation of its first in 2008.

'We are very encouraged going into 2010,' says Jaime Dagnino Jr. 'We sold 11 machines during Labelexpo Europe, an impressive figure for a company our size which compares favorably to the press sales during the show of some of the bigger manufacturers. Our business has been growing even through the recession, and we have continued introducing innovations such as our low cost E-print press, automated press controls such as iControl, and short web EC press. In Latin America, which has perhaps avoided the worst effects of the recession as experienced in the United States and Europe, we are receiving a lot of interest in our products and selling machines regularly.'

RONALDO MELLO, Avery's new VP Materials South America

AVERY APPOINTS VP FOR MATERIALS SOUTH AMERICA

Avery Dennison has appointed Ronaldo Cappa De Otero Mello as vice president and general manager, Materials South America. Based in Vinhedo, Brazil, Mello is responsible for the development and growth of Avery Dennison's businesses in South America.

Mello joins Avery Dennison from Itap Bemis, the largest flexible packaging company in Latin America, where he held a number of management positions during the last 12 years, culminating in director of its Dixie Toga Flexible Division. He brings more than 25 years of experience in the packaging industry, having worked for local and multinational companies in general management, sales, business development and finance roles.

'Throughout his professional career, Ronaldo has led key changes in the business units that he managed, creating new business environments and developing closer alliances with clients,' said Don Nolan, group vice president of Avery Dennison Roll Materials.

VENEZUELAN CONVERTER INSTALLS NILPETER FA-3 WITH CASLON UNIT

Venezuelan label converter Etiquetas Grafalco has installed an FA-3 flexo press from Nilpeter with an inline Caslon digital printing unit. The machine, installed in September, is the first FA-3 press in Venezuela and the first Caslon unit to be sold in Latin America.

Thirty percent of Etiquetas Grafalco's production is dedicated to cosmetics labeling, while the company also operates in the household goods and pharmaceutical sectors. The FA-3 joins two Nilpeter FA 2500 presses, two Mark Andy 830s and machines from Newfoil, Rotoflex and AB Graphic at the company's 1,700 square meter facility in Caracas.

'We wanted to move into digital printing in order to cater to short runs, of which there are a lot in Venezuela,' explained Alberto Coifman, director of Etiquetas Grafalco, which was founded in 1993 and employs 45 people. 'It is a great advantage to be able to offer both conventional and digital technology from the same plant, and the press has improved our productivity by nearly three times.' Coifman expects increased business in the food label sector as a result of the installation.

The FA-3 press, which has a 13 inch web width, is made up of six flexo units and the 4-color Caslon unit, while also hosting an array of additional features, including hot stamping, cold foiling, UV laminating, slitting, corona treatment and automatic register control.

'The advantage of having the digital capability inline,' says Coifman, 'is that it allows excellent finishing options, which are so crucial to label production.' He reports that the machine's high speed is another benefit, calling it 'much quicker' than his existing FA 2500s.

Nilpeter's global sales manager Jesper Jorgensen reports that the majority of Caslon installations have been inline, citing converters' need for finishing capabilities as a key factor, though the machine can also operate as a stand-alone unit. 'We are proud that Etiquetas Grafalco is recognizing the benefits of a combined solution which can bring the best of both worlds,' he said. 'The finely tuned register control technology brings the two technologies together.'

According to Alberto Coifman, future plans for Etiquetas Grafalco include investing in in-mold label production and shrink sleeve technology. There is little of either in Venezuela, he says, and shrink sleeves are mainly imported from Colombia.

Export from Venezuela is complicated by issues with pricing and tariffs, so Etiquetas Grafalco serves its local market, made up of 28 million inhabitants. 'Throughout our 16 years, we have been growing constantly,' said Coifman.

NILPETER FA line with in-line Caslon unit

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If you can't complete this crossword...

