

# INDUSTRY LOOKS FORWARD TO 2017

Global growth predicted as consumer economies continue to boom

# LABELS & LABELING

THE WORLD OF PACKAGE PRINTING

## SELLING THE SHEET-FED DIGITAL PACKAGE

The growing role of sheet-fed digital presses in package printing

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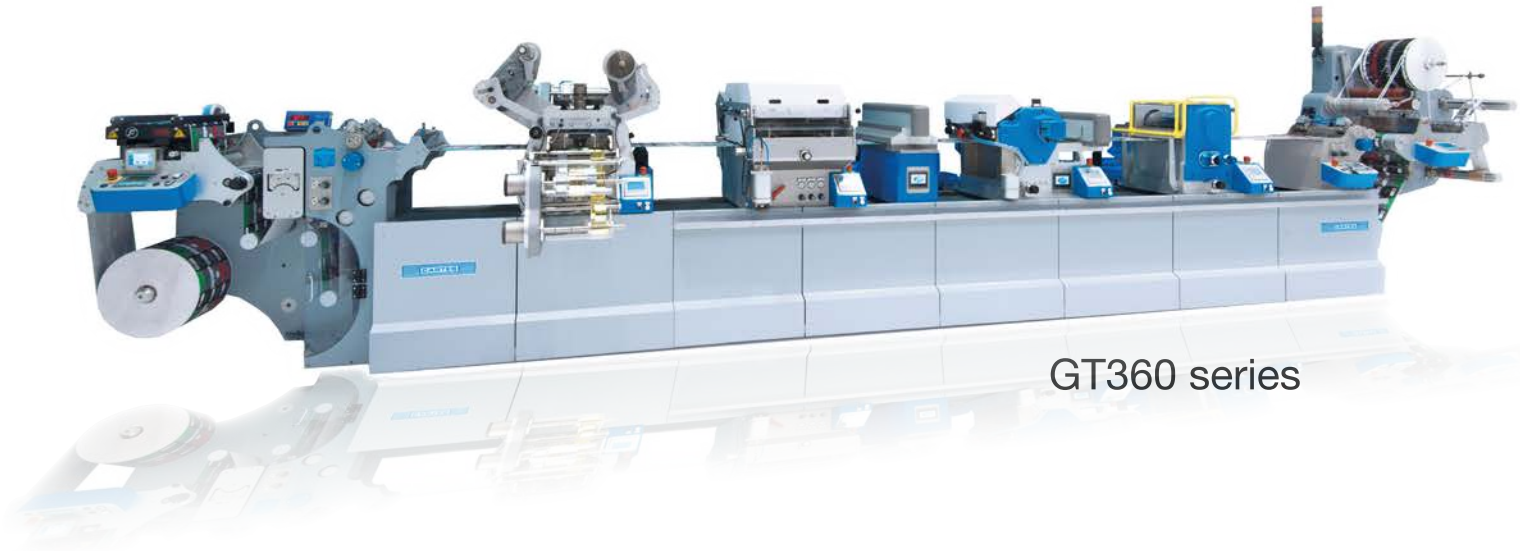


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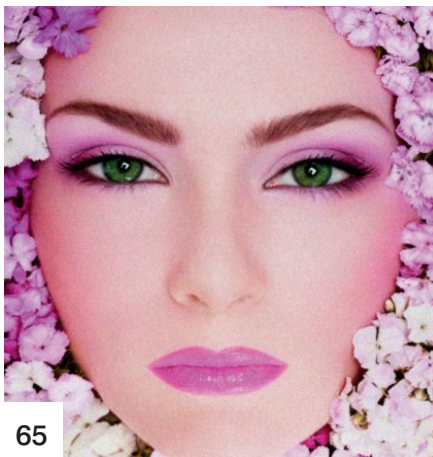
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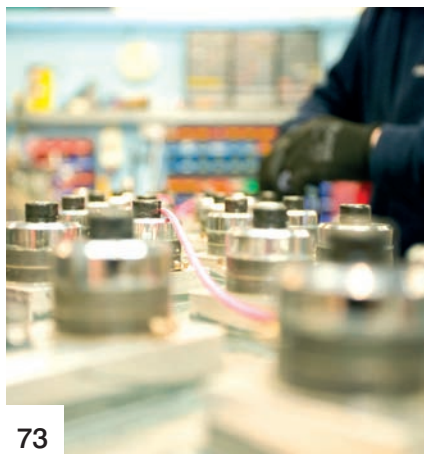




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### labels&labeling.com

The Labels & Labeling website presents daily news and exclusive content generated by its international editorial team and addressing the most pertinent developments in the label and package printing industry



### 2017 predictions (news)

The label and package printing industry shares its thoughts about the year ahead



### Trend spotting (opinion)

L&L group managing editor Andy Thomas identifies three key trends of note for the industry



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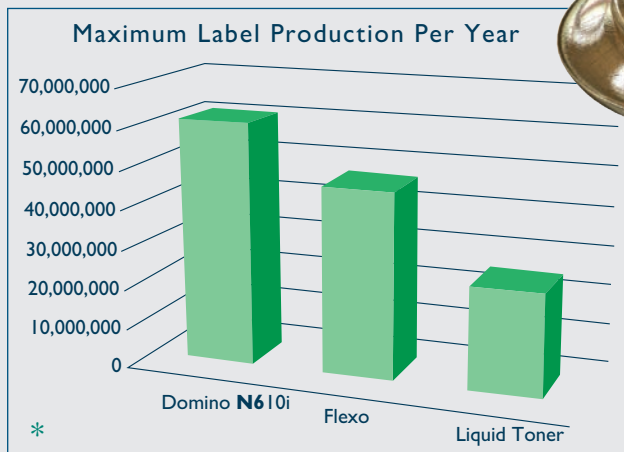
A conference session at Labelexpo Americas 2016 discussed the adoption of new printing techniques to revolutionize design and branding



### Hybrid printing systems (opinion)

A trend at last year's Labelexpo Europe was hybrid label printing. Gallus asks, is the future already here?

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## Ten years ago (*L&L* issue 6, 2006)



**P8** *L&L* deputy editor James Quirk embarked on a tour of Latin American converters and suppliers in Brazil, Argentina and Chile in the run-up to May's regional Label Summit. Companies visited included Brazilian material supplier Novelpoint and press manufacturer Etirama; in Chile wine label specialist Etiprak and self-adhesive paper supplier Dipisa. The Argentine leg included leading converters Multilabel and Artes Gráficas Modernas.



**P38** Today, narrow and mid web printing of flexible packaging substrates and cartons is a recognized avenue for diversification for label converters, but this was much rarer ten years ago when James Quirk reported on a package printing seminar hosted by Gidue in Turate, Italy. The conference focused on nitrogen inerting to reduce odor and for better adhesion on non-absorbent substrates, as well shrink sleeving and applying primers for print and adhesion consistency.



**P53** *L&L*'s Barry Hunt looked at whether roll offset printing was set to grow in the narrow web industry. Key players in the rotary market, as today, were Nilpeter with its MO-line, Gallus RCS line, and the now discontinued Gidue Xpannd. The forms-press manufacturers such as Edelman and Drent Goebel (which had just taken over RDP Marathon) were redesigning their presses to take account of the requirements of the label market.



**P68** North America editor Danielle Jerschefske looked at an example of smart label technology entering the marketplace. Timestrip developed a practical way of monitoring elapsed time and integrated that technology into Proctor & Gamble's Febreeze product and a range of air filters. Consumers could also directly purchase Timestrip fridgestrips, freezerstrips and room temperature strips from Timestrip's on-line store.

## What you're looking at...



What have visitors to [labelsandlabeling.com](http://labelsandlabeling.com) been looking at recently

**News:** The M&A ball keeps rolling. Multi Packaging Solutions' acquisition of AJS Labels is the latest development, and follows Lintec taking over Mactac Americas, Outlook Group's merger with M&A Packaging, Saica Group acquiring Americk Packaging and Flextrus acquiring Mediaköket Grafiska. Inovar Packaging's acquisition of LabelPrint America had its CEO, John Attayek, commenting on executing a strategic plan for growth, both organically and through acquisitions in partnership with business owners and management, building regionally based prime label and flexible packaging businesses across the US. 'We are looking for targeted label

and packaging companies, in combination with business owners and management, who align with our culture and overall strategy,' said Attayek.

Organic growth has been an underlying factor for numerous suppliers and their recent investments. This has seen the absorption-type merger of Toyo Ink Europe and Toyo Ink Europe Plastic Colorant with Toyo Ink Europe Specialty Chemicals; Siegwark open its new INKube packaging inks technology center in Shanghai; and Huhtamäki confirm three new manufacturing units, one in Egypt and two in north-east India, to boost growth in its flexible packaging business segment.

## Skills gap Editor's note

**A**s *L&L* went to press, we heard of the closure of the DiTrollo Flexographic Institute in Chicago, Illinois. Founded by Vince DiTrollo 17 years ago, the institute offered narrow web industry-specific training for flexographic press operators. It quickly won the support of key industry suppliers. Vince DiTrollo told *L&L* that it was becoming increasingly difficult to find funding at state and government levels to make the institute economically viable.

The DiTrollo Institute launched the careers of many press-men and women and provided an invaluable resource for converters in the region.

On a recent tour of the ASEAN region, I heard time and again that the skills shortage might actually hold back the development of the label

industry.

In developed economies the end of time-served apprenticeships (Germany is an honorable exception) has deprived converters of a pool of young talent for the future.

This is why the Label Academy is such a critically important project – almost a 'lifeboat' of industry knowledge. The learning modules are dedicated to the whole range of narrow web technology areas and the qualifications have been endorsed by TLMI and Finat, as well as an increasing number of regional associations.

Andy Thomas  
Group Managing Editor

# News

Konica Minolta is making a major push into Europe's package printing market



## Konica Minolta opens European operation

*Japanese company opens facility in France to boost European growth*

Konica Minolta has opened a strategic business base in France to facilitate the growth of its European industrial package printing business.

The company believes that the growth of digitalized, high-mix small-lot production will require not only digital printing, but also digitized post-press in the areas of varnishing, laminating, foil stamping, and die cutting.

Recently, Konica Minolta has launched digital printing equipment targeted primarily at the labels and package printing business: the bizhub PRESS C71cf narrow web digital press and the AccurioJet KM-1 B2 digital inkjet press, as well entering into a financial and strategic alliance with digital finishing specialist MGI.

'Konica Minolta will seek opportunities to accelerate open innovation in this field through its existing alliance with MGI Digital Technology (MGI), a leading high value-added digital printing equipment manufacturer based in France, and also by strengthening partnerships with a number of post-press equipment manufacturers in Europe,' said the company.

Under its Mid-term Business Strategy, Konica Minolta plans to increase total revenue in the production print business to 360 billion yen (3.27bn USD) by 2020, driven largely by growth in the industrial label and package printing markets.

Highcon's digital finishing equipment adds value to sheet printing



## Komori partners with Highcon

Komori America and Highcon, a developer of digital cutting and creasing systems, have entered into a strategic partnership, described as 'integral to Komori's overall strategy'. Under the terms of the agreement, Komori America will sell and support the entire Highcon product line. A Highcon Euclid III is to be installed in the Komori America demo center before the end of the year.

Komori says Highcon's digital finishing technology is the 'perfect complement' to its offset press technology, as well as the new Impremia IS29 sheet-fed 29in UV inkjet printing system.

The two companies already have a strategic partnership in Japan.



PS wine labels are taking market share from wet-glue

## Wine labels grow with global consumption

The market for wine labels across all formats is forecast to grow by 2 percent between 2016 and 2018, reflecting increasing levels of wine production around the globe.

The prediction is made in the newly-published AWA 'Global Wine Label Awareness Report 2016', which says that continued challenges from craft beers and some spirits will compel wine producers to raise the visual appeal of wine labeling and packaging.

Europe currently claims the major share of global wine production, at 62 percent, with the wine-growing countries of South America – Argentina, Chile and Brazil – in second place with a 10 percent share, and the USA third with 8 percent. These three regions also dominate the use of wine labeling materials.

Overall, wine producers still prefer traditional paper label substrates over film substrates, but pressure-sensitive labels continue to capture market share with over 60 percent of total usage, forecast by AWA to grow at 2.8 percent over from 2016-18.

Glue-applied labels, with a 36 percent share, will also grow fractionally, while sleeve labels will increase their current small share by 7.1 percent per year over the same period.

This fifth edition of the AWA 'Global Wine Label Awareness Report' can be ordered from [www.awa-bv.com](http://www.awa-bv.com).

## MPS makes UK and US acquisitions

Multi Packaging Solutions (MPS) has acquired AJS Labels in the UK and i3 Plastic Cards in the US. AJS specializes in the manufacture of self-adhesive labels for markets including confectionary, health and beauty and personal care, employing around 80 people.

i3 Plastic Cards, based in

Dallas, Texas, creates and personalized transaction cards, including pre-paid gift and loyalty cards. Collectively the businesses recorded net sales of approximately 25 million USD in the last 12 months.

Commented Andrew and Jayne Scrimgeour, owners and founders of AJS Labels: 'We have

been involved with the business for over seven years and are very proud of what has been achieved. Over that period, the business has grown significantly. The deal will allow the company to realize its ambitious plans to grow and develop as part of a business with a global footprint and a broader range of capabilities.'



## New Australian association holds first conference

*Flexible Packaging & Label Manufacturers Association (FPLMA) meets in Melbourne*

Australia's Flexographic Manufacturers Association and labels association LATMA have held their first joint conference under the banner of the Flexible Packaging & Label Manufacturers Association (FPLMA).

Held at Melbourne's Hilton hotel, the conference featured 25 speakers from all facets of the industry, embracing a wide spectrum of business and technical topics, headed by keynote speaker, Federal Minister for Innovation the Hon. Kelly O'Dwyer.

Key themes included the need to grow support for apprenticeships and training, and the need for labeling and packaging in Australia to be backed by strong, proactive trade association support. Efforts to achieve a resurgent association were outlined by FPLMA president Mark Easton, managing director of Sydney headquartered self-adhesive label specialist Impresstik Group.

'The merger has overcome duplication and crossover of existing memberships and offers a united force and future,' Easton told L&L Oceania correspondent Henry Mendelson. 'The new association enables us also to reach members within the Asia-Pacific region

and incorporates us into increasingly expanding areas rather than Australia only. This complements representation for current members from both associations who have converter sites within the Asia-Pacific region.'

Easton said benefits of the merger will include shared administration costs, increased revenue from a bigger membership pool, a combined Print Awards program, broader scale technical forums and the larger association's ability to lobby apprenticeship initiatives with training and government agencies.

The inaugural FPLMA event culminated in a Print Awards dinner ceremony attended by over 200 industry members and their partners.



Mark Easton, first president of FPLMA

## Outlook merges with M&Q

Outlook Group has merged with M&Q Packaging under the M&Q Holdings umbrella.

M&Q Packaging is a North American manufacturer of high specification films, flexible packaging and bags, while Outlook Group manufactures pressure-sensitive labels, flexible packaging and folding cartons and is a vertically integrated contract packaging service provider.

In addition to the two SQF certified printing and contract packaging facilities in Neenah, Wisconsin, Outlook Group will now have a presence in eastern Pennsylvania.



Mactac has a strong presence in the industrial label market

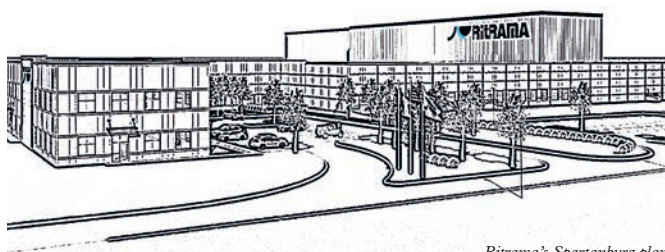
## Lintec takes over Mactac Americas

Lintec has reached an agreement with Platinum Equity to acquire Mactac Americas for 375 million USD.

Japan's Lintec, headquartered in Tokyo, is a manufacturer of adhesive-related products with operations in 15 countries around the world. Mactac, headquartered in Ohio, is a manufacturer and distributor of pressure-sensitive labels with operations in the US, Canada and Mexico. The company's products are used in a wide range of industries including label printing, graphic design, packaging, digital imaging, retail display, fleet graphics, assembly engineering, automotive assembly and medical device assembly.

Platinum Equity acquired Mactac from Bemis in November 2014. In August of this year, Platinum Equity divested Mactac's European business to Avery Dennison.

Platinum Equity partner Louis Samson said Mactac has experienced a significant turnaround in recent years and will join Lintec with strong momentum.



Ritrama's Spartanburg plant

## Ritrama invests in new US facility

Ritrama, the Italian manufacturer of self-adhesive materials with 23 production facilities worldwide, is investing 85 million USD in its Spartanburg plant, creating 150 new jobs.

Designed to be the company's most modern and productive plant worldwide, this new 30,000 sqm facility will utilize the latest coating technologies and advanced robotics for internal logistics and packaging, as well as a fully automated storage and retrieval system for all its warehousing. The facility will be a logistic platform to service North America, as well as export to Central American and South American markets. It will also serve as the company's North American headquarters.

Located near the intersection of I-26 and Highway 221 in Moore, rough grading on the site began in mid-December 2015, and it is anticipated that the facility will be fully operational by the fourth quarter of 2017.

# Machinery sales drive Labelexpo India 2016

Show moves to new location and registers biggest attendance. Andy Thomas and Aakriti Argawal report

**L**abelexpo India 2016 closed its most successful show to date on November 20. Held at a new venue at the India Expo Centre in Greater Noida (Delhi NCR), the four-day trade show hosted more than 8,000 visitors and 200 exhibitors.

Supported by the Label Manufacturers Association of India, All India Federation of Master Printers, Delhi Printers Association and Authentication Solution Providers' Association, Labelexpo India also hosted the LMAI Avery Dennison Label Awards, with categories sponsored by Iwasaki Tekko, Label Planet, Nilpeter, Omet, Orthotec, UPM Raflatac, Vinsak and Xeikon.

At the event, LMAI president Sandeep Zaveri announced a ground-breaking initiative to take orphans from around India and train them as flexo press operators at Avery Dennison's Knowledge Center in Bangalore.

'This idea is simple, but may become revolutionary,' said Zaveri. 'We visit numerous orphanages and institutions across the country and from there select 5,000 children, who are over 18, with the idea to guide them, train them and hopefully turn them into trained machine operators. This could be our small effort in giving back to the industry which has given us so much. And who knows, one of these kids could grow up to be the next big out of the box thinker.'

The LMAI worked closely with the Tata Institute of Social Science and the govern-

ment-backed Learn and Improve initiative on the project, which is supported by Avery Dennison.

The first batch of 20 children will attend the Avery Dennison Knowledge Center in Bangalore in December. 'The syllabus has been modelled by the LMAI team to ensure that all children will have hands-on machine time, training in professional etiquette and know-how to come a successful operator,' said Zaveri.

## Launches

Among key launches at the show was the Nilpeter FB350S press, designed and built by Nilpeter India. The press had a gravure unit with double layer drier and no requirement to vent solvent fumes, which are collected in the bottom of the unit. The press had a new dual crossover unit which allows peel&reseal labels of up to five pages to be converted in-line, and a redesigned PLC controlling a new pre-register and tension control system.

Omet was showing for the first time in India its iFlex press, selling multiple machines at the show including to Huhtamäki PPL Webtech Labels in Mumbai and Insight Graphics.

Digital printing also marked a major advance at the show. HP Indigo notched up a significant sales success with a WS6800 press going to Skanem Interlabels, while Xeikon sold two of its top-of-the-range 3500 series presses to Zircon.

Zircon also invested in a SPGPrints rotaLen

direct laser engraver, to provide a digital pre-press workflow for imaging high volumes rotary screens at its Dehradun factory. This is the first sale of these machines in India. Zircon's Omet Varyflex V2 press incorporates three rotary screen units for value-adding label enhancements and its newly ordered 10-color Omet XFlex has two rotary screen units. The rotaLen will have the capacity to supply screens for both presses.

Another significant first was GEW installing its new LA-1 air-cooled UV-LED lamp on a Multitec Ecoflex VSI Servo (S2) press, which was also launched at the show. The lamp is constructed using GEW's arcLED technology, which allows quick and easy changeover between arc and LED lamps on the same print station. Commented Amit Ahuja, Multitec managing director, 'Using UV-LED inks and the GEW arcLED LA-1 on the first print station, the lay down of the opaque white is much more even, with no pin-holing.' Flint UV-LED inks were being used.

Flexo press manufacturer Lombardi also had a good show, selling an 8-color Syncroline press to Mangalam Creations, sister company of Venkateswara Packagings, a corrugated box manufacturer based in Bengaluru.



For a full run-down of all equipment sales at the show, visit [www.labelsandlabeling.com](http://www.labelsandlabeling.com)



Skanem-Interlabels confirms order for HP Indigo WS6800



Zircon signs for two Xeikon 3500 presses



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# Installations



## 01 Gallus ECS 340

*Elite Labels, UK*

The investment forms part of a move to update and upgrade its self-adhesive label production as the company, which is part of a global group, serves mainly the fashion industry but is expanding its label services to new industries, from cosmetics to food and drink. Elite Labels has offset, flexo, digital and rotary printing as well as weaving looms, but the self-adhesive department has been ear-marked as a particular focus for company growth over the coming two years.

## 02 Focus e-Flex 330

*CLC (UK), UK*

The company has made a specialty of smart labels, featuring RFID, NFC and EAS functionality. The Focus e-Flex 330 fully servo flexo press will increase the printer's capacity for producing integrated passive RFID, NFC and EAS products.

## 03 Orthotec CFT3536

*Papfin, Moldova*

Papfin is one of the biggest wine and spirit label converters in Moldova. It already operates an Orthotec CFT3536, a 4-color offset press which includes rotary hot stamping, embossing and rotary die-cutting, installed in 2014. Its second and third CFT3536 machines are 6-color offset presses with cold stamping, rotary hot stamping, embossing and rotary die-cutting.

## 04 HP Indigo 20000

*Digital Packaging Innovations, Kenya*

The first purchase of this press platform on the African continent is to be installed alongside an AB Graphics Digicon 3000 finishing unit, which will provide a complete end-to-end packaging system. The sale was supported by HP's local channel partner in Kenya, Elite Digital, along with its own regional representatives. The landmark installation is set to be completed

in late 2016, and as the company's first digital press, will allow Digital Packaging Innovations to enter entirely new markets.

## Domino N610i

*Argent Tape & Label, US*

Argent Tape & Label has eight flexo label presses, and produces 45 million labels per year with 75 percent of its label business in the automotive industry. The desire to grow the business into other markets, such as food and beverage which tend to require shorter runs, combined with a large number of SKUs, helped fuel the need to go digital. This is the first digital production press for Argent Tape & Label.

## Screen Truepress Jet L350UV

*Probo, Netherlands*

The specialist web-to-print company has entered the digital label printing market to expand its product portfolio to its reseller partners, who it expects will quickly sign up to its new label

production service, which in turn could boost its large format print business. Working exclusively with reseller partners, Probo specializes in digitally printed large format products such as banners, flags, wallpaper, panels, canvas, wood, vinyl and foil, paper and textiles.

## Xeikon CX3

*Telrol, Netherlands*

The order for six Xeikon CX3 presses is one of the biggest deals in the digital press manufacturer's history. Telrol's first digital press investment was a Xeikon 3300 in 2009, which was used to launch the printer's Digital Centre of Excellence in Almere that has grown to five digital presses. In 2015, together with Xeikon, Telrol started a successful pilot project with a Xeikon CX3.



Go to [www.labelsand-labeling.com/news/installations](http://www.labelsand-labeling.com/news/installations) for more installation news

# Appointments



**Rainer Hundsdörfer**  
*CEO*  
*Heidelberg*

He has managed a number of leading industrial technology companies, most recently as chairman of the board of management of ebm-papst, a manufacturer of fans and motors. Prior to this, he was chairman of the Industry division and member of the executive board at Schaeffler. Previous Heidelberg CEO Gerold Linzbach has left the company of his own accord.



**Annica Bresky**  
*EVP, Consumer Board*  
*Stora Enso*

She will join Stora Enso by May 1 2017 and be based in Stockholm. Stora Enso's CEO Karl-Henrik Sundström will act as head of the Consumer Board division until Bresky starts. Bresky is currently president and CEO of Iggesund Paperboard, and has previously worked as mill director at Billerud-Korsnäs.



**Manfred Janoschka**  
*President*  
*ERA*

He succeeds José María Camacho, former CEO of CirclePrinters, and is the first European Rotogravure Association president to be elected from a cylinder engraving company.



**Kevin Green**  
*Technical sales manager*  
*Pulse Roll Label Products*

He will be responsible primarily for UK customers located in the south-east of England, as well as managing selected export accounts in key European and other international markets.



**Mats Lind**  
*Flexible packaging*  
*Flint Group Flexographic Products*

Flint Group has created a central business development unit for its Flexographic Products division, with

Lind responsible for the flexible packaging market segment, along with Philipp Eissner, responsible for the corrugated board market segment, and Dr Joelle Bédard, responsible for the support of flexo press manufacturers.



**Friedrich von Rechteren**  
*VP, global business development*  
*Flint Group Flexographic Products*

He will lead the company's new central business development team, as well as taking on responsibility for sales in Europe, the Middle East and Africa, and has become a member of the Flexographic Products senior leadership team.



**James Murphy**  
*Business development manager*  
*Xeikon*

An industry veteran who has been involved in the packaging industry for more than 30 years and is a specialist in heat transfer, in-mold, shrink sleeve, cut-and-stack and pressure-sensitive labels. Murphy will be responsible for further developing the heat

transfer and IML markets in North America.



**Bob Loescher**  
*Northeast senior sales consultant*  
*Nilpeter USA*

The appointment extends the press manufacturer's regional representation, with Loescher bringing 18 years of north-east regional sales expertise from Actega North America. As an FTA First certified implementation specialist, Loescher is an expert in the field of flexographic printing support, consultation and communication.

**John Sweeterman**  
*GM, San Leandro*  
*INX Digital*

Sweeterman has joined after working as a senior account executive at Chromatic Technologies where he managed global business development for emerging packaging technology of specialty inks and coatings. He also has prior advertising agency and pre-press business experience with brand strategy and brand packaging. As well as managing the INX Digital facility in San Leandro, California, he also works with the division's European teams.



**Shailesh Nema**  
*Country manager*  
*Michelman India*

His core responsibilities include execution of strategy for sustained growth and overseeing the business operations in India. He was previously working as CEO of Ajanta Packaging. Prior to this, he was the South Asia director at UPM Raflatac overseeing the company's business in South Asia.

**Peter J. Mulheran**  
*VP and GM*  
*Eaglerwood Technologies*

He has been with Eaglewood Technologies since its inception in 2007, and in his new role is responsible for managing the sales channel and product portfolio domestically and internationally.

**Job van Hasselt**  
*Area sales manager*  
*Kama*

The packaging machinery manufacturer has expanded its activities in the Asia-Pacific region with the appointment of its new area manager for Southeast Asia, the Pacific and Japan, who will support Kama's distribution partners, PM Trading in Korea, Heidelberg Japan KK, Sinar Grafindo in Indonesia and Ferrostaal in Thailand.

For more industry appointments, go to [labelsandlabeling.com/news/appointments](http://labelsandlabeling.com/news/appointments)





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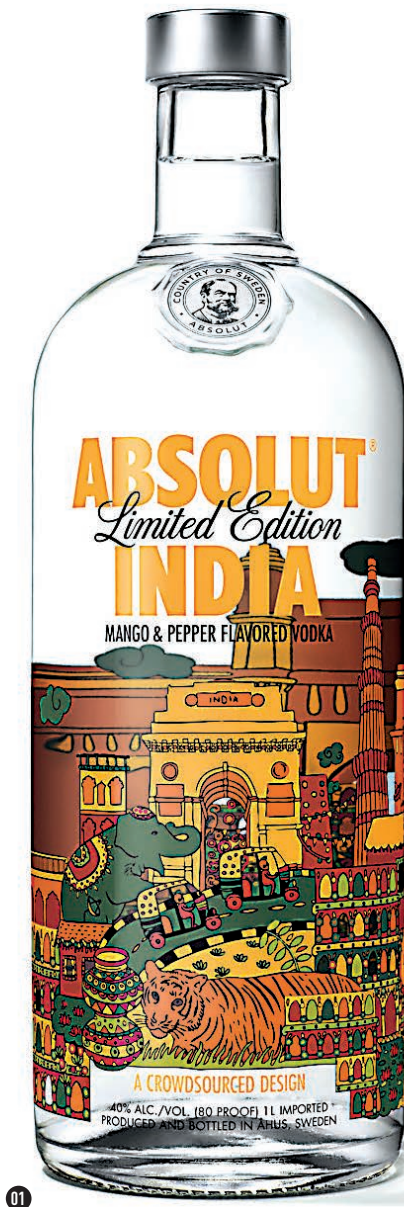
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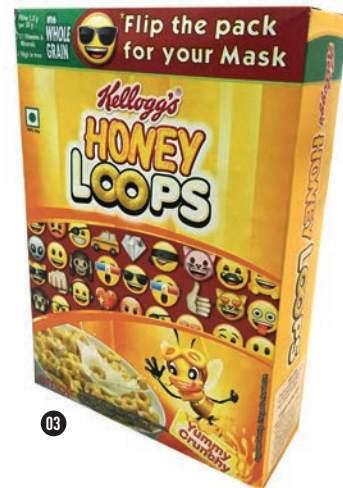
## Label & Packaging Showcase



01



02



03



04

### 01 Absolut India Limited edition

The limited edition bottle features design influenced by the art from the rich cultural heritage of India of the 18th century.

### 02 Dabur Honey Squeezy

The new design of Dabur Honey bottle has a special label printed using multiple printing techniques including screen printing.

### 03 Kellogg's Honey Loops

The back of the pack has a mask drawn on it that can be cut and worn by children.

### 04 Sunfeast Farmlite Biscuits

ITC launched this hut shaped box with openings cut on top.

### 05 McDowell's

One of the leading brands of Indian whisky in a two-litre PET bottle with a non-refillable and tamper-proof, 'Guala Cap'.

### 06 Kellogg's Frootloops

Uniquely shaped package with functional design has transparent slots to see its content.





05



06



07



08



09

### 07 Amul Kool

Amul, known for its dairy products in India, did a branding design makeover for its Amul Kool milkshakes this year.

### 08 Profile pouch for liquids

Profile pouch for liquids with sonically sealed spout by Uflex in India. The laminate of the pouch is a three-ply structure comprising isotropic PET and co-ex nylon polyethylene (PE).

### 09 Hansaplast

The company introduced a range of designer plasters targeted at kids.



This new regular feature is dedicated to the best designed printed packaging from around the world. If you would like your product featured here, email [labellexposure@labelsandlabeling.com](mailto:labellexposure@labelsandlabeling.com). We require a high resolution photograph and supporting text.

## Opinion

# Looking ahead to 2017

*L&L asked the label and package printing industry what it thinks will be making the headlines in 2017.*

'Label and package printing industries are challenged with the constant need to evolve and meet emerging consumer trends and needs. In 2017, the European Flexographic Industry Association (EFIA) anticipates that the pace of change is not going to slow. Technology is changing the way consumers are shopping and the internet has opened up myriad ways for consumers to make informed decisions about what they buy. Competition to sell is intense. Brands need to stand out in this new crowded retail landscape – online and in store – and want to add value to the shopper experience to drive longer-term consumer loyalty. This is creating opportunities for the print industry in offering pack and product personalization, customization and premiumization. Smart 'connected' packaging with digital marketing campaigns are now the norm and targeted at specific consumer groups. As a result of these trends, EFIA is seeing a focus on stand-out graphic design using new tactile coatings and ink effects, and the use of complementary flexo and digital print systems to deliver short runs of customized packs.'

**Debbie Waldron-Hoines, director, EFIA**

'The digitization of the industry will continue. 2014 marked the first year in the North American marketplace that digital production press sales outpaced sales of new conventional presses. This trend will persist, however not only at the converter level. We speak with brand owners on both sides of the Atlantic every day and in the research work LPC does with industry associations, we are seeing a small number of consumer packaged goods companies and contract packagers across North America and Europe buy digital presses to vertically integrate some or all of their label printing requirements. Digital press manufacturers foresee this trend growing in 2017.'

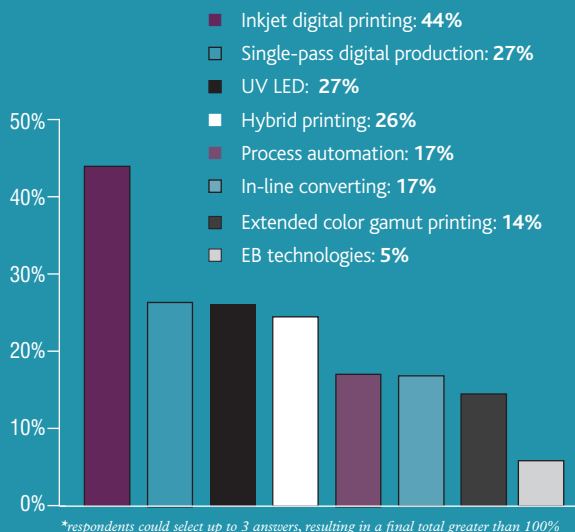
**Jennifer Dochstader, managing director, LPC**

Much of the technical innovation taking place in label and package printing over the past 10 years has been related to advances in digitized pre-press, color management, digital printing, advances in flexo and hybrid presses, as well as increasingly sophisticated finishing systems. These developments will continue as run lengths decrease, more versions and variations are required, time to market decreases, and ever-more complex labels are created. On top of these changes can be added pressures relating to costs, investment, margins and profitability, environment and sustainability issues, supply chain traceability demands and food contact challenges. These pressures will see label and package printing companies move towards ever more automation of their administration and production workflows, using sophisticated MIS integrated with specialized inspection and color performance software and technology, through to fully automated press and finishing line set-up. The target aim is now to work towards human-free, 24/7, completely automated and streamlined workflows that receive job orders by electronic data interchange (EDI), use the potential of Cloud computing and the Internet of Things, fully automate production (even using WiFi for remote access and control), liaise with shipping carriers, and invoice and receive payment advice through EDI. Think this is all a dream? Be assured, it's not.'

**Mike Fairley, director of strategic development, Labels & Labeling**

### Labelexpo Americas Poll

*Which technologies will have the biggest impact on the label and packaging printing industry over the next 12 months?*



For further info, read the latest annual L&L label and package printing industry predictions article at <http://bit.ly/2fk6x4N>



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# Options for the future: Part 1

*In the first of a series of articles, Bob Cronin of The Open Approach outlines continuation and exit options for label entrepreneurs*

The label and packaging business is comprised largely of entrepreneurs. Successful companies are built upon their founders' blood, sweat and tears. It only goes to figure that the two become virtually synonymous – and that separating an entity from its owner would mean sure demise for both of them. But alas, that thinking would be wrong. Our great industry offers numerous continuation and exit options.

As a consultant to label and packaging companies, The Open Approach works with many entrepreneurs in this quandary. We find ourselves often meeting with owners channeling The Clash as they wonder, 'Should I Stay or Should I Go?' The answer doesn't have to be so bifurcated. In fact, one of the greatest benefits of creating a great company is that you also create multiple succession options. As long as your company is on solid ground, you're in the driver's seat. This, of course, may make it harder to relinquish. But your most lucrative options occur in growth mode. So even while it may seem counterintuitive, the best time to exit your business is while you're on top.

As you start thinking about the future, it's good to have a plan. To this end, this and my next few articles will help you understand your options and what you can expect from these trajectories.

## There are seven options for continuation or exit:

- 1 Do nothing
- 2 100 percent sale to a strategic
- 3 100 percent sale to private equity
- 4 Majority sale
- 5 Minority sale
- 6 50/50 sale
- 7 Recapitalization

Each path has its own 'consideration factors', including control, value realization, risk, participation in future growth, owner(s)

## “One of the greatest benefits of creating a great company is that you also create multiple succession options. As long as your company is on solid ground, you’re in the driver’s seat”

objectives, maximizing buyer interest, impact on employees, and timing. When examining these seven options, it’s critical to understand how these factors tie in.

### Let’s look at your first two options:

**1 Do nothing** – If you’re enjoying running your enterprise and can’t imagine life without it, perhaps staying at the helm is wise – at least for the time being. But make sure to examine the consideration factors.

**Control:** In a ‘hold’ option, your people hold all the keys to the future. This means it’s critical that you have a strong management team with the ability to execute on your vision and navigate new challenges. These individuals must be adaptable, technology-focused, and cognizant of arising customer and product trends. They should be able to ensure your company’s profitable growth for at least the next 24 months.

**Value realization:** There’s no value realization here since you aren’t selling. Any opportunity of the current market, financing climate, and segment interest may vanish.

**Future growth and participation:** Your business’s future and your financial participation are entirely in your control. You bear the benefits or consequences of all activity. You also remain in charge of all financial investments (CAPEX) needed.

**Owner(s)’ objectives:** Label and packaging companies can be run by a sole proprietor or through a partnership. If you’re flying solo, you can set your own timing. If you have a partnership or limited owners, the control over timing may change if one person decides to exit before you do. It’s important to revisit your team’s commitment every six months or so, to ensure you stay on track.

**Maximizing buyer interest:** Since you aren’t going to market, this does not come into play. However, it’s good to keep your company in “fighting shape” in case an event speeds up your timing. Keep your technologies prime, watch your debt, focus on customer retention,

and pursue your most lucrative markets.

**Risk:** In this scenario, you are 100% invested. Applicable risk is whatever is occurring in your business and segments.

**Impact on employees:** With no change in ownership structure, your staff stays intact. As long as you have a rewarding employee culture, you should be able to keep your people happy and working for your success. **Timing:** Today’s financial markets and relevant pros and cons do not apply. Still, consider how these issues would affect your succession. Is there any great influence going on today that may not be available to you in a few years?

**2 100 percent sale to a strategic** – The push to ‘enhance shareholder value’ continues to accelerate strategic acquisitions – with progressive small enterprises scooped up quickly. Be careful. It’s important not to venture into such a sale on your own. The Strategics have experts who focus on driving the absolute best deal for their company – not for you. You need advisors who will champion your cause.

**Control:** When you sell your business to a strategic, its future is no longer in your hands. You cannot control the brand name, vision, market position, approach to customers, or direction of your employees.

**Value realization:** What may sound like a good deal may not be. Companies are valued on numerous factors, including assets, profitability, segments, market trends, customer security, and more. Your advisors can help you understand what to expect through comparable sales or EBITDA multiple factors. If they are industry-specific, they can also provide insights to increase your value.

**Future growth and participation:** With a 100 percent sale, you have no stake in your business’s future. This can be an advantage or a disadvantage. Exit options in ensuing articles will discuss potential rewards for staying vested.

**Owner(s)’ objectives:** As a sole proprietor, your perfect offer is the one that best meets your goals. If multiple owners are involved, you may need to compromise. Articulate each party’s objectives, and craft a deal that is best for all.

**Maximizing buyer interest:** Going out to the entire market may have a commoditizing effect. This is because it gets everybody judging, forming opinions (and rumors), and watching your every move. It may also make for nervous employees. Still, there are ways to orchestrate your offering quietly to top buyers. The Open Approach has an exclusive network that ensures maximum buyer interest, while protecting your confidentiality.

**Risk:** Selling to a Strategic indeed has certain advantages. If a 100 percent sale, your risk is essentially gone. Make sure your contract states no future obligation.

**Impact on employees:** No matter what the buyer says during the deal, you have zero control over what happens to staff going forward. Remuneration, professional growth, culture, expectations – consider these forever changed. Plus, the reality is that your team will be ‘integrated’ into the buyer’s workforce, which may mean cuts. Make provisions in your contract to help protect key personnel.

**Timing:** Timing is everything. When you begin the sell process, be confident that current financial and industry impacts make for your most attractive timing.