DOWN

1 The individual element in the halftone printing process (3).

2 The contact point between two driven rollers (3).

3 The image transferred from the printing plate or cylinder to the label substrate (10).

4 Occurs when the adhesive squeezes out from under the backing in a pressure-sensitive laminate (4).

5 The process of raising a design or image above the label surface using a set of matched male and female dies (9).

6 Estimated time of arrival (3).

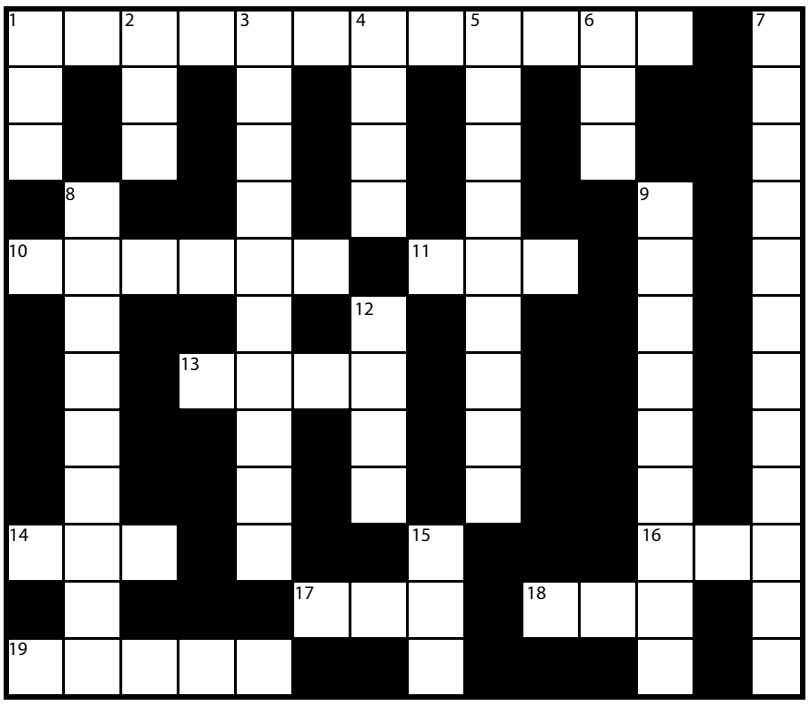
7 A set of characters or bars in a bar code which represents both alphabetic and numeric characters as well as symbols (12).

8 The areas of a printed image which are nearest to white (9).

9 Metal roller or drum that is cooled internally with water (5 and 4).

12 Abbreviation commonly used for capital letters (4).

15 Label placed inside the mold before a plastic bottle is blown (3).



ACROSS

1 A photoelectric instrument that measures reflected or transmitted light on colors or printed products (12).

10 A term used to describe various printing defects, such as spots or imperfections in the printing (6).

11 International Organisation for Standards (3).

13 The administration in the US Department of Labor that ensures a safe and healthy workplace (4).

14 The acronym or abbreviation used for primary colors of light (3).

16 A method of reading (scanning) printed text copy with software capable of recognizing and converting the scanned images into an electronic equivalent (3).

17 Original equipment manufacturer (3).

18 Thickness measurement of thin materials used in some countries (3).

19 Material to be printed or converted. Also referred to as the substrate (5)

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CORPORATE CULTURE

How to deal with scope creep

Maybe you've been there before….What happens when your client asks you to do more than you had originally agreed and quoted on? As with most things in business, getting what you want comes down to communication.

This question dances around 2 issues.

Issue 1: What protection do you have in your quotes?

Whenever you submit a quote for a piece of work, you should always make sure you include a statement that outlines what you will do if the scope of the work changes or increases. For example, you might say:

'In the case that additional work is required beyond that outlined in this quote, xyz company will provide a further quote based on the scope of this work,' or

'In the event that the scope changes or increases materially, xyz company will requote based on the new or additional scope.'

This inclusion lets your clients know that your process is to requote formally, rather than just begin to work at an hourly rate. Set the expectation up front and you'll have no trouble implementing it when you need to.

Issue 2: What sort of relationship do you have with your clients?

But you want to be careful that your focus on providing a service doesn't result in you having a 'servant-master' relationship with your clients. So they say 'jump', and you ask 'how high?'

If you are stuck in this servant-master groove your first instinct is to agree to the customers wishes, regardless of their impact on you. So when they ask if you can spend just a couple more hours on a job, and charge them on an hourly basis, your first instinct might be to say yes.

Now imagine you have an equal relationship with your clients – they have a need which you are filling, they value your expertise, and you value their custom – equally. Under these circumstances you would respond to the same request differently.

Firstly you would make a decision about whether you wanted to do the work, or whether you wanted to recommend someone else. Sometimes our clients ask us to do things just because we are there, not because it's actually our specialty or our desire! It's OK to say no – you are actually reminding your clients about your niche, which is the very reason they hired you.

Assuming there are times when you do want to continue doing the work, you would remind the client of your process, which is clearly stated in your original quote. You might say:

'I am happy to do this work. I charge based on completing a specific job, not by the hour, so I will provide you with a new quote based on the job as you've described it'.

You need to be committed to finding ways to quote for a job, regardless of how small that job is. Even if it is only going to take a few hours to complete, it's still more about the value you are providing than the time you are spending.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

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