As you start planning for your future, it’s imperative to know all your options. You’ve spent your life building a great business. And you’ll (likely) sell it only once. I’ll cover the remaining five types of exits in future articles. These will then give you a road map for what option best fits your objectives.



Bob Cronin is managing partner of *The Open Approach*, an M&A firm focused exclusively on the world of print. To learn more, visit [www.theopenapproach.net](http://www.theopenapproach.net), email Bob Cronin at [bobcronin@aol.com](mailto:bobcronin@aol.com), or call (+1) 630 323 9700





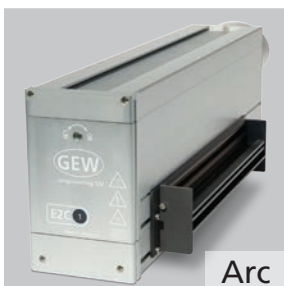
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# Q&A

L&L's China editor Kevin Liu interviews the management team of the label printing branch of PEIAC, the Printing and Printing Equipment Industries Association of China: Qiu Xiaohong, general secretary; Li Chunjie, managing vice president; Yao Yi, managing vice president; and Tan Junqiao, honorary president

**L&L:** General secretary Qiu Xiaohong, can you introduce the major team leaders of the label printing branch, and the functions and position of the label printing branch within PEIAC?

**Qiu Xiaohong:** Right now there are four honorary presidents in our branch, respectively Tan Junqiao, Yang Jinghua, Xu Wencai, and Zhangqi. And the president of our branch is Lin Guanxiong (Zhongshan Fuzhou). There are also managing vice presidents Qi Heliang (Taiyo), Dong Ninghui (ZiQuan Label), Li Chunjie, Yao Yi (Luster) and Zhang Yuzhong (Meikei), and vice presidents Roman Lee (Brotec), Li Xiaocheng (Shanghai Hengze), Ren Zhijian (Qicai), Zhou Bingsong (Weigang), in all 21 people. I am the general secretary. The association leadership is elected every four years and the next general election will be in 2017.

The main purpose of the label printing branch is to push the sound and steady development of the Chinese label industry, as well as the whole industrial supply chain. Our mission is to provide a bridge between printers, suppliers and government. As the bridge, the association will submit the mutual requirements of the label industry and enterprises to higher government authorities. At the same time, we shall assist the authorities in carrying out the government's industrial development plan and industrial policies along with stipulations and relevant laws, in order to maintain fair industry competition and promote the label industry's development and technical progress.

**L&L:** Can you clarify the status of the label branch – for example, how many members do you have and how many are label printers?

**Qiu Xiaohong:** We now have 300 members, of which there are 100 label printers in enterprises all across China.



**“We want to push ‘intelligent’ technical innovation in the label industry, particularly in the direction of green, or sustainable, printing, and make this into a mainstream process”**

**L&L:** What is your vision for development over the next five years?

**Li Chunjie:** Firstly, in the 13th national plan, the government has stated its vision for the development of China in the next five years. The role of PEIAC's label branch will be to examine global economic and technology developments over this period and to encourage the Chinese label industry to adapt to these trends. Secondly, we want to push 'intelligent' technical innovation in the label industry, particularly in the direction of green, or sustainable, printing, and make this into a mainstream process. In addition we want to liaise outside China with a view to looking at export markets for Chinese printers and suppliers.

As a member of the worldwide label association, PEIAC's label printing branch will look to communicate more closely with label associations in other countries and promote the whole industry for involvement in more international events. We are planning to develop new regulations and rules in line with international standards, and help promote the prize-winning Chinese converters and suppliers at worldwide label events to lift and strengthen our national printing level. We will also join in more award judging with the worldwide label associations and look to take our new message to international forums.





The PEIAC 2015 annual meeting

In essence, our future vision is to promote the industry to be in line with worldwide standards, and to expand our international development activities.

**L&L: Yao Yi, as the president of Beijing Luster Light, and someone who attends many international expos and visits many local label converters, in your opinion what are the main challenge Chinese label printers are facing?**

**Yao Yi:** I think the challenges in this industry may be presented as follows. Generally speaking, the most common occurrence in our label industry is always lagging behind in technology and production process, and the ability to innovate needs to be speedily improved. The development of digital label printing, intelligent labels, green label printing technologies and other advanced processing skills bring both huge challenges and opportunities for domestic enterprises.

In China, the leading label printing process is still letterpress, representing up to 70 percent of installations, while the more environmentally friendly flexo printing is only around 20 percent. In developed countries such as the USA and Europe, flexo printing has a market share of respectively 75 percent and 50 percent.

The demand for personalized printing and variable data printing is growing quickly. More and more domestic manufacturers of both traditional and digital printing machines are launching their own digital label printing presses, including Founder Group, Weifang Donghang, Lucky Huaguang and Liaoning Basch, among others. However, there are still huge differences between digital printing enterprises in and outside China.

There is a big difference in industrial label quality standards and quality control systems compared to developed countries. In recent years, PEIAC's label printing branch has worked with several enterprises including Zhongshan Fuzhou Adhesive-Product and

**“We are planning to develop new regulations and rules in line with international standards, and help promote the prize-winning Chinese converters and suppliers at worldwide label events to lift and strengthen our national printing level”**

Luster Light-tech Group to draft and establish industrial standards called 'Printing technology – quality requirements and test methods for self-adhesive labels'. In the meantime, Luster Light-tech Group is also vigorously promoting its own quality control information management system capable of interfacing with companies' ERP systems. This will assist enterprises in reducing overall defects and tracking product quality information throughout their operations. Still, there remain big gaps between our quality management systems and those in developed countries.

The level of management skills in domestic enterprises may become one of the key bottlenecks preventing the further development of our label companies. It is reported that in China, up to 70 percent of the label converting industry are companies with sales volumes of less than 50million RMB (7.3m USD), indicating that



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The leaders of the label printing branch of PEIAC, L-R Qiu Xiaohong, general secretary; Li Chunjie, deputy vice president; Tan Junqiao, honorary president; and Yao Yi, deputy vice president

## “The demand for personalized printing and variable data printing is growing quickly. More and more domestic manufacturers of both traditional and digital printing machines are launching their own digital label printing presses”

most label printing enterprises are small to medium sized. Among these enterprises, lack of systematic planning and management skills will severely obstruct the growth of enterprises in such a fiercely competitive market.

More and more foreign capital-invested enterprises have entered China, and along with acquisitions and mergers, this is making a huge impact on domestic label companies. The purpose of acquisitions by foreign capital invested enterprises is either to make up for where their businesses are weaker in some aspects, or to build up alliances between giants to strengthen the power of both.

For example, when Flint Group acquired the professional digital printing manufacturer Xeikon, it laid a firm foundation for a branch of the company to focus on new digital printing solutions. Bobst acquired 65 percent of shares in Nuova Gidue, thus giving the Bobst Group the chance to grow its business in the label arena and become the leader in short-run packaging and printing technology. Similar reasons are behind the proposed merger of DuPont and Dow Chemical. Returning to the domestic label market, we have not seen big acquisitions: our enterprises are still focusing on establishing new plants. Excess production capacity, ferocious competition and price wars have resulted in low profit margins for small and medium-sized enterprises, which are facing difficult survival conditions.

**L&L: What is the association's future vision of flexo printing in the Chinese label and packaging industries?**

**Tan Junqiao:** Following the improvement in Chinese living standards and the enhancement of environmental awareness, government, enterprises and individuals are all increasingly looking to emphasize environmental protection and sustainable development, including in the print industry. The Ministry of Environmental Protection first put forward its emission standards for volatile organic compounds in key industries in 2013, with the official guidelines published in July 2015. These new regulations mean more and more printing enterprises

will be focusing on green and environment protection issues, and this means the environmentally friendly flexo printing method will have huge development potential in the China market. For example, gravure printing transitioning to flexo printing is a phenomenon which already exists in the flexible packing industry. And we are seeing this trend in better sales numbers achieved by PEIAC's flexo equipment supplier members.

**L&L: This year the government introduced its policy to limit VOC emissions for the printing industry, and the environment protection concepts are gradually reaching people. In the label industry, however, besides pollution, printing plants are still facing the need to recover waste such as release liners. So is there any corresponding plan to promote environment protection and sustainable development in this industry?**

**Tan Junqiao:** Recovery of waste and release liner paper is a difficulty the whole industry continues to face. I know some enterprises in Japan burn it after compressing the waste. UPM Raflatac can recover and process the waste and scraps and reuse it as building materials, but the costs are high. We have no better solutions for this industry at present. Chinese label enterprises have huge quantities and this is spread widely also among their customers, making it very difficult to concentrate and dispose of these waste products.

**Qiu Xiaohong:** Our association has been paying attention to foreign companies and foreign-invested companies in China to study their measures for the recovery and disposal of waste and scrap. If there is a better disposal method for the Chinese market, we will definitely promote it actively. We are encouraging companies to focus on environment protection and sustainable development, at the same time discussing better ways to dispose of waste.

**L&L: From the Labelexpo Asia data, we can see there are lots of visitors coming from traditional newspapers and commercial printing enterprises. What is your view on this? Further, regarding regional growth, which part of China do you think has most potential for label printing growth?**

**Qiu Xiaohong:** As to the first part of the question, one point is the bosses of traditional printing plants – including tickets, books and journals, as well as the packaging and commercial printing fields – are considering making a business transition due to the decline of growth in the traditional printing industry and the continued shrinking of profit margins. This makes them increasingly interested in label printing. The second point is, the label industry has indeed some profitable fields and is a hotspot of the printing industry. Thirdly, label printing has a low threshold for entry, and there is still some space for expansion. Finally, there are tough technical and process requirements required to enter label printing, and this presents these commercial companies with both challenges and opportunities.

The second part of your question: geographically, central and western China, such as Sichuan, Shanxi, Hubei and Henan provinces, are potential locations for continued label growth, driven by a high pace of economic development.

**L&L: Is there any cooperation between PEIAC's label printing branch and other international industry associations, such as Finat and Tlmi?**

**Qiu Xiaohong:** The label printing branch is one of the World Label Association (WLA) members. We attend the L9 Conference each year and participate in the judging of the WLA worldwide label competition. Finat and Tlmi are important founder members of the WLA, and we have been keeping in close communication with these two associations. We will seek more cooperation on more aspects affecting the global label industry in the future.

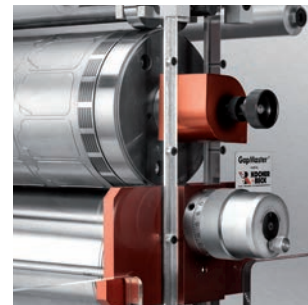


Read a report from PEIAC's annual meeting in L&L issue 4, 2016

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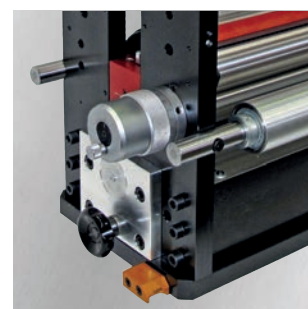
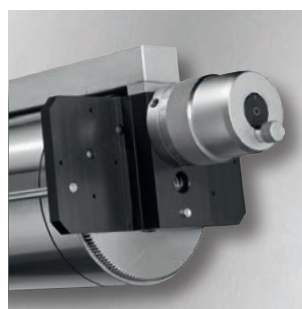
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L-R: Marco Borali, marketing director, and Massimiliano Marulli, managing director, Ario Group, with the latest Omet XFlex X6

# Acquisition leads to growth at Ario

*With the acquisition of Leats in Turin, the Ario group is now a major player in the Italian PS label market. Andy Thomas reports*

**M**ilan label converter Ario has expanded its business in the high value wine and cosmetics sector with the acquisition of Turin-based Leats. The acquisition was followed by the installation of Omet's latest iFlex flexo press at the Turin plant.

The expanded Ario group now has a 13m euro turnover, and hopes to reach 14m euros by the end of this year. The combined company has a workforce of 70 people across the two sites.

Ario's Milan plant runs two Omet XFlex-X6 presses, both 410mm wide with eight print units. The latest was installed last year and incorporates Omet's Twist fast-change die-cutting system. An older Omet Flexy is fitted with an in-line Vectra turret rewinder. Work is

completed on Prati and AB Graphic rewinders.

In 2014 Ario Milan installed its first digital press, a Xeikon 3300, and is now considering expanding its digital capacity, possibly with an inkjet press.

## Leats acquisition

The acquisition of the Leats company was a 'perfect fit' for Ario, says Massimiliano Marulli, managing director of Leats Etichette.

Leats was founded by Marco Priotti in 1977, and in 2000 his nephew Piero Tibaldi joined the company straight from school. Tibaldi remains an active member of management in the new Ario team.

Leats has a wide range of press types. The company runs a Gallus TCS 250 intermittent offset press with screen and hot foiling for the traditional wine label market, where structured papers are mostly used. An 8-color Gidue Combat press handles high volume jobs and some shrink sleeves, and a Berra flatbed screen press with hot foil and flatbed die-cutting is used for wine and cosmetics labels. Inspection is carried out on two Prati Jupiter rewinders with BST 100 percent inspection cameras, while an ABG Omega handles blank labels. Older machines include a Gallus EM280 and two R200 letterpress.

The most recent investment at Leats is an 8-color Omet iFlex. 'We chose the iFlex because it is very easy to use and fast to change on short runs orders,' says Piero Tibaldi.

'On the iFlex we work with a small size print cylinder, which makes us cost-effective against digital. We particularly like the speed of changing from one job to another. The iVision register cameras on every print unit make it very easy to set up from a single screen. The



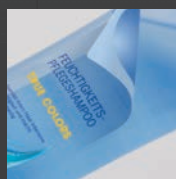
Lining up a print cylinder using the iLight laser on the iFlex

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L-R: Marco Boralì and Piero Tibaldi with new Omet iFlex

**“Reliability was also important. The press must run 18 hours a day without a problem. It was also easy for our operators to learn – after just two days they were printing good labels”**

iLight laser beam helps the operator line up the plate cylinder, after which only small manual adjustments are necessary. The fast change dies are delivered to the press on trolleys, which makes handling much easier. Now it takes us under two minutes to change jobs and with very little waste.’

The iFlex maintains register without requiring servo drives. A line shaft drives the print and converting units directly, without the use of gears.

‘Reliability was also important,’ says Tibaldi. ‘The press must run 18 hours a day without a problem. It was also easy for our operators to learn – after just two days they were printing good labels.’

The press is fitted with Vetaphone corona treater, BST/Eltromat web guide, GEW E2C UV units, turnbar, screen unit and a rail-mounted hot foil unit.

Tibaldi says that using the latest HD flexo plate technology, the dot achieved on the iFlex is ‘very near’ to an offset dot.

#### Working together

The acquisition of Leats gave Ario access to the full range of narrow web technologies, including letterpress, flatbed screen, intermittent offset, UV flexo and digital.

How are jobs allocated to particular presses? ‘Offset combined with screen and hot foil is used mainly for special papers in the wine market,’ explains Massimiliano Marulli. ‘There are some cases where you can use flexo for wine labels, but it is less common. The production route depends on the length of run and quality needed, but the quality of flexo today reaches almost offset quality with HD printing and new types of anilox, and this quality will increase.’

Given the different technologies at each plant, the Milan and Turin operations will increasingly focus on different kinds of labels.

‘We are focused on distinguishing the two companies,’ says Marulli. ‘The Milan Ario operation is more focused on industrial-type markets, while at Leats the focus is more on high quality value-added production,





Ario's Berra flatbed combination screen press

and we want to make that our showroom. This is the direction we are moving in. Our customers want high quality labels made in Italy and we need to reflect this.'

All operations are controlled through Ario's own bespoke management information system, which covers all steps from material entry to warehousing, production and shipping. Production planning is fully electronic.

With a customer base mainly in food and wine, it is not surprising that most self-adhesive materials are paper, though pressure-sensitive film use is increasing. 'In

our Turin plant we use more film than paper because of our cosmetics industry work,' explains Marco Boralì, managing director of the Ario Group. 'In particular we use more PE for shampoo bottles and for durable applications in the chemicals industry.'

Two years ago Ario in Milan adopted low migration inks – important for customers in the food industry – throughout its operations. The company is keeping a close eye on UV-LED developments, but definitely wants these inks to be available in low migration formats before any future investment.

And although few customers are asking for more 'sustainable' materials, Ario has developed a film for the cosmetics sector made from 85 percent sugar plants.

With a young and enthusiastic management team and access to such a wide range of technology, it is little surprise that Ario is predicting continued growth in the Italian market.



For information on Nuceria's move into flexible packaging, see *L&L* issue 5 2014, p47, in the archive at [www.labelsandlabeling.com](http://www.labelsandlabeling.com)



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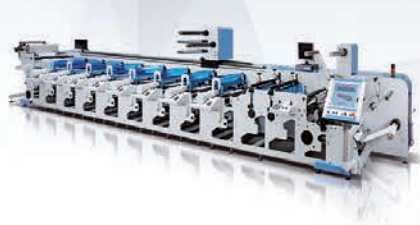
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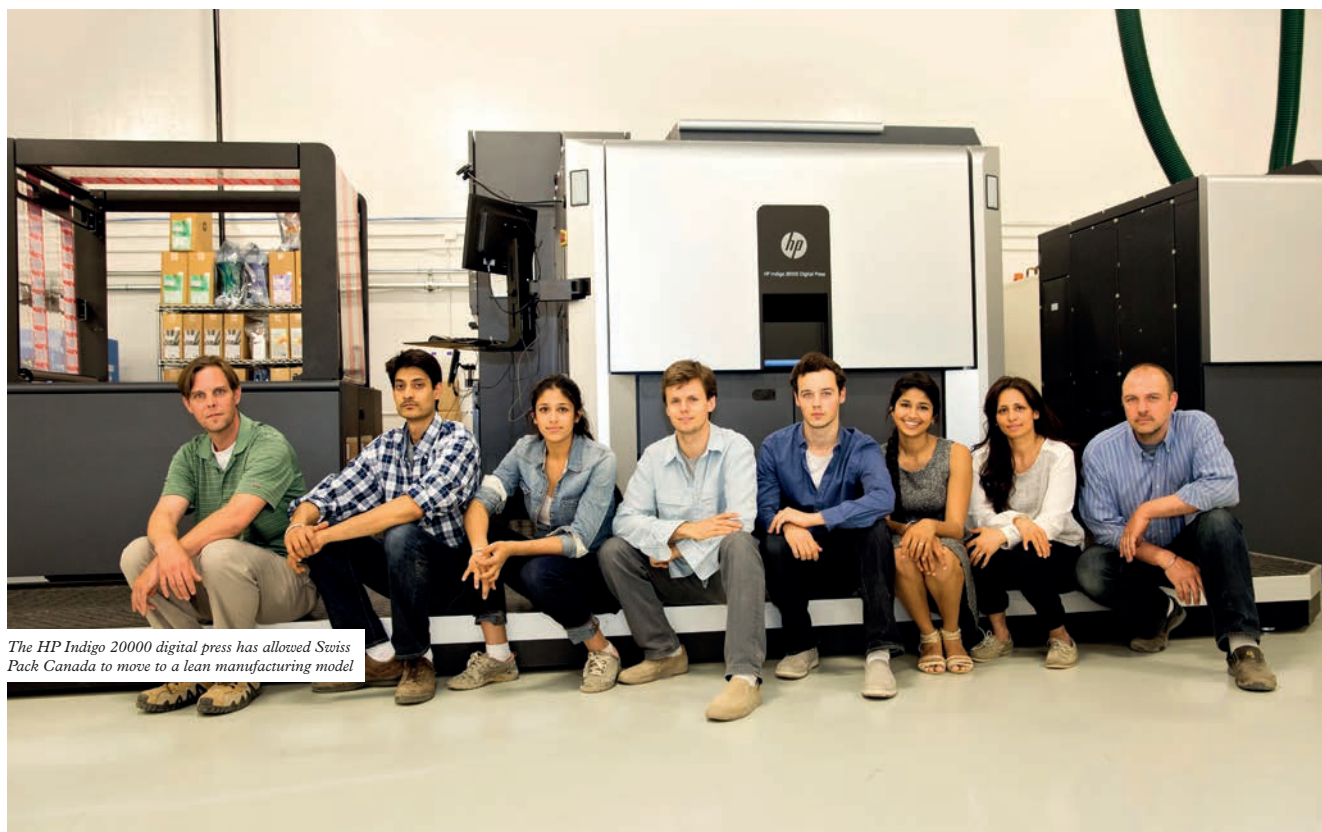
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The HP Indigo 20000 digital press has allowed Swiss Pack Canada to move to a lean manufacturing model

# Digital win in Canada

*Ontario-based Swiss Pack Canada has installed the first country's first HP Indigo 20000 digital press to address customer demand for a local print service provider offering short run flexible packaging. David Pitman reports*

Swiss Pack Canada is a producer of high quality flexible packaging, custom printing, digital package design and co-packing services. The company stocks packaging products for a wide range of industries including food, pet food, cosmetic, pharmaceutical, diagnostic, agriculture, pesticides, fertilizers, hygiene and detergents. Swiss Pack Canada specializes in stand-up pouches, coffee bags, custom printed pouches and three side seal pouches including flat and pillow varieties.

The company has relied on gravure printing for its production to date, coupled with short runs of labels, which are affixed to pre-printed stock bags to meet its customers' requirements for customized packaging. Its investment in an HP Indigo 20000 digital press, the first in Canada, enables it to expand this by producing dozens of different jobs per day with a quicker speed to market. The press's 740 x 1100mm image format covers a wide range of flexible packaging jobs and brings high productivity and efficiency to a variety of applications.

'We were quite efficient with labeling stock bags, but want to offer similar to what we can through our gravure operation in the form of fully printed bags,' comments Philippe St-Cyr, general manager of Swiss Pack Canada. 'Customers are looking to move from labeled bags to custom printed products, and there's a gap in the market in Canada for that.'

'Canadian customers want to use suppliers producing in Canada. But using a local company might mean long lead times, similar to buying offshore and in large quantities. Or you could buy from Asia in

**"Customers are looking to move from labeled bags to custom printed products"**

smaller volumes but incur the cost of plates, etc. We saw that no-one in Canada was investing in proactive technologies to provide locally produced, short runs.'

## Entrepreneurial spirit

St-Cyr sees that Canada is full of entrepreneurs, who require his company's support. 'We want to help companies grow and new products to emerge. Lack of investment is keeping that energy dormant but we want to bring creativity to the fore.'

'Most printers are chasing big accounts but I don't care for them. I get more pleasure in working with smaller accounts and customers, and helping them. For many, there's no pleasure for them in servicing smaller accounts, but for us there's a ton of pleasure in doing small runs.'

'SMEs want to be do things differently, and are more appreciative of the technical innovations we can offer them, such as extended shelf life and barrier properties, rather than concentrating on price. That means there's more value in the relationship for you as a supplier.'





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**“Most printers are chasing big accounts but I don’t care for them. I get more pleasure in working with smaller accounts and customers”**

‘It also shields us from relying on a smaller number of bigger accounts, getting drawn into price wars and, potentially, losing a race to the bottom.’

#### **Business transformation**

Swiss Pack Canada’s HP Indigo 20000 investment is part of a long-term strategy to provide short runs to its 3,500 active accounts in Canada, all SMEs. As an example, St-Cyr references a fast-growing candy company out of Montreal that was buying stock bags and labeling them. ‘An order for nine different SKUs, of 1,000 each, sold out in less than two weeks. It has now ordered a further 20 SKUs, as well as reordering the originals. In gravure, that would incur a big cost for plates and require a long lead time, so isn’t sustainable. With digital, our customers are able to upscale quickly.’

This is similar to the experience detailed by European flexible packaging company Uni Packaging with its investment in HP Indigo digital printing technology and baby food brand Yooji (see L&L issue 1 2016, p54, for a full report)

Swiss Pack Canada won’t be printing labels on its HP Indigo 20000 anytime soon as this is ‘counterintuitive’, so says St-Cyr, to its desire to supply customers with fully printed packaging rather than labeled bags.

‘We are thoroughly happy with the HP Indigo 20000 digital press and getting a good response to what it allows us to offer. We’re set to double our current package printing business in the first year, which is altering our business model as we traditionally hold large stocks of bags. With digital, we’re transitioning to a lean manufacturing model.’

#### **Digital is the future**

St-Cyr describes digital printing as the process of the future in the flexible packaging market, although noting that there is, ‘room for the technology to grow in terms of speed and reliability.’

‘But put a digital print off the HP Indigo 20000 next to a gravure print and it needs a trained eye to see the difference. The trained eye often tends to gravitate towards the digital print as gravure quality and registration relies heavily on the operator. Do two jobs side-by-side and in gravure you can have slight mis-register or variations in the inks and how they perform, owing to the temperature, length of the machine, etc. Digital, while currently lagging behind in terms of speed, is a lot more consistent.’

### *Digital package printing advances*

HP Indigo has confirmed a number of sales that underline the global appetite for digitally printed flexible packaging, which are to be produced using its 20000 digital press. Alongside Swiss Pack Canada as the first adopter in Canada, this includes Kenya’s Digital Packaging Innovations ordering the first 20000 on the African continent; Chinese candy manufacturer LvAi Food, which has transformed its business with the installation of an HP Indigo 20000, targeting a new generation of social media conscious consumers (see L&L issue 5, 2016, p62); and Bemis, a global supplier of packaging for food, consumer and industrial products, installing an HP Indigo 20000 to support the evolving needs of their customers and drive continued innovation with digital print capabilities. Since drupa 2016, HP Indigo has detailed extensive adoption of its Series 4 press technology, including the 20000, with more than 100 installations reported in the six months after the show.



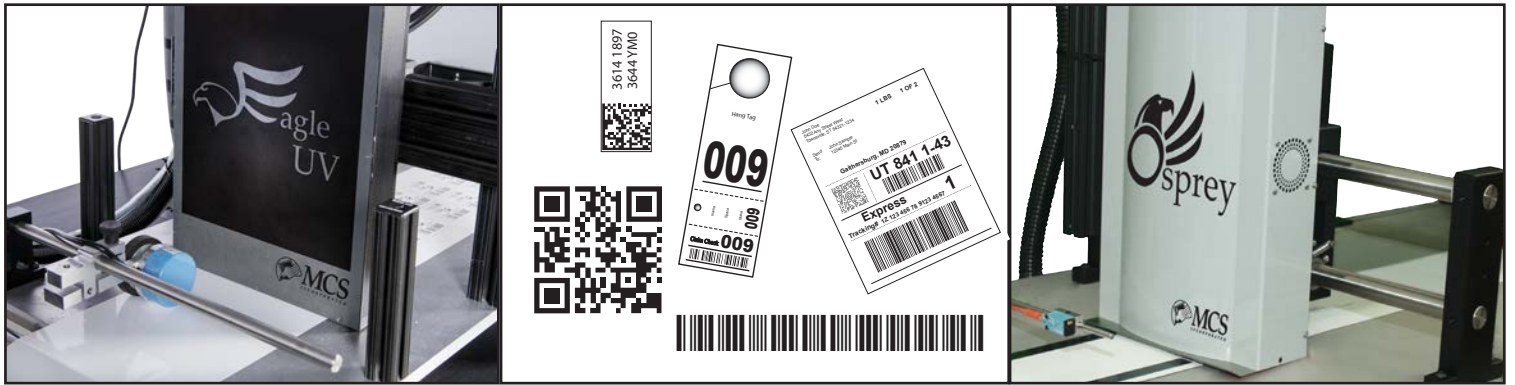
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*'Digital, while currently lagging behind in terms of speed, is a lot more consistent' – Philippe St-Cyr, Swiss Pack Canada*

## **“We’re looking at Pack Ready, as well as the myriad other emerging technologies that are promising, such as solventless and electron beam”**

Developments in CI offset are ‘really nice’, he notes, although he sees that even HD flexo is not able to meet the image reproduction quality of gravure, ‘so for flexible packaging other conventional printing technologies ‘don’t really cut it.’

‘Digital really is where we’re going, and want to get faster and better at it. We’d like to do strictly digital printing. We’re hoping that the technology becomes fast enough that we don’t need to use gravure anymore. The situation currently is that if a customer orders 10,000 units for one SKU it can’t be done using digital. In 3-5 years, we want to see big improvements in machine speeds then we can quote on similar levels with digital as we do with gravure.’

Swiss Pack Canada plans further investments in its digital package printing workflow, including Pack Ready, HP Indigo’s zero cure time lamination process for flexible packaging.

‘We’re looking at Pack Ready,’ confirms St-Cyr. ‘But we’re also looking at the

myriad other emerging technologies that are promising, such as solventless and electron beam. We want to move more into biodegradable and digitally printed ecological inks. With Pack Ready, we’d be bound to a list of approved suppliers. We’ll have Pack Ready as an option, but it won’t be our sole solution.’

The desire to move to environmentally-friendly products is driven by greater education of the public on the impact of their food and packaging choices. ‘We’re pushing constantly to get better at that, and digital allows us to minimize wastage on materials and eliminate waste through platemaking and other parts of the gravure printing process that are unseen but contribute to the overall waste level.’

### **A natural fit**

‘Digital is a natural evolution for us,’ affirms St-Cyr. ‘You have to have experience in flexible packaging and the existing customer base to make it work to its full potential.’

‘We’ve been able to bring down costs and streamline our production process, and directly printed packaging looks more professional for our customers, so they’re very happy.’

‘There’s lots of room for us to grow, and we want to increase our capacities running through the digital press. We want it to be printing a lot more; the more the better.’



*For further info, see the L&L 2017 predictions article at <http://bit.ly/2fk6x4N>, where digital developments feature prominently*



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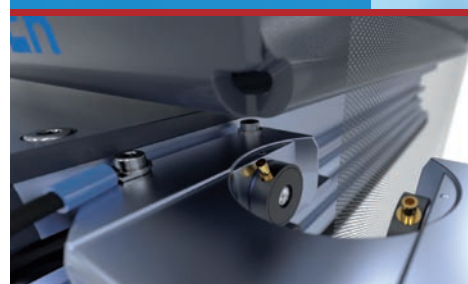
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Ian Schofield, own label and packaging manager at Iceland

# Brand owners provide food for thought

*RotoMetrics' latest open house at its UK production site in Aldridge allowed brand owners to discuss their requirements with UK converters and suppliers. Andy Thomas reports*

**R**otoMetrics' Future of Print event at its UK production site in Aldridge featured three very interesting presentations by brand owners, each providing food for thought for the assembled group of label and packaging converters.

A 'no holds barred' presentation from Ian Schofield, own label and packaging manager at Iceland, the UK's biggest retailer of frozen foods, left converters in no doubt of the company's priorities.

Schofield said 'quicker and smarter' described Iceland's own brand (private label) strategy. 'We have to get to market faster than anyone else.'

He described how the recent launch of a Pizza Express product took just eight weeks from concept to shelf, including ingredient formulation, testing and brand and packaging development.

'This is how fast we are moving. And with multiple variants.'

In terms of positioning, Iceland sits between the discounters and the 'big five' UK retailer giants and claims to be the fastest-growing on a like-for-like basis, as well as number one in online trading. 'Amazon will push the bar up here and we have to react quicker.'

Over 70 percent of what the company sells is own label and packaging is key to Iceland's growth strategy. Packaging design needs to promote Iceland's core drivers, which include healthy eating, product provenance ('farm to fork'), the growing influence of 'spice' in recipes, and so on.

For the 25 brands controlled by Schofield, no design stays on shelf for more than 6-9 months.

'And I never print same job twice. There is always a 'flash' or 'award-winning' or an ingredient change. This is a massive change for the industry: run lengths are coming down as we sell more. We want specific packaging for a specific moment – for a sports event,

seasonal etc. Long runs will never come back because we are so adaptive to the market.'

At the same time, quality is a given. 'Flexo must be high definition. We only print once so quality must be perfect.'

All these drivers point towards digital, said Schofield. 'We don't want stock – it's gone for product and packaging. No more write-offs. We used to spend half a million pounds putting packaging in the bin. No more.'

Digital print today accounts for around 5 percent of Iceland's own label packaging. 'I like the fact there are no plate costs. And now we're looking at primary and secondary packaging like outer cases. Also at vertical integration into our factories – my own print plant next to my production plants? Should I do that myself or leave it to the experts? This is what we're thinking. Think personalization; no waste; lead time is days not weeks; and we're in and out of products really quickly.'

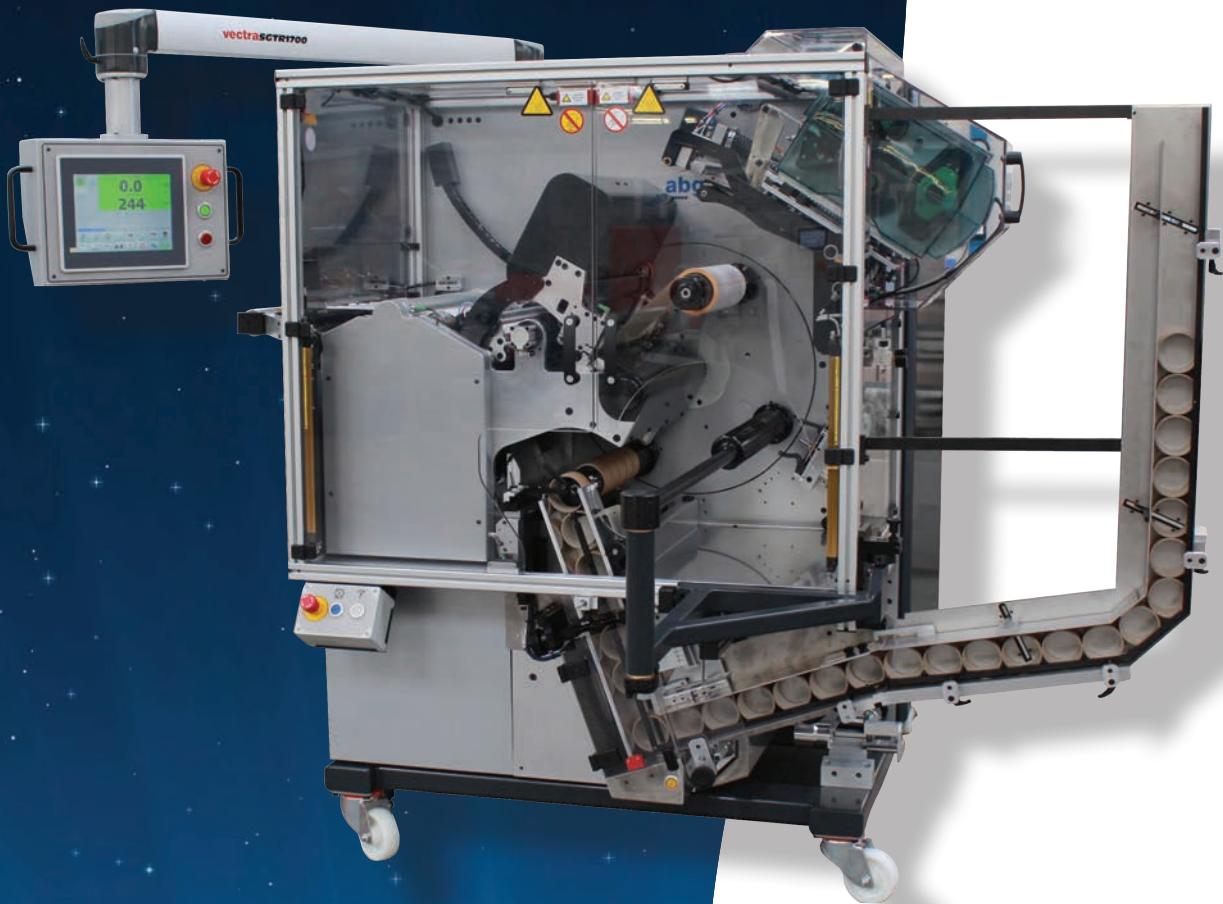
With digital presses getting wider and inkjet 'looking good and cheaper', Schofield said there was no longer an issue with substrates, though finishing is 'not completely resolved'. Print finishes will be important, he said, including more blocking and varnishes in everything from perfumery to food packaging.

Schofield explained that digital is not just about print. 'We use the same digital assets across all media. POS, mobile, call centers etc. And we're using more images from a central database to allow us more control.'

Iceland's speed to market requires rapid and automatic processing of artwork. Schofield has built his own artwork standards at Iceland with an asset management system that brings together ingredients, artwork and photography automatically and without human



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Paul Currie, Lakes Distillery



intervention.

Smart packaging is another area where Schofield is working hard. 'When is a product at its best, and not just "best before"? We are thinking temperature control from field to fork. Now you can scan your fridge with a mobile phone and it can do things that are very interactive, and these apps are getting better.'

Concluding, Schofield said Iceland is looking for innovation – but the right kind of innovation.

'It's the little things that make the difference. I'm not looking for revolution, but for you to make my machines run 5 percent quicker, or provide a barrier that can add another day's shelf life on cooked meat. I do need exclusivity and I need consistency and honest value for money – and that does not mean cheap!'

#### Coca-Cola talks futures

Gregory Bentley, global SME lead for decoration technologies at Coca-Cola Beverage Services, explained how the group's marketing has been revolutionized by postponement, or late stage decoration made possible by in-line labeling instead of direct print. This has allowed Coca-Cola to reduce stock, lower total packaging cost and reduce lead times.

Any innovation presented by Bentley to the group's bottlers has to pass stringent performance tests. Labels must operate flawlessly on high speed lines running at 600+ bottles a minute, or up to 150m/min on thin and delicate (30 micron) films in a wet environment, and with huge costs if the line is forced to stop.

This is the context for the introduction of the Bow Label, the supply chain for which was even more complex than the Share-a-Coke campaign covered previously in Labels & Labeling.

Looking to the future, Bentley said customization and personalization should be added to the standard drivers of speed, cost, quality, flexibility and response time. But he stressed there is no automatic reason to suppose that digital will become the dominant process – it should be used only where there is a definite reason. Indeed, Bentley presented his own design for a new iteration of the flexo process – the 'rolling plate' flexographic process where a loop of plate material replaces the fixed plate.

From a different part of the drinks segment came Paul Currie, founder of the Lakes Distillery.

The brand is a unique blend of whiskies from across the United Kingdom, and now encompasses a premium restaurant. Under the slogan 'The One British', the brand is designed with a contemporary, high-end feel using a mixture of direct bottle decoration and labeling.

'It is difficult for us to know what technology is out there that we can take advantage of,' said Currie. 'We have ideas that our labels can be part of our media offering – that you can scan QR codes with smartphones. And as a new company a lot of our marketing is through social media.'

The need for a unified branding strategy is particularly important as Lakes Distillery plans to diversify into gin, and needs its labels both to unify the brand and describe the difference.

## Standards FIRST

In a well-received technical presentation, Steve Donegan, director of pre-press specialist Graphic Republik, took on the contentious issue of flexo standardization.

Donegan reminded delegates that even in offset, early attempts at automation were controversial. 'Pre-press departments were setting the ink ducts on a Speedmaster and there was uproar when the printers heard it would be automated. They refused to have data going directly to the presses directly even though they knew how it would help them!'

When Donegan first got involved in flexo standards back in 2003, 'things were literally a joke. ISO has since decided they cannot produce a standard because there are so many combinations of materials and aniloxes, etc.'

For that reason, the latest incarnation, ISO 12647-6, is focused on all the partners involved in a job – including the customer – agreeing on a certain standard. 'So there is no one standard, but the partners agree on tolerances to plates and proofs which can be reproduced. Using characterization data and today's measuring devices and workflows, this can be achieved.'

Donegan explained that FIRST provides the measurement and characterization tools required to achieve color accurate results. 'Obtaining data at each stage of production is key.'

There are two types of printer, Donegan told delegates: those who obtain LAB and density values from their ink supplier to measure the color values for the job – and those who prefer to change an anilox or put in more magenta to make the job warmer. 'Which of these best describes you?'

Concluding, Donegan said specifications, standards and tolerances will become even more important going forward.

'Brand owners love consistency, so the process controlled printer will win more work. And you will reduce downtime, waste and operating costs. All the tools are out there – but will they be used?'

Differentiation comes from telling a unique story, said Currie, noting consumer trends where 'people have stuff but want an experience. So they want to know where a product comes from and what's in it – and we have a great story to tell through our label design. People must know these products all come from the same company, and this also helps us sell the whole range to retailers.'

A key part of the messaging is the use of local Cumbrian botanicals for slo and damson gins. 'These have contemporary looks and the label colors are matched to the liquid'. Next on the roster will be flavored Vodka using local waters, raising more fascinating branding challenges.



RotoMetrics is also a sponsor of the latest Label Academy book and exam module on rotary tooling (see [www.label-academy.com](http://www.label-academy.com))



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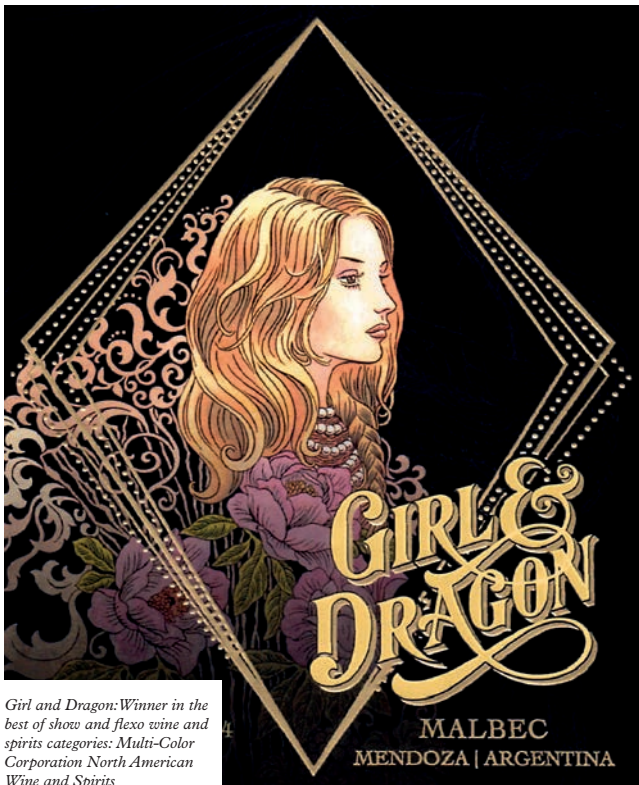
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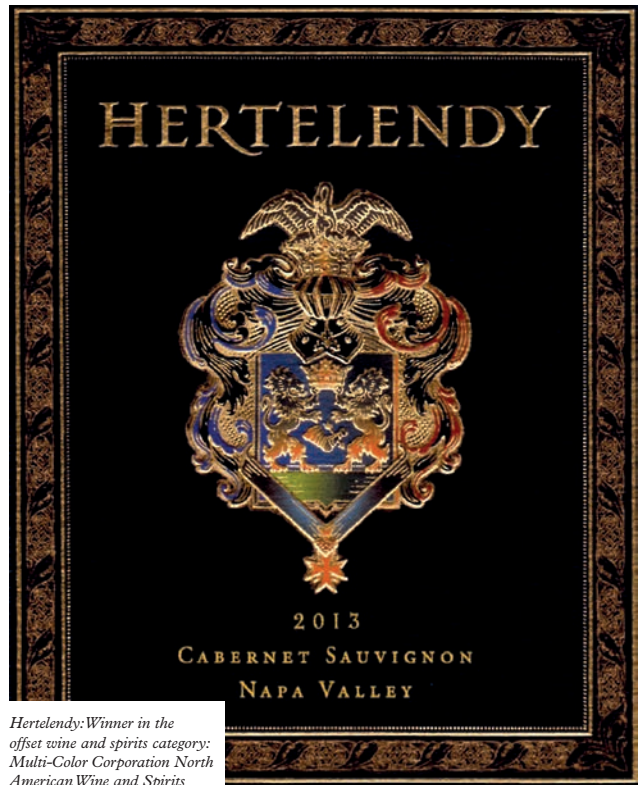


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*Girl and Dragon: Winner in the best of show and flexo wine and spirits categories: Multi-Color Corporation North American Wine and Spirits*



*Hertelendy: Winner in the offset wine and spirits category: Multi-Color Corporation North American Wine and Spirits*

# TLMI hosts annual meeting

*The North American tag and label association presented its annual meeting and awards banquet in Palm Beach, Florida in October. Chelsea McDougall reports*

**T**he annual meeting for the Tag and Label Manufacturers Institute was hosted October 16-19 at The Breakers resort in Palm Beach, Florida. Nearly 500 members attended.

Among the festivities over the three-day conference was a change in leadership when Dan Muenzer of Constantia Flexibles handed over the TLMI chairmanship to Craig Moreland of Coast Label. Muenzer had a busy chairmanship, taking the helm earlier than expected, hiring new TLMI president Mark Tibbetts, leading the association through an overhaul of the TLMI staff and office

relocation, and developing its latest strategic plan. Moreland, who is president of the California-based label converter, will lead TLMI over the next year as the association works to implement the new strategic plan, which also was presented at the event.

Highlights of the strategic plan include improved internal and external communications, increased lobbying efforts and a focus on industry-wide sustainability, specifically to reduce matrix waste in landfills by 30 percent, while increasing liner recycling by the same figure.

'One of the biggest problems we have in our industry is the amount of waste generated,' Moreland told the audience of TLMI members and suppliers. 'We felt this was a key area the association needed to work on.'

Industry experts have noted that 60 percent of roll label product is waste going into landfills. TLMI hopes to reach its landfill reduction and liner recycling goals within the next three to five years.

'These are pretty audacious goals,' TLMI president Tibbetts told the environmental committee. 'We're not going to move the moon over night; it is going to take us some time.' Environmental committee co-chair Calvin Frost added: 'You can't be involved in an industry with 60 percent waste and

## Board of directors elected

TLMI board of directors was elected at the annual meeting. The board of directors includes: Craig Moreland (TLMI chairman), president, Coast Label Company; Michael Ritter, (TLMI chairman elect), general manager, ID Images; Lori Campbell, (TLMI vice chair) chief of operations, The Label Printers; Dan Muenzer (TLMI immediate past chairman), vice president of marketing, Constantia Flexibles; Tim McDonough, (finance chair) president, Flexo-Graphics; Mark Tibbetts, (secretary/treasurer) president, TLMI; Kathy Alaimo, president, Syracuse Label & Surround Printing; Scott Fisher, president, Smyth Companies; Mark Glendenning, CEO and owner, Inland; G. Lynn Higgs, CEO, Infinite Packaging Group; Rob Hutchison, owner/president of Hutchison Miller Sales; Greg Jackson, president, Columbine Label Company; Jan Lehigh, president, Alpine Packaging; William Muir, president, Grand Rapids Label Company; Robert Parker, president, Label King; Steve Schulte, vice president of sales and marketing, Mark Andy; Cindy White, president and CEO, Channeled Resources Group.



*Precision: Winner in the digital category: Multi-Color Corporation, Sonoma*



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TLMI converter members from left: Dwane Wall of Creative Labels of Vermont, John and Andrea Borrelli of Luminer Converting Group, Gail Wall of Creative Labels of Vermont and Robert Parker of Label King

be sustainable.' Additionally outlined in the strategic plan, TLMI wants to assist its members in attracting qualified skilled workers, an oft-cited 'pain point' for TLMI member converters.



Pub Burgers: Winner in the flexo and letterpress category: Yerecic Labels



Aloe H2O: Winner in the other category: Inovar Packaging

'The core purpose of a trade association is to come together and pool resources as a group to accomplish what would be difficult or impossible for each member to accomplish on their own,' Moreland said.

#### Keynote addresses


The annual meeting, which was noted as being the most highly attended of these gatherings, also featured keynote addresses from a former NFL player, an economist and an environmental expert.

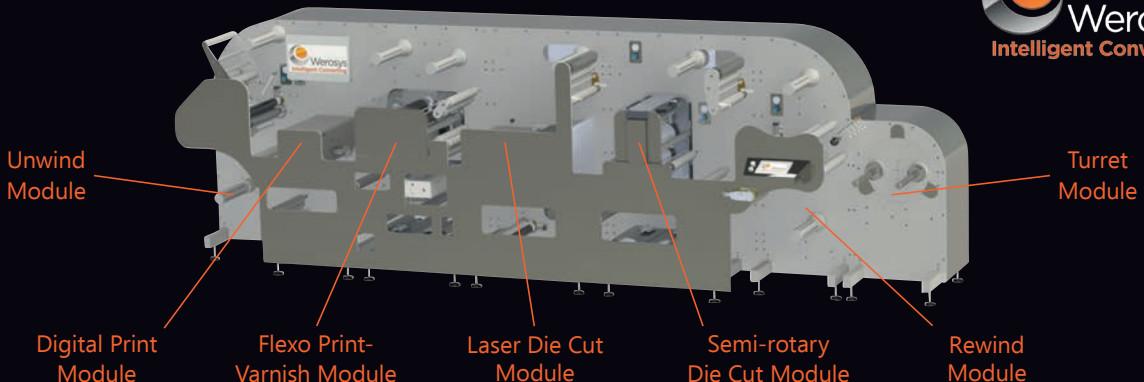
Eric Boles once played as a wide receiver for the New York Jets, and has since become president of The Game Changers, a sought-after coaching and consulting firm. 'Groups that aren't successful rarely have meetings at the Breakers so I'm going to assume you're all good at what you do,' he

said to a laughing audience.

Boles peppered his keynote address with American football anecdotes and advice for success. 'The new definition of mediocrity is meeting expectations,' he said. 'Expectations have gone way up, therefore doing the same thing the same way and expecting a different result is kind of crazy.'

Economist Alan Beaulieu is a favorite speaker at TLMI events. He offered his insight into the state of the US economy, and predicted a major depression in 2030, a 'financial Armageddon,' he called it. However, Beaulieu said there was good news to be found in the current state of the US economy. 'Consumers are in great shape, interest rates remain favorable, employment is rising as are wages, banks are lending,' he said. Anne Johnson is a principal and vice president at






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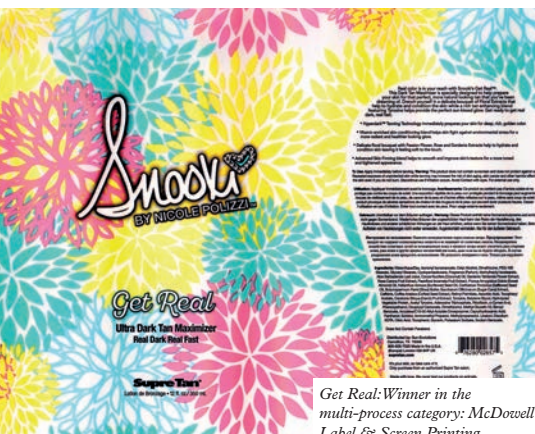
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Get Real: Winner in the multi-process category: McDowell Label & Screen Printing

Resource Recycling Systems where her work focuses on sustainability and packaging. She discussed packaging designs for recyclability, and factors behind 'zero waste' initiatives, which, in a large part, stems from consumer demand, she said.

'Municipalities and companies are driving zero waste,' Johnson said. 'They feel this pressure. It's a big expense for them and they're feeling pressure to have goals and objectives around their waste.'

Corey Reardon, president and CEO of Alexander Watson Associates, was also a featured speaker at a networking lunch.

### Award winners

The last night of the conference, TLMI hosted an awards banquet to honor those in the label industry. Muenzer was named converter of the year and Karen Moreland of RotoMetrics won the supplier of the year award. Massachusetts-based Flexcon and Ohio-based Constantia Flexibles, where Muenzer works as vice president of marketing, were honored for their environmental efforts.

TLMI's Environmental Leadership Award recognizes both a converter and a supplier member each year that has demonstrated a commitment to progressive environmental practices across a range of areas. These include solid waste reduction, recycling, waste or energy recovery, the implementation of new 'clean' technology or processes, or the implementation of an education program.

Flexcon was given the award for incorporating sustainable business practices into its operations. Beyond developing environmentally friendly products, Flexcon implemented an Environmental Management System (EMS) to reduce its environmental impacts and increase its operating efficiency. Flexcon has been LIFE certified since 2011.

Constantia Flexibles was recognized for its SpearRC, a cost-effective pressure-sensitive label that is recognized by both the Association of Postconsumer Plastics Recycling (APR) and the European PET Bottle Platform (EPBP) to be fully compatible with the PET recycling process.

TLMI also gave awards to 20 member companies whose labels stood out among the more than 225 entries in various categories for the annual label award.

Multi-Color Corporation North American Wine and Spirits won Best of Show award for its Girl and Dragon Malbec label. First place North American entries went on to compete for Best of Class honors.



Go to [www.tlmi.com](http://www.tlmi.com) for more information

### Best of Class winners are:

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**Flexo Wine & Spirits Category**  
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and Spirits  
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L-R Les Bradley and Ian Bates

## Breakthrough rotary die-cutter launched

*The launch of a single cylinder rotary die-cutter marks a new project for LPP, says owner Les Bradley, who has also moved to secure the future of his converting equipment agency. Andy Thomas reports*

**W**hen label industry veteran Ian Bates was appointed managing director of specialist converting machinery distributor LPP, it was clear that company owner Les Bradley was putting a firm succession strategy into place.

Bradley says he will now concentrate on developing sales of Rotary Technologies equipment in Europe, with the title of managing director and owner, Rotary Technologies Europe Ltd. 'The geographical scope of this new company is basically everywhere which is not North and South America, so we are now looking for agents to supply and service the Servo 3000, as well as our breakthrough digital print die-cutting machine, the TCC 3300.'

The TCC 3300 rotary die-cutter uses a single magnetic cylinder, similar to a semi-rotary system, but the web does not shuffle back and forth. Instead the web runs at a constant speed, and the die cylinder cams to get into position for the next cut. This allows a current maximum speed of 300 ft/min (106m/min) to be achieved, but with the flexibility of a single magnetic cylinder, making job changeovers a simple matter of changing the magnetic flexible die.

The TCC 3300 has completed beta testing at Southern Tape & Label, where it has been running full production jobs for several months.

'We have been using Rotary's (Servo 3000) reregister system on our flexo presses for years for our digital finishing and were excited when they approached us with their new die-cutter,' says Bob Ramsey Jr at Southern Tape & Label. 'The TCC 3300 is extremely efficient and sets up fast. We're able to finish more jobs per day, allowing

**"We're able to finish more jobs per day, allowing future growth of our digital business. In the near future we will be moving the TCC 3300 in-line with our Jetrion press"**

future growth of our digital business. In the near future we will be moving the TCC 3300 in-line with our Jetrion press to print and die-cut at the same time. The TCC 3300 is highly automated and efficient. It actually brings itself into register.'

The 8-servo axis die-cutter has a compact design, being 6.5ft from end to end and with an approximate 15in web path from unwind to rewind. The TCC 3300 utilizes a fixed magnetic cylinder for mounting industry standard flexible dies covering a range of label repeats between 7-15.75in. The maximum speed is currently 300ft/min depending on the label repeat. The unit has auto-registration and a touch screen for set-up.

Rotary Technologies has a strong track record in innovative converting systems. The company has enjoyed enormous success with its Servo 3000 re-register unit, which can be used for a number of applications, including peel & read label conversion, adding a servo in-feed to an older mechanical machine, and providing a re-registration facility. There are now over 500 installed worldwide – with 150 of those sold by LPP.

New LPP managing director Ian Bates was previously a customer for these units. 'I bought four Servo 3000 units for MPS, Paragon and Essentra,' recalls Bates. 'We

bought it for waste saving but soon moved to develop various new converting options – for example 14 color re-register jobs and peel and read labels, which is the most common use of Servo 3000 units.'

### Industry background

Ian Bates has been in the label industry for 31 years, starting as a press operator then working his way up to group operations manager within the Paragon Labels group. After a time heading up Gerhardt US, Bates spent three years looking after Chesapeake Labels' Wrexham and Dublin facilities before moving to Essentra, where he looked after nine sites around Europe. 'This involved site closures and amalgamations and building a new greenfield site in Newport,' says Bates. 'I actually used LPP to help move the presses from Essentra Hull and Kimbolton to the new site. The timescale involved meant that I needed a reliable and professional team to ensure the deadline for moving was met.'

LPP Services, which handled those press moves, is still an important part of the overall LPP business, and is overseen by Fred Osborne and Les Bradley's eldest son Craig.

LPP is the UK and Eire agent for a number of key brands including Rotary Technologies, Nikka Camera inspection systems, Flexor inspection rewinders, Teknek web cleaners and FlexoMaid anilox cleaners. 'We look for the best all round products to ensure we are providing long term value,' says Bates.



*For background to this story, see p90 of L&L issue 4, 2015, in the magazine archive on [www.labelsandlabeling.com](http://www.labelsandlabeling.com)*



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# DuPont focuses on converter challenges

*With new plate processing and materials available, DuPont argues there has never been a better time for converters to take platemaking in-house. Andy Thomas reports*

**D**uPont Advanced Printing has announced upgrades to its flexographic plate and plate processing technology which bring significant productivity and process control benefits to its users.

Perhaps the most important introduction is Cyrel Easy Plate technology which simplifies the process of producing flat-top dot plates by building the capability directly into the plate material. The Easy Plate portfolio is available for thermal and solvent-free processes with an engineered or smooth surface.

Up to now, producing flat-top dot Cyrel plates has required an extra processing step to inhibit oxygen on the plate surface during exposure.

Jan Scharfenberg, DuPont technical manager for EMEA, says flat-top dots have advantages under certain conditions. 'People like the fact you can measure flat-top dots more easily – because where do you measure when you have something point shaped, effectively infinite? Another advantage is less abrasion and more stability on long run lengths.'

With Easy Plate materials the plateau can be seen at around the 8-10 micron dot size. Everything below that uses 'digital' dots for the highlights. 'So with Easy Plate we combine the stability benefits of flat-top dots while retaining highlights which are almost as good as fully digital plates.'

## Fast developments

On the plate processing side, DuPont has launched a new Fast thermal processor aimed at flexible packaging and label customers. The DuPont Cyrel Fast 2000 TD system has a mid-size 42in x 60in format but can handle plate sizes of 35in x 48in without any modification as well. DuPont has made several significant 'under the hood' enhancements to the Fast processor design which will help reduce downtime.

Firstly, the 'sticky' drum surface, which required frequent maintenance to keep the adhesion level correct, has been replaced by a mechanical system to hold the plate. In addition, the heated roller, which was contaminated by polymer residues over time, is now protected by a thin PET film which keeps the contact roller clean. 'This improves processing quality and requires significantly less of a service effort,' says Scharfenberg.

## Esko relationship

Because of the joint branding of the Esko CDI and Cyrel Fast product lines, there has been some confusion about the relationship between Esko and DuPont. In fact, this year the two companies celebrate a 20-year relationship. The strategic partnership continues. 'We test their systems, help optimize them and give advice on how our plates and sleeves perform,' says Scharfenberg. 'But there is no exclusivity.'

**"The plateau can be seen at around the 8-10 micron dot size. Everything below that uses 'digital' dots for the highlights. So Easy Plate combines the stability benefits of flat-top dots while retaining highlights which are almost as good as fully digital plates"**

## In-house platemaking

Jan Scharfenberg believes that DuPont's latest technology developments make it easier than ever for converters to take plate manufacturing in-house. 'Thermal processing makes more sense the closer you are to the press. If a plate breaks you can start the press again in one hour.'

Scharfenberg believes that the names invented by repro houses to brand their services confuse converters into thinking the platemaking process is more complex than it actually is. 'Platemaking is a non-creative process – you just follow the rules. Our ideal scenario would be to have all the complex stuff at the trade house, like digital file handling, color management and retouching, and all the non-creative end at the converter – even if it's managed by the repro house.'

Scharfenberg believes it comes down to how repro houses see their future role. 'Is a repro house a service provider or a plate maker? If a service provider, then the future is handling digital assets and file



DuPont AP Cyrel 2000TD

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## Plates vs sleeves

DuPont is seeing more use of sleeves in the narrow and mid-web sectors. 'We see these converters using process color to print different products on multiple lanes then slit these into final widths,' says Scharfenberg. 'The missing part was not the sleeve, but the availability of the correctly specified printing press. Using presses with better registration and a continuous print design – or a high number of repeat jobs – sleeves makes most sense. They use the same pre-press workflow as standard plates and are processed in dedicated thermal or solvent equipment lines.'

**“Our experience is that Revo works best where you can standardize at one site. But even then it only works if you keep all the same components”**

distribution. They could say to a converter, "Put a Fast unit by your press and we will handle the files". You can then think much broader. As DuPont we do not care who owns what. We sell plates to both trade shops and printers. But for the sake of the industry, platemaking should be closer to the press.'

### Flexo vs gravure

Another issue which concerns Scharfenberg is the lack of standardization in the flexo process at a time when gravure and offset printers are looking for alternatives.

'It is very hard to explain to a gravure guy who wants to move to flexo all the different possibilities and systems, like water-wash versus thermal, all the different ink systems, plate thicknesses and so on. So it is a dynamic market, but for a decision maker it became a bit complicated.'

DuPont believes thermal processing is the most effective alternative to solvents. 'We do not do water-wash because we do not like the complexity and high maintenance effort in processing or the risk of water contamination,' says Scharfenberg. 'We are committed to thermal as can be seen by our 1,000+ Fast installations.'

Interestingly, lack of standards is a further reason for converters to take platemaking in-house, Scharfenberg believes, since standardiza-

## Flat-top time travel

There is a certain irony in DuPont's incorporating flat-top dots into its Cyrel Easy Plate technology. Around 20 years ago the flexo plate industry actually moved away from flat-top structures, which had been part of the analog film workflow, to super-fine 'digital' dots, which allowed converters to closely match offset and gravure print quality – for example in producing subtle vignettes.

With the re-introduction of film and the new discussion and market demand for flat-top dots, DuPont (among others) felt compelled to offer its own flat-top dot option using a bolt-on oxygen inhibition module. This workflow was associated with an investment cost and a certain degree of complexity, and was an interim solution before the Cyrel Easy technology platform was developed.



DuPont AP Cyrel Easy technology print sample

tion is easier to achieve when applied to a single operation.

'Esko's Equinox (extended gamut system) can be implemented best if you work with a limited number of pre-press partners. But if you work with too many, implementation might become too time consuming. If you have an in-house workflow, however, you can standardize everything and we can help you more effectively.'

**“It is very hard to explain to a gravure guy who wants to move to flexo all the different possibilities and systems, like water-wash versus thermal, all the different ink systems, plate thicknesses and so on”**

This has certainly been Scharfenberg's experience as DuPont's representative on the Bobst Revo team, which brings together a full complement of suppliers to ensure each press installation works smoothly. Revo users must commit to 7-color process printing using Esko's Equinox software, and to qualified products including DuPont's Cyrel Easy plates, Apex anilox and Flint UV inks. 'Our experience is that Revo works best where you can standardize at one site,' says Scharfenberg. 'But even then it only works if you keep all the same components.'

Although lack of standards in flexography has major drawbacks, Scharfenberg stresses that the process as a whole has huge advantages for packaging printers: the wide range of substrates it can handle; the density of ink laydown; and an increasingly eco-friendly profile as the industry – with DuPont leading from the front – moves away from solvent processing.

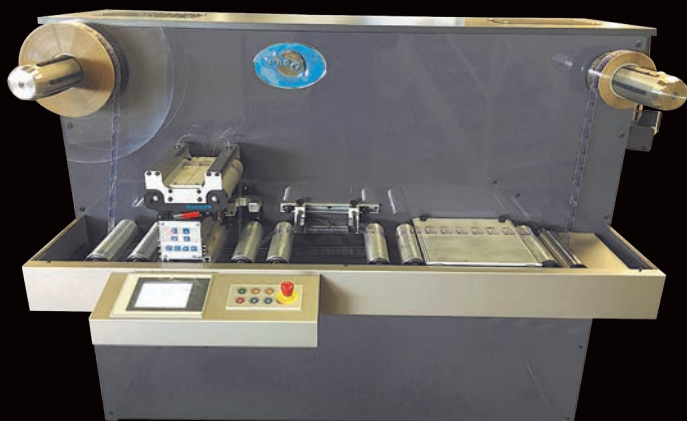


Among early adopters of the Easy plate system was Hub Labels in Hagerstown, Maryland: read more at <http://bit.ly/2fagr9m>

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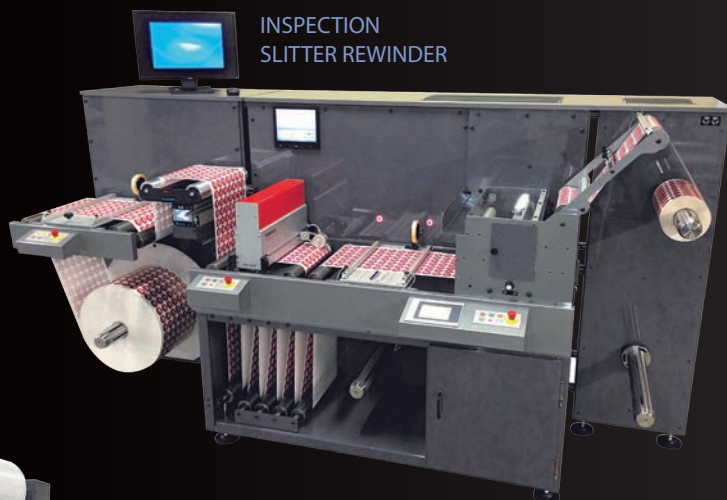
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Nitai Vyas (left) and Rajan Vyas with the new Nilpeter FB3300S at their plant in Ahmedabad

# Nitai Press on strong growth trajectory

*Rajan Vyas, co-director at Nitai Press, talks about the company's journey and gives tips to offset printers keen on diversifying into label printing in India. Aakriti Agarwal reports*

In 2016, Nitai Press, based in Ahmedabad in Gujarat, installed its second press in two years – a high-specification 8-color Nilpeter FB3300S.

In 2014, the company shifted production to a bigger facility and installed its first Nilpeter FB3300S. The 13in, 8-color UV press – with features including screen, cold foil, chill drums, lamination, relam/delam and two die-cutting stations – has a re-insertion facility that can produce 16 or more colors from the same job after reprinting.

Rajan Vyas, co-director at Nitai Press, says: 'I opted for Nilpeter because the company has a manufacturing facility in India. I could go to the factory and see the press running before taking a decision. Nilpeter offers great after-sales customer support too.'

Success, however, did not come easy to Nitai Press, managed by brothers Rajan and Nitai Vyas. They started a pre-press trading business by the name of Dazzle Agency in 1989-90. The two brothers would meet designers in Ahmedabad, get the design that

**"I opted for Nilpeter because the company has a manufacturing facility in India"**

had to be printed and go to Mumbai to get them converted onto plates. There were no computers at that time. Their uncles, Satish and Pankaj Bhatt, owned a pre-press firm, Liberty Graphics, in Mumbai and supported them by processing the plates for their company. After shuttling between the two cities for nine years, the brothers decided to begin offset printing.

They invested in a Heidelberg 2-color refurbished press in 1995 and used it for 10 years, but could not reach the heights of success they were aiming for. Rajan Vyas says, 'We had to outsource finishing. We were not prepared at that time to invest in

all the finishing equipment required in offset printing. Therefore, we could not control the finishing of the product. Poor finishing – such as binding, varnish or slitting – used to often spoil the print job, resulting in a rejection. We finally decided to take control of the finished product.'

After 10 years of struggle, the brothers decided to transition to flexo printing. They sold the Heidelberg press in 2006 and invested the next two years in understanding flexo technology and getting a loan to buy a flexo press.

The well-educated directors, Rajan Vyas, a commerce graduate with media planning from the Mudra Institute of Communications, and Nitai Vyas, who holds a diploma in printing technology from JJ College of Arts in Mumbai, decided to make their first investment in a 6-color Mark Andy 2200 in 2007. 'This investment allowed me to finish the product at my factory and give a good quality product to the end customer,' said Rajan Vyas.



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Nitai Press's new, bigger premises on the outskirts of Ahmedabad

Giving credit for the success to Nitai Vyas, co-director and his younger brother, Rajan Vyas says, 'I decided to name our business after him because he is the backbone of the company. He has the technical know-how which is absolutely critical in this business. My brother visualizes the product before it's printed and has a long term vision for the company. We have the confidence and strength to run the business because of his knowledge and expertise.'

Rajan Vyas says that success did not come overnight. 'Just installing a press does not necessarily cut a good deal. Other people imitating my journey may or may not succeed. It's important that each one carve their own path and take calculated risks. Sell confidence to your customers so they come back to you with more work.'

Further praising the support from Micro Inks and Nirma, he added, 'No printer can succeed without support from its clients and the directors of these two companies stood by us at every stage of our business.'



Rajan and Nitai Vyas, co-directors of Nitai Press

## "Just installing a press does not necessarily cut a good deal"

'Our chartered accountancy firm and guardians, Kaushik Jayendra & Company, guided us at every step. To succeed, it is important that people associated with business are willing to help,' Rajan Vyas says.

The company has been growing at a staggering 30 to 35 percent year-on-year and catering to pharmaceuticals, liquor, cosmetics, perfumes and barcode label industries in and around Gujarat. 'We will now target some big FMCG companies,' concludes Rajan Vyas.

The new factory is spread across an area of 13,000 sq ft and three floors, and converts about 240,000 sqm of paperstock every month. Nitai Press closed the 2013-14 financial year with a turnover of Rs 9 crore (1.34 million USD). With the new press installed in 2016, the company's target is to grow by 30 to 35 percent in the current financial year and is confident of achieving a turnover of Rs 12 crore to Rs 14 crore (1.80 million USD to 2.09 million USD).



For further information, refer to <http://info@nitai-press-camp-pvt-ltd.com>



Nitai Vyas (left) and Rajan Vyas (right) with the new Nilpeter FB3300S installed in 2016

## Tips for offset printers

During the Labelexpo India roadshows in October 2016, Rajan Vyas made the following suggestions to offset printers interested in investing in label printing:

- 1. Flexo is not as straightforward as offset printing.** Understand the technology; it doesn't begin or end with just installing a press. Consider the cost of tooling and infrastructure when starting a flexo business.
- 2. Identify a press and/or technology** that suits your customer profile and business. Try to stick to one brand of the press so you don't have to invest in new tooling every time.
- 3. Pre-press** is the heart of label business but immediate investment in equipment for this operation is not critical. Understand and learn how it works but outsource to a reliable pre-press house.
- 4. Learn to calculate your cost** of printing accurately on a flexo press so you sell at a profit, even if it is marginal. Every job requires accurate calculation.
- 5. Start new business simultaneously.** Don't stop your existing business to start printing labels.
- 6. Get an order so your press does not stand ideal.** Try to get an idea of the kind of label jobs that your offset clients may have before you invest in a press. If possible, have your existing offset clients give you flexo jobs beforehand. Get a job before getting a press.
- 7. Try not to get in a price war.** There is stiff competition in the market but print good jobs and deliver on time. Stick to good work ethics so your customers see the value and service you offer and come back to you with work.
- 8. Target mid-sized companies.** Big companies, Indian and multinational, will try to reduce your margins considerably. While it is good to have some steady jobs from big companies, it is important to focus on mid-sized companies for better return on investment, credit and experimentation with new techniques of label printing.
- 9. Network.** Attend as many exhibitions as possible and meet industry experts, so you understand the trends and learn various technologies within the industry.
- 10. Invest in a new business with deep pockets.** Return on investment is gradual and depending on your investment, cost structuring, management, it could take up to three years to break even or make a profit. The key to success is to exercise the virtue of patience in this business. The first couple of years could be a learning curve.



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Two of the four Nilpeter presses installed at Sai Com Code Flexoprint in Sonapat

# Sai Com to start production in east India

*A Nilpeter press and a Rotoflex VSI 330 were installed at the end of November. Aakriti Agarwal reports*

**S**ai Com Codes Flexoprint, headquartered in Sonapat near Delhi in India, has announced its second plant in Guwahati, Assam.

The 15,000 sq ft plant is expected to start production by the end of November with a 13-inch web width 10-color Nilpeter FB3300S press and a Rotoflex VSI 330 inspection, slitting and rewinding machine.

Sai Com Codes Flexoprint CEO Harish Gupta said: 'We intend to supplement the first press with a second one before the end of this financial year. Our policy is to be as close to our customers as possible and it is also our belief that to ensure continued growth, we have to add capacity and value for our customers. We have to grab the opportunity to grow with them and that is only possible when we set up our plants closer to their new ones to be able to match their just-in-time requirements.' There is an option to double the plant capacity in the future. Another similar press from Nilpeter will be shipped to the new plant in January. A second Rotoflex VSI 330 will follow in March 2017.

## Investment

The first plant in Sonapat houses four 13in width Nilpeter servo presses and two Rotoflex VSI 330 inspection slitter rewinders. The narrow web flexo presses run at an average production speed of approximately 120m/min. The plant has the provision to add two more flexo presses in the existing space in Sonapat. 'However, this shall depend on investment considerations keeping in mind our new plants,' said Gupta.

Reasoning on installing all Nilpeter presses at both its plants, Gupta said, 'We do not try to experiment with our established

suppliers unless there is a compelling reason for us to do so. Once our mother plant is based on this model, it becomes easy for us to replicate the same model. In terms of presses, we are a Nilpeter house and the same press is going to be installed at our new plant.'

The company strongly supports its suppliers and credits its growth to them. Gupta said that he does not see enough reason to invest in pre-press when established suppliers have always served them well. 'We do not find any reason for taking away business from them. This is in line with our philosophy of taking as good care of your supply chain as you take care of your customers. Your main suppliers play a major role in how you grow as do your customers. Secondly, every penny spent on investments today needs to be justified very carefully in terms of where and on what it is being spent. Our industry is getting more competitive by the day and one can ill-afford to make mistakes with substantial investments. It is no longer an industry where you can operate with a mom-and-pop kind of operation if you want to grow. You need to invest in professionals at all levels and keep adding them as you grow,' he said.

Though the company is focused on self-adhesive labels, all presses are configured to 'future-proof the company for the time when it decides to choose to enter either shrink sleeves or in-mold labeling markets,' said Gupta.

The company is evaluating further expansion in a different region in 2017.



For further info, refer to company's website  
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Printers at the Univacco open house at the Nilpeter factory in Chennai



T. Kamalakannan, CEO of Dhana Impex, in discussion with the owners of Nitai Press, based in Ahmedabad

# Univacco hosts Indian open house

Univacco hosted an open house at the Nilpeter factory in Chennai, India, to highlight cold foil techniques on a flexo press. Aakriti Agarwal reports

Attended by about 40 printers, an open house at the Nilpeter factory in Chennai, India, featured a 10-color Nilpeter FB servo press printing clear-on-clear and in-mold labels using Univacco foils and in-line die-cutting. The event was organized by Dhana Impex, the Indian distributor for Taiwan-based Univacco.

The demonstration was followed by a gathering where T. Kamalakannan, chief executive officer at Dhana Impex, welcomed the printers. 'The industry is confronted with challenging time and we are introducing new products to address the needs of customers.'

Colin Thompson, marketing and sales product manager at Univacco, introduced the company to the audience and said, 'To address the industry demands, we have new materials and films coming out to cater to clear-on-clear labels. We are committed to constant innovation with new formula and techniques which we think would benefit the Indian print industry too.'

## Beyond pressure-sensitive

Manish Kapoor, country head of sales at Nilpeter, urged the printers to look at opportunities beyond pressure-sensitive labels. 'The Indian label printing industry is growing at a moderate rate of 15 percent. Forty-five percent of this growth is contributed by increasing volume, 25 percent each is contributed by value growth and shift from wet-glue and four percent by expanding footprint. To be able to grow at 15 percent, label printers will have to address all

these areas.'

He said that it is important to think creatively, to get and retain new businesses, and to increase capacity as well as productivity. 'Don't carry dead weight in the form of non-profitable jobs. Work hard towards adding relevant and profitable business,' he added.

He also suggested that printers invest wisely in what they need and not in what is available in the market when adding capacity. 'Buy something that will give you an edge over competition and will differentiate you. Innovate and increase capability. Work closely with your suppliers and don't wait for others to develop new markets. It's equally important to educate wet-glue label printers about the advantages of shifting to pressure-sensitive printing.'

'There are opportunities galore,' he assured. Highlighting some positive aspects of the industry, he said that the entry barrier has risen considerably making it tough for new entrants.

'The growth graph continues to show an upward trend. Undercutting of prices has been brought to a level where they cannot be cut anymore. It is thus time to graduate from being a label printer to a packaging provider. Unleash the power of the Indian label printing industry and invest in a combination press.'

Praveen Gupta, country manager, South Asia, UPM Raflatac, reiterated Kapoor's suggestion of shifting focus to value addition and not chase after volume alone.

**"It's important to educate wet-glue label printers about the advantages of shifting to pressure-sensitive label printing"**

Alan Baretto, managing director of Nilpeter India, concluded the event by delivering a vote of thanks to the printers and suppliers.

Some prominent printers at the demonstration were Classic Image Offset from Kolkata; Seljagat Printers, Sivakasi; Wintex Flexo Prints, Bengaluru; Nitai Press, Ahmedabad; Ajanta Packaging; Venkateswara Packaging, Bengaluru; Shriram Veritech, Noida; Impact Packaging, Delhi; Super Labels, Chennai; Best Labels, Chennai, amongst others. Some offset printers looking at diversifying into label printing were also present.

Among suppliers who partnered at the open house were Flint Group, UPM Raflatac, Biesse tapes, Kodak, Veepee Arts from Bangalore, RotoMetrics and Swedcut.



For further info on foils, refer to [www.univaccofoils.com](http://www.univaccofoils.com)

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# Choosing the right anilox

*Sonia Arcos, technical sales director of Cheshire Anilox Technology, explains how choosing the right anilox can help converters take advantage of improvements in flexo printing*

To take full advantage of recent improvements in the flexographic process, printers must understand both their anilox screen specifications – line count and volume – and engraving type and cell geometry.

## 60 deg Hexagonal engraving

Although the 60 degree hexagonal pattern (Fig. 1) was until recently the most common anilox engraving, it has important limitations with regard to ink release and ink flow. The 60 deg pattern consists of millions of individual hexagonal cells engraved across the surface of the anilox roll. With closed-cell configuration air gets trapped with every rotation, causing turbulence within the ink. This turbulence causes micro foaming and uneven laydown of ink to the plate and substrate, resulting in pin holing. At high speed a loss of color density is caused by the inability of the closed hexagonal cells to get refilled in each revolution. Poor ink release is another major restriction. Due to its conical profile, the 60 deg cell only releases 60-70 percent of its total volume. Problems arise when the unused ink congeals or dries, plugging the cells and causing print inconsistencies.

Today's advanced laser technology, however, has enabled anilox suppliers to develop superior engravings for a wide range of different applications.

## Solid and combination print

With solid and combination print, MaxFlo+ is the best option (Fig. 2). The ink release properties of this high line count engraving ensure enough volume is delivered to achieve dense solids and extremely clean vignettes.

Substrate type and ink system affect the anilox specification and engraving type, so having well-defined print targets with tolerances will help your anilox supplier recommend the best solution.

MaxFlo+ is best used for combination UV printing, with volumes ranging from 6-7cm<sup>3</sup>/m<sup>2</sup> and a high line count of 800-900LPI. The channel improves the ink flow and reduces aeration, which results in significantly less pin holing or voids in the print (Fig. 3).

## HD flexo printing

HD flexo is a major driver in today's flexographic industry, and new anilox screening technology has been critical to its success. **There are three main factors:**

- New fiber optic laser technology has enabled line counts in excess of 2000 LPI

compared to the maximum of 1200 LPI by CO<sub>2</sub> lasers. The narrower beam width and customized software have made possible sophisticated cell shapes that offer outstanding ink release properties at ultra-fine line counts.

- Changes in ink flow and constitution. Newer finely ground ink pigments allow for greater color strength at lower cell volumes.
- New digital HQ or HD plates have allowed unprecedented refinement of the plate screen. An HD plate is made up of a number of variable dot sizes and support dots on the plate (Fig. 4), allowing for plate screens with high LPI and highlight dots that are less than 1 percent.

To make a successful recommendation, your anilox supplier will need to know the type of ink, substrate, plate DPI and target minimum dot percentage.

Consistency and repeatability of HD process print are critical, and due to the finer anilox required, we recommend ProFlo, which has an improved cell profile that provides a more consistent and controlled ink lay-down to the plate. This high-release cell offers as much as 15 percent additional ink compared with conventional 60 degrees engravings, enabling the anilox manufacturer to deliver the required color densities at finer line counts (Fig. 5).

Keeping the anilox cell opening equal to or less than the minimum dot diameter will ensure clean printing as the anilox will deliver the right amount of ink to the plate and not over-ink your minimum dots, avoiding 'dirty' printing.

For 175-200LPI HD print standardized line counts range from 1200 LPI to 1400 LPI and volumes from 3.5 to 2.0cm<sup>3</sup>/m<sup>2</sup> in both wide and narrow web printing.

Printed using same ink and print conditions		
	900 LPI 3.8cm <sup>3</sup> /m <sup>2</sup> Anilox 60 deg hex	1,200 LPI x 3.5 cm <sup>3</sup> /m <sup>2</sup> ProFlo
C	1.15	1.35
M	1.25	1.4
Y	0.90	1.0
K	1.35	1.50

SID with ProFlo and conventional 60 degrees

## Fixed palette

With demand for shorter runs increasing, fixed palette printing is emerging as a cost

effective solution. This technique uses only CMYK plus orange, green and violet or red green and blue, avoiding the need for Pantone colors.

Fixed palette or Expanded Color Gamut (ECG) presents some challenges to the anilox supplier, as consistency of all print variables is fundamental. Adherence to volume tolerances and rigorous measurement of the anilox is key, along with a stable ink viscosity maintained throughout the run.

MaxFlo+ and ProFlo are the best choice for ECG. These high release engravings provide a more efficient transfer to the plate, increasing the density throughout the full

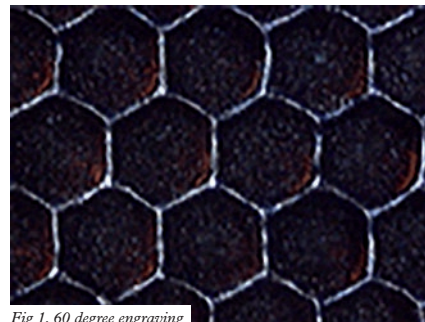


Fig 1. 60 degree engraving

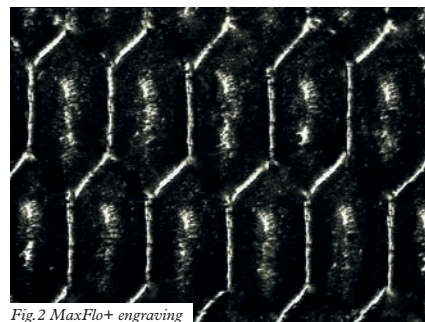


Fig. 2 MaxFlo+ engraving

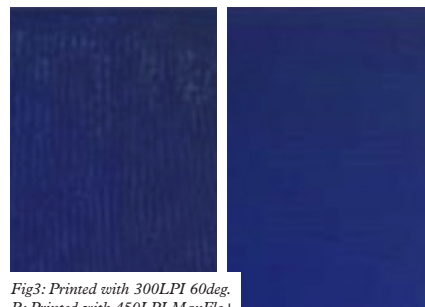


Fig3: Printed with 300LPI 60deg.  
R: Printed with 450LPI MaxFlo+

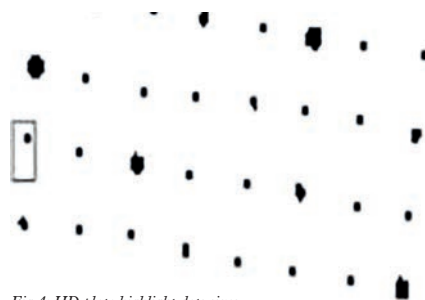
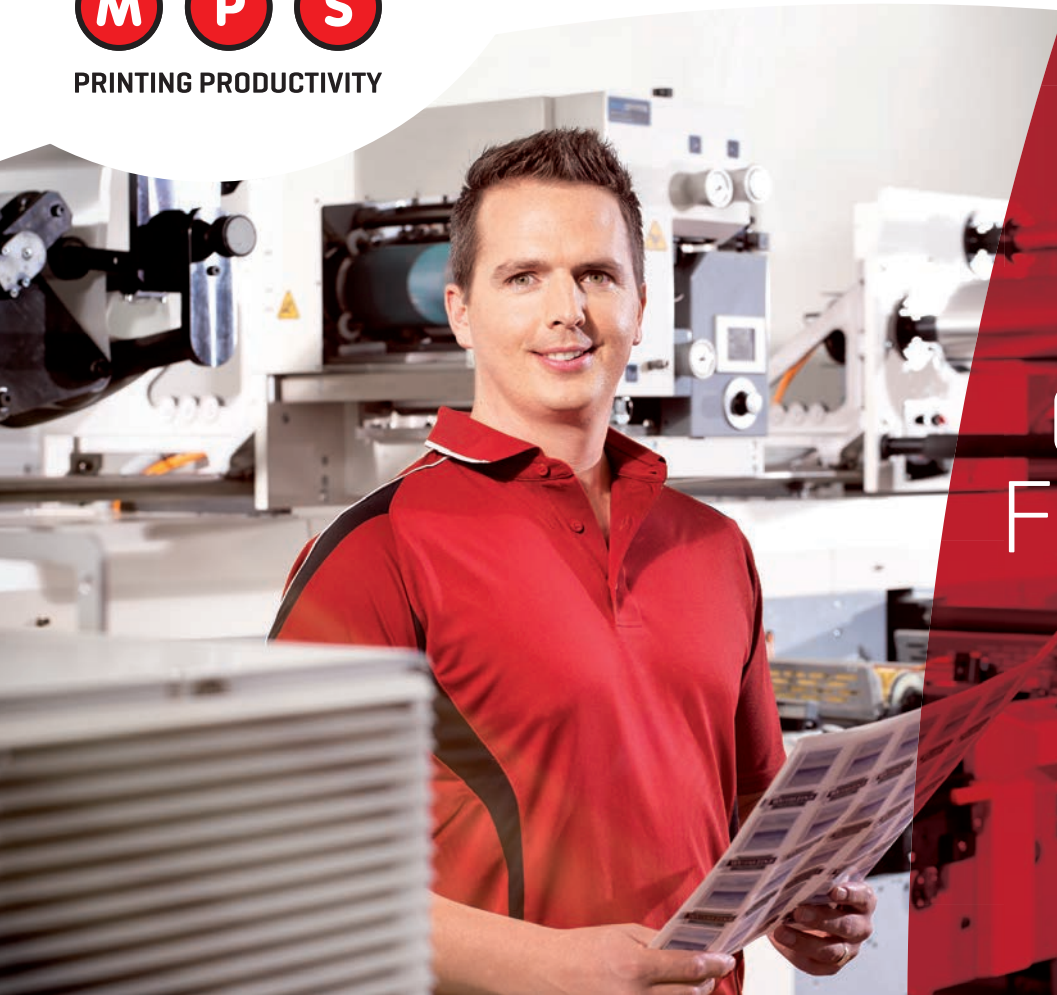


Fig. 4: HD plate highlight dots sizes



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Fig 5: Standard Flexo



HD Flexo

tonal range which widens the available range of colors and increases the process color gamut.

The best way to determine the most suitable line count and volume for the 4 or 7 color process is testing through a banded anilox roller. Depending on the substrate and inks used, for the four color process, the recommended anilox line count is between 900LPI - 1300LPI ProFlo with volumes ranging from 2.5-4.5cm<sup>3</sup>/m<sup>2</sup> and 800-1100LPI MaxFlo+ with volumes ranging from 6-4cm<sup>3</sup>/m<sup>2</sup> for the donor colors (OGV / RGB). Volume tolerances should not exceed 2 percent.

Liaising with your ink, plate and anilox supplier is vital for the successful implementation of ECG.

### High opacity whites

For flexo to achieve or exceed opacity levels of rotary screen, a high volume of ink is necessary. Because UV inks are thick and do not flow easily, transferring a high volume can be a challenge, and the higher the volume the more difficult it is to achieve a smooth coverage.

Easyflo HD engraving (Fig. 7) achieves by far the highest density. This high-release engraving features a 30 degree angle with an open and linked cell design. Channel engravings have been accepted for many years as a proven way of improving ink flow within the anilox, reducing excessive foaming which will result in pin holing (Fig. 8).

Recommended cell volumes range from 25 cm<sup>3</sup> /m<sup>2</sup> -40 cm<sup>3</sup>/m<sup>2</sup>, but cell volumes will need to be assessed on an individual basis based on your print conditions. A good starting point is to check the opacity level achieved with any of your high volume anilox rollers or conduct a banded anilox trial if the results were nowhere near your opacity target.

Another important aspect is surface

tension. Most films have a very low surface tension which will make inking difficult. To obtain sufficient wetting and adhesion, pre-treatment just before the application of whites is necessary. The treatment of any film will dramatically alter the surface tension and will enable the ink to wet out and adhere to the surface.

Plate types can make a real difference to the opacity level achieved. Combining EasyFlo HD with texturized solid plates will improve significantly the ink transfer efficiency and increase opacity.

If applying white to an uncoated substrate or carton, consider larger cell engravings such as MaxFlo and volumes ranging from 20-30cm<sup>3</sup>/m<sup>2</sup>.

For applications of white solvent-based inks on plastic substrates, MaxFlo+ achieves opacity levels equal to gravure printing. Although screen specifications will depend on your particular print conditions, a volume range of 15-18cm<sup>3</sup>/m<sup>2</sup> has yielded outstanding levels of opacity in flexible packaging.

### Specialty inks and coatings

For specialty inks such as fluorescent, photo chromatic, metallic and pearlescent, ink particle size is the key factor for correct anilox specification. A good rule of thumb is to keep the cell opening a minimum of twice the size of the largest particle size. Once the minimum opening has been determined, the cell volume needs to be assessed. This will be chosen in relation to the minimum dry coat weight recommended by the ink supplier.

It is important to understand that heavy volumes of highly pigmented ink do not work well. High volumes require deep engravings which will make the evacuation of the ink pigments more challenging and the cells will easily plug. Choosing an open engraving will improve the ink release as an open cell structure will have a shallower

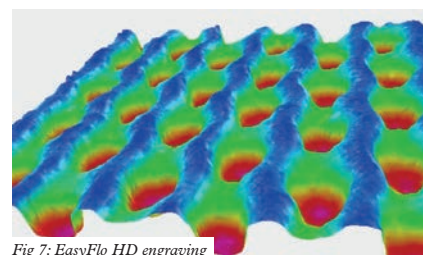


Fig 7: EasyFlo HD engraving



Fig 8: Printed with 60deg (left) and EasyFlo HD (right)

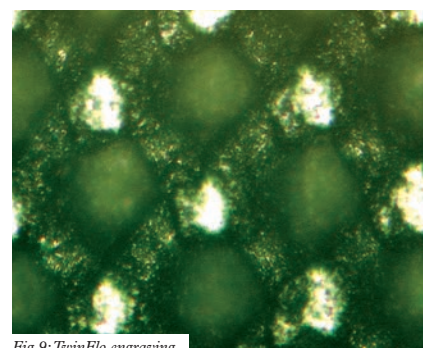


Fig 9: TwinFlo engraving

depth promoting ink transfer. For specialty inks and coatings we always recommend TwinFlo (Fig. 9), which features raised 'posts' between the linked cells that support the doctor blade, while the double channel screen provides a more open structure that increases ink laydown.

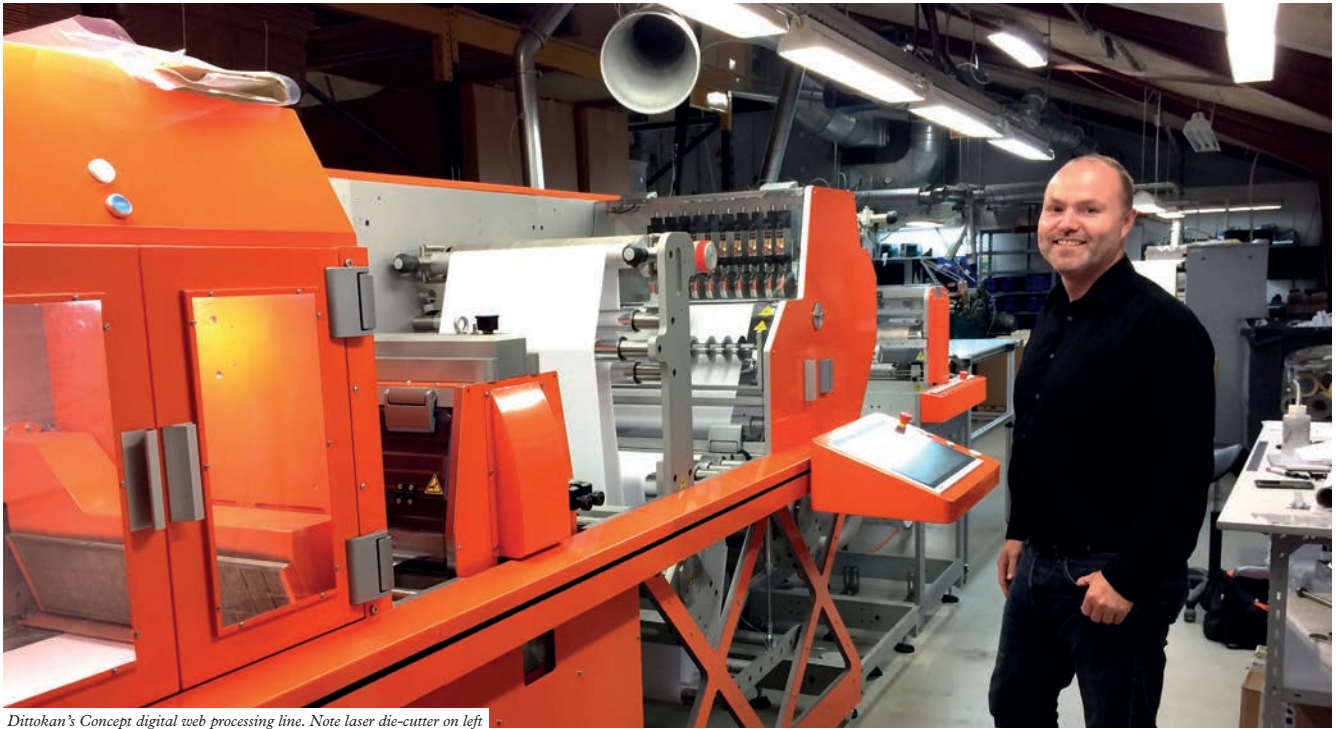
This engraving is also recommended for applications of laminates, adhesives and varnishes, as well as the new on-demand tactile varnishes.

Anilox choice will depend on target coat weight, percentage solids and coating density, as well as the application method (gravure coating or standard flexo) and the doctoring method (two roll or chambered system). Having a benchmark is also critical. If you have used any anilox before and have measured the coat weight achieved, this will be very useful information.

Substrate type is another factor that will affect the final coat weight. The recommended volume for uncoated substrates will be higher than for non-porous or coated substrates.



*Sonia Arcos is the Technical Sales Director of Cheshire Anilox Technology with more than 12 years' experience in the printing industry. Highly qualified, she has a strong technical knowledge and understanding of the flexo printing industry*



Dittokan's Concept digital web processing line. Note laser die-cutter on left

# Automated finishing

*Andy Thomas looks at two Danish installations of Werosys converting lines which demonstrate the flexibility of these modular, automated finishing systems*

**F**inishing systems specialist Werosys has installed differently configured machines at two Danish converters which demonstrate the range of options available in its high-end modular Concept systems.

Werosys was formed almost four years ago with a clear focus on automated and integrated finishing systems based around the twin concepts of Cloud computing and Industry 4.0.

'Where for most companies software is installed on top of mechanical systems, for me it was the other way round,' says Bjarke Nielsen, chief technical officer and founder of Werosys. 'I am driven by solving things by software first and then adding the mechanical layers. When I design a machine I see it from the computer's point of view, as an IT platform.'

The goal is for the machine to run itself using information stored on remote servers. 'For example the machine will always run at its optimum speed without external input from the operator, who simply turns the dial to maximum. Software modules communicate with each other, telling one process to wait while a slower process happens, so the machine works out its own bottlenecks while always protecting itself.'

The Werosys Concept machines are embedded into Cloud/Industry 4.0 systems, meaning all aspects of the machine down to individual electrical components can be monitored in real time.

'All our components are designed from the ground up to 4.0 requirements, so the amount of information we can get back about the machine's condition – Big Data if you like – is huge. If a motor starts running hotter you can look back and see when it went wrong, and anticipate breakdowns before they happen,' says Nielsen.

The use of servos throughout the Concept machines eliminates problems associated with brakes and clutches. 'A servo motor is an intelligent motor which can have a lot of behaviors depending on how you program it. It can accelerate but also act as a brake, and can be monitored with built-in sensors.'

Nielsen describes Werosys machines as like 'Lego lines'. 'Each of our

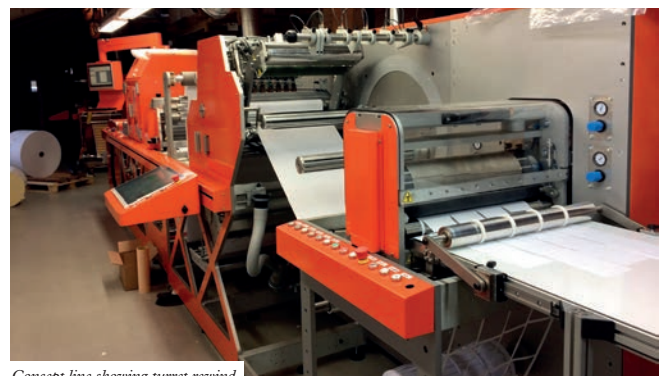
modules is itself modular, so we can move rollers around and change web paths, for example.'

With label converters' profit margins under such pressure, Nielsen sees automation as the only way forward: 'Why is the operator setting up how many labels, choosing cores and other manual steps which are already in the customer specification and therefore in the customer's IT system?'

Setting up automation between IT network and Werosys finisher is easier than many converters think, says Nielsen. 'It does not require a complex MIS system. The file exchange is done in the universal XML format which sets the machine up directly, so the only manual step is for the operator to place the core on the mandrel. The operator does not have to know how the job is printed – digital or flexo etc. He scans the barcode on the order and our machine then fetches the job ID. The XML file says how many labels per roll and how many lanes and the slit width.'

The barcode does not hold the actual job information – instead it points to a location on the server. Therefore the machine set-up always reflects the latest changes on the IT system.

The Concept's control system is based on industrial Windows,



Concept line showing turret rewind



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L-R Bjarne Nielsen of Werosys and Mogens Brinck, production manager Flexiket

giving the stability of an industrial hardware platform with the benefits of a Windows interface. 'So we can access a server just like a standard PC, at the same giving us more power than a PLC controller so we can solve problems in software that for others require hardware.'

### Dittokan

The first Werosys installation visited by L&L was at Dittokan, a small but ambitious converter located in Aarhus, Denmark.

The highly specified Werosys line was designed around a Xeikon 3500 digital press and demonstrates all the advantages of automation outlined above.

The digital converting line is 550mm wide to match the press width. The first part of the installation saw Werosys take over web handling for the Xeikon press with a dedicated unwind with web guide and web cleaner into the press. After printing, a second web guide takes the web into an in-line flexo printing module with lamination and cold foil options, and from there to a rewind.

The printed web is then removed from the press and placed onto the Werosys Concept finishing line. After the unwind and web guide, the web passes through a series of converting modules. These include a laser die-cut station; a fully automated slitting station; a turret rewinder, a rotary sheeting/die-cutting system and a semi-rotary/full rotary die-cutter running at speeds up to 90m/min and 500m/min respectively.

On the automated slitting module, each knife has a dedicated motor, allowing job changes to be carried out on-the-fly, without stopping the web.

The Concept finishing line allows Dittokan to run multiple jobs in the same roll on the Xeikon press then separate them on the converting line – greatly increasing output from the digital press.

The configuration of the Werosys Concept requires the digital press to print a barcode in between each job, and the line then reads the job ID from the barcode and extracts job data from the customer's IT system. This data is used to re-configure the entire line

for the next job on-the-fly without stopping the web. Jobs from the company's flexo presses can also be automatically set up and finished on the Werosys line, simply by the operator scanning the Job ID from the work order.

'We are a small converter and when we decided to go digital, the question naturally was "how can we be different than all the other converters which also have digital presses?"', says Nicolai Svendsen, owner of Dittokan. 'We decided the answer was to be the most efficient, and for that reason we started a long term project with Werosys to install a custom-built digital web handling and converting line. We still have a long way to go, but already the efficiency savings are clear.'

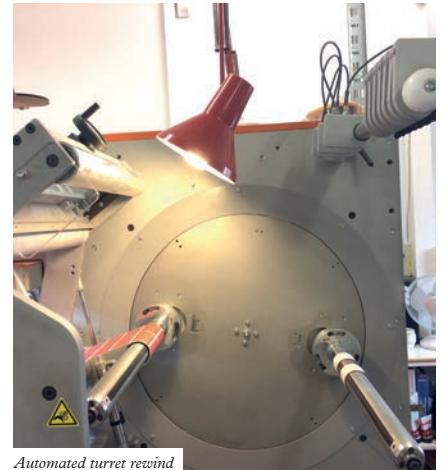
### Flexiket

The second installation visited by L&L was Flexiket, today part of the Limo Holdings group, one of Denmark's leading label converters.

The Aarhus plant visited by L&L contains a mix of conventional and digital presses, and specializes in print-on-demand and short run work. On the digital side there are two Xeikon 3300 presses and one EFJ Jetrion UV inkjet press. Another specialty for the company is screen-printed toy, hazard warning and chemical labels. Production manager Mogens Brinck was brought into Flexiket in March 2014 from Amcor Flexibles to help professionalize what was then a family-run operation. He is a long-time advocate of Lean manufacturing and is strongly supported by Limo group's new CEO, who comes from outside the labels industry 'and is always asking why something is not automated when it could be.'

The Werosys Concept machine at Flexiket is configured as a highly automated slitter rewinder, designed to reduce set-up time and increase throughput on delicate materials and small volume jobs.

The line is fully integrated to Flexiket's IT structure. Each roll contains printed barcodes which reference job-specific data held on the server. This data sets up web tension, the automated slitting unit, and the turret



Automated turret rewind

rewind, all without operator involvement. The fifteen slitting knives can be set in less than 20 seconds.

Because the slitter rewinder is optimized to work with flexo printed material, where there is typically only one job per roll, Flexiket chose an automatic slitting system, where the knives are moved by a single motorized arm, working in close sync with an automatic turret to significantly increase efficiency. On the Dittokan machine, by contrast, all the knives have their own individual motors to allow on-the-fly job changes while the web is moving.

'This machine was a big change for us, and now the operators really like it,' says Brinck, 'They simply have to scan a barcode and the knife setting is fully automated. The machine's precise web handling control allows us to slit and rewind very delicate materials at speeds of 325m/min.'

Adds Bjarke Nielsen, 'It is because of the machine's PC-based hybrid controller that we can run stable tension at a high speed with a "super sensitive" dancer arm system and finish rolls well below 100m in length fast and efficiently. The software is calculating the control parameters for the servo systems at a rate of more than 1,000 times per second. At 325m/min we re-calculate everything for every 5mm of material running through the machine.'

This Concept slitter-rewinder installation was a joint development between Flexiket and Werosys, allowing this versatility to be programmed from the outset. 'To handle different tensions at high speeds and on a range of materials has taken a lot of resources and operator involvement,' says Brinck. 'But on most materials we are now running at more than 300m/min and even operators new to the machine are making it sing.'



For more information see James Quirk's interview with Bjarke Nielsen here: <http://www.labelsandlabeling.com/video/associations-and-events-finishing-and-converting-systems/werosys-makes-labelexpo-debut>

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# Taking ultrasonics to the next level

*Alphasonics is taking its ultrasonic cleaning technology into the healthcare sector, an important new market that offers big opportunities for the NHS and the company itself. David Pittman reports*

**A**s a supplier of ultrasonic cleaning systems, Alphasonics has spent the previous two decades honing its technology and processes used in the care and maintenance of critical components of various printing processes.

Established in the early 1990s, the UK-based company has a product portfolio covering anilox roll and gravure cylinder cleaners, blanket wash module cleaners, flexo plate cleaners, parts washers, flocculation systems and industrial water recycling systems. More than 2,200 systems are installed worldwide, with partners and clients spanning a variety of applications, from the label and narrow web, packaging and corrugated markets, to electronics and engineering industries.

In the label and package printing segment, Alphasonics has worked itself into a strong position, supported by its core technologies – Alphasound, Betasound and Active Cavitation – and high-profile partnerships, with Amcor and Coveris naming it as a preferred supplier. Nilpeter, Mark Andy, AB Graphic, Omet, Xeikon, Edale and Troika Systems also work closely with its ultrasonic cleaning systems. Troika Systems designs and develops quality control 3D analysis management systems for the print industry, such as the AniCam and SurfaceCam 3D scanning microscope and management systems. It and Alphasonics have worked closely in recent years to highlight the role anilox management plays in the flexographic printing process, and that maintaining regular cleaning is integral to this process, something the two companies have termed 'Anilox Control'. This notion holds the connotation that control of the anilox means control of the process of flexo. There is, they suggest, a fine line between this element of control and profit accumulation and protection through waste reduction and print quality, and the ability to clean a roll to 100 percent, they say, means the control printers require is realized easily. Alphasonics and Troika Systems describe this as 'the new anilox paradigm' and note that this message is taking hold in print houses across the world, with Europe leading the way.

The relationship between Alphasonics and Troika Systems has been further cemented through continuous anilox roll cleaning trials that Alphasonics has run, the latest at Labelexpo Americas 2016, to highlight the capabilities and safe use of its ultrasonic cleaning technology. Troika Systems has provided pre- and post-test inspection

**“We now offer ultrasonics that are even more consistent than ever before”**

of aniloxes used in the trials to show the degree to which they are cleaned using Alphasonics' ultrasonics technology.

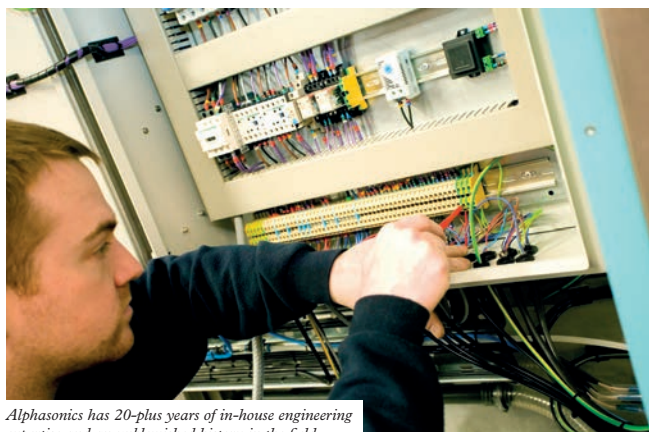
## Ultrasonics

Ultrasonic systems combine high frequency vibrations and a cleaning agent. Transducers generate vibrations directly related to the high frequencies that disturb the liquid at an extremely fast rate. This creates bubbles in the form of voids and vacuum chambers that collapse with enormous, heat, pressure and energy but over a nanosecond and on a scale so small that they only remove surface dirt and contaminants. The size and strength of these bubbles is controlled by the frequency employed. The higher the frequency, the smaller the bubble and therefore, the gentler the cleaning action. The bubbles implode on the medium being cleaned, drawing contamination away, while the implosions in the fluid also create a chemical reaction, meaning cleaning in this regard is two-fold.

Alphasonics ultrasonic systems operate two such frequencies, with transducers fitted to the bottom of cleaning tanks, forcing the base to flex up and down at a pre-determined rate. This core technology, Alphasound, was developed to allow aniloxes to be cleaned as often or little as required depending on the operator's requirements. This flexibility ensures the system can in fact grow with the printer's business as they increase their screen counts and their capabilities.

Chris Jones, marketing manager at Alphasonics, as well as being the company's UK and Ireland sales manager, notes that when placing sound into a liquid, it is necessary to employ additional techniques to level out the ultrasonics and minimize fluctuations in activity from areas with an abundance to those where there is little to none – referred to as nodes and antinodes.

This includes the introduction of a frequency sweep to regulate the ultrasonics and minimize the creation of nodes and antinodes.



*Alphasonics has 20-plus years of in-house engineering expertise and an unblemished history in the field*



*Alphasonics has reorganized its operations and supply chain to meet the requirements of ISO 13485, with a focus on round-the-clock support and service capabilities*



Ultrasonic systems combine high frequency vibrations and a cleaning agent



Alphasonics has run a series of continuous anilox roll cleaning trials to showcase the capabilities and credentials of its technology

Alphasound employs this principle, although takes it a step beyond comparable systems. 'Our nearest competitor is sweeping around 2 or 3kHz either side of a lower frequency of 40kHz, which creates an environment not conducive to consistent or safe cleaning,' states Jones. 'We used to employ a sweep range, +/- 5kHz, at a higher frequency, which meant our equipment creates a gentler, more precisely controlled cleaning environment. This stood us in good stead for many years, but we had to take it further. Our constant state of R&D meant we could.'

'We're now using the transducers on the bottom of the tank to work for us to further widen the sweep rate. For this, we're using the optimum harmonic peaks at which the transducer function. Sweeping down to this harmonic peak and back up means we're sweeping wider than ever, 10-12kHz, and not sweeping into "dead space", rather we're sweeping to the perfect pitch for the transducers, meaning they are not having to work as hard, making them last longer and meaning we can offer ultrasonic cleaning that is even more consistent than before. We've worked with a number of sonolysis experts who note they have not seen sweeping of this nature anywhere in the world.'

Betasound takes the concept yet further by using two different frequencies at the same time along with a frequency sweep. High and low frequency pairings are designed for parts that are even more delicate than usual, such as ultra-high screen anilox rolls. Active Cavitation is an additional proprietary technology that creates disturbances in the tank that increases and enhances the formation and collapse of the vacuum bubbles that give the cleaning effect. This not only enhances the cleaning on the surface of the part being cleaned, but also causes a chemical reaction which speeds up the cleaning process. The company is also making the move to digital controls, which they believe mean that in the not too distant future the potential to service and repair systems remotely can be realized.

### Concerns

Despite these innovations, Alphasonics finds itself having to defend its technology as being safe to handle anilox rolls and other soiled components of the printing process that require cleaning, owing to overall concerns about ultrasonic cleaning. Damage to components sensitive to cavitation attack appears as very small comet-like spots on the surface, while vibrational resonance may result in fracturing during the cleaning process.

Jones acknowledges that the concept of ultrasonics could cause damage in its raw state. However, he makes clear that Alphasonics' 20-plus years of in-house engineering expertise and an unblemished

history in the field means its technology cannot be fairly compared to other ultrasonic cleaning systems.

'It's like comparing a hard scrubbing brush and a feather duster. The other system's scrubbing brush approach is aggressive and inconsistent but with half the bristles. Here, problems do exist, but not with Alphasonics as we've engineered the problems out that caused roll damage in the early days, before we were even in the industry. Unfortunately, we've been tarred with the same brush as other manufacturers that caused the issues.'

'The frequencies our systems operate at, the wide sweep range and the know-how that goes into building our machines [each unit is custom built to the customer's specifications] means we can categorically state that our ultrasonic cleaning systems do not and cannot damage anilox rolls. We can also categorically state that a roll is cleaned to 100 percent of its volume capability through the use of our equipment. We actively look to be put to the test on this; we put our money where our mouth is.'

Alphasonics has such confidence in this claim that it is now providing a written guarantee to ensure, says managing director David Jones, 'our customers feel confident in our equipment, in our technology, and most importantly our honesty and sincerity.'

### Medical

This belief and the quantifiable capabilities of its technology has further enabled Alphasonics to look beyond its core markets into new areas, and to identify where its highly developed systems could be utilized. One such area is the medical market.

'The NHS [the UK's National Health Service] is reporting the same issues as we see in flexo when not equalizing the ultrasonics, although here the issue is reversed as over activity means there are hot spots being cleaned to the point of sterilization and cold spots where there is no cleaning, leaving residual proteins, bacteria and germs,' says Chris Jones. 'With a few adjustments, our technology that has served us so well the printing industry allows us to serve this critically important market. We've cleaned down to zero micrograms of protein, and are testing down to zero nanograms. We're streets ahead of what's currently available, and will start on-site trials shortly with a view to making this available to the market.'

'This will mean big things for us and the healthcare sector. I don't feel I'm overstating things here when I say this could save lives through greatly reducing the risk of theatre-born infections. This can also provide massive cost savings to the NHS, with insurance premiums potentially reduced. We're able to measure the results and prove them, which we already demonstrate in print houses and can now show to the medical sector.'

### Future developments

As well as technical developments, corporate advances are being undertaken to ensure Alphasonics can serve the medical sector. It is going through ISO 13485 accreditation, a quality management system for the design and manufacture of medical devices, and which Jones describes as 'ISO 90001 ++'.

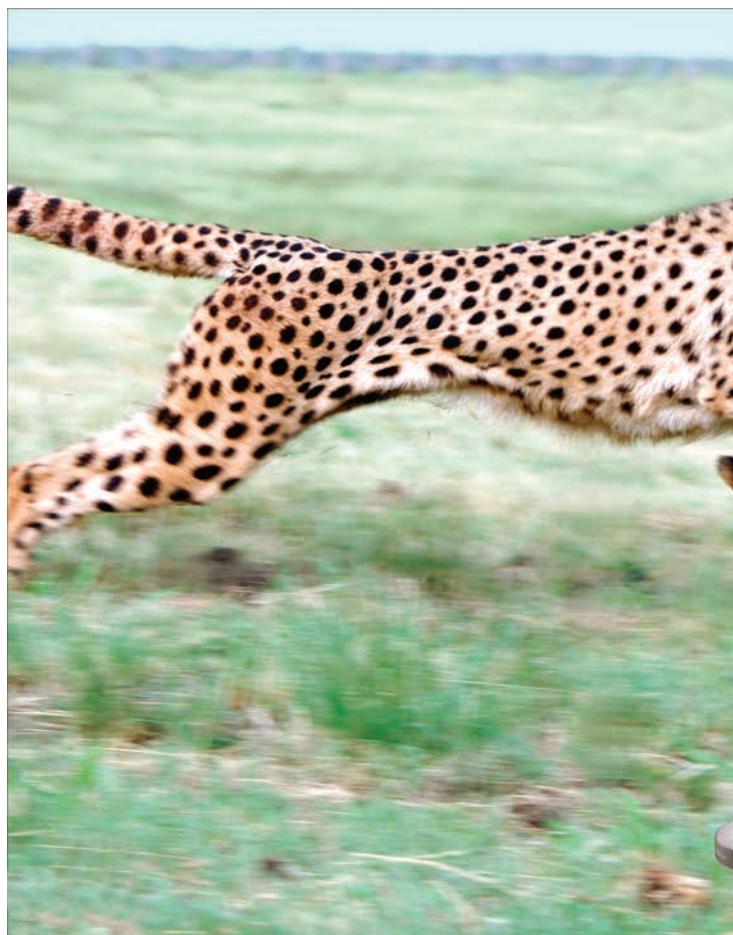
This has brought about a reorganizing of Alphasonics' operations and supply chain to meet the requirements of ISO 13485, with a focus on round-the-clock support and service capabilities. Providing the pathway into the NHS goes as planned for Alphasonics, Jones anticipates expansion of its manufacturing footprint will be 'a must', while the company could even split into separate divisions to serve its different markets.

Alphasonics is also soon to establish a direct presence in the US, where Jones identifies 'huge opportunities'. 'We ship worldwide and have many customers already in the US; now we're looking to appoint a "Mr Alphasonics" to build trust, deepen our relationships and be the face of the company in the US.'



Read the thoughts of David Jones, Alphasonics managing director, on moving flexo forward through anilox control – [bit.ly/2f9ZMT1](http://bit.ly/2f9ZMT1)





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# Moments of truth in labeling

Taghleef Industries continues to develop the Derprosa Soft Touch product line in the pursuit of the greatest 'moments of truth' for brands and consumers through labels and packaging. David Pittman reports

**W**hen Taghleef Industries (Ti) completed the takeover of Derprosa Film in 2014, it opened itself up to new markets through the company's position as a worldwide supplier of specialty films for graphic arts applications for luxury packaging and films for flexible packaging.

Derprosa now serves as the graphic arts brand of Ti, and has added a selection of film products and technologies to its portfolio that have allowed Ti to extend into new markets and applications. One of those is Soft Touch, a patented product introduced for the graphic arts market in 2009 and used to overlamine printed paper or cardboard in different applications, such as book covers, folding carton for luxury products, posters, business and loyalty cards, and more.

This technology has now been expanded into a wider range of industries, including labels, with Ti offering a range of films for roll-fed, self-adhesive overlamination and even IML applications featuring Soft Touch, which deliver at the 'moment of truth'.

One of the classic moments of truth is when a product catches the eye on the shelf among other products and draws the consumer to choose it. Some black films, matte films and metallic looks are popular choices for this purpose. If that experience is rewarding, with the packaging mirroring the characteristics of the product within, this effect is enhanced, brand loyalty starts to take hold and a repeat purchase is probable.

## Emotional impact

According to Ignacio López-Baillo, global sales and marketing director for Derprosa,

**"We will launch new versions on which we are currently working to cover more market applications both in labels and outside"**

it is these deeper, more powerful emotional connections which link consumers with products, a connection which is sought after by brands.

'Neuroscientific studies have measured the emotional impact and positivity on consumers who touch products using Soft Touch. These studies confirm that not only is consumer positivity substantially increased, but also that seven out of 10 customers would choose products packaged with Soft Touch over any other film.'

López-Baillo further notes consistent quality in all Soft Touch films, creating outstanding performance and machinability, and that the depth and clarity of the original colors when using Soft Touch creates 'stunning visual effects'. The surface properties of the film allow for many types of finish, such as spot UV varnish, foil stamping, gluing, die-cutting and digital embellishment, to be carried out.

And as the initial intention of developing this product was to create an anti-scratch film with additional tactile properties means packaging and labels are resistant to



## Starch-based bio film wins industry accolade

An innovative chocolate bar wrapper, developed through the collaboration of Mars, Rodenburg Biopolymers, Taghleef Industries and Mondi, has been named as the winner of the 2016 'Oskar' at this year's Global Bioplastics Awards.

The bio-based packaging for Mars and Snickers bars avoids fossil resources by using starch derived from the waste water of the potato processing industry. The joint project, which started in 2012, involved Rodenburg Biopolymers developing a tailor-made compound based on second generation starch derived from waste water of the potato processing industry. Taghleef Industries then extruded the compound on its BoPLA line at its Italian plant in San Giorgio di Nogaro into a biaxially oriented white voided film, Nativia Ness.

With thicknesses of 40 and 50 µm, Nativia Ness has a white pearlescent appearance, good opacity, high yield, is heat sealable (MST= 85 degrees C) and is cold seal receptive. This new generation of bi-oriented and bio-based film fulfils all product protection requirements for chocolate packaging, is food approved and is able to meet the same speed of BOPP films on packaging lines.

Mondi Solec in Poland converted the film using gravure, cold sealing and a release lacquer. The printing process was more challenging than for standard OPP films due to the distinctive behavior of the new film on the printing line, including film shrinkage caused by the heat generated during printing process.

Michael Thielen (Bioplastics magazine) hands over the award to Emanuela Bardi (Taghleef Industries) and Thijs Rodenburg (Rodenburg Biopolymers) for the bio-based packaging for Mars chocolate bars (Photo credit: Karen Laird)



Ti is positive about future growth for Soft Touch, as well as other tactile label materials



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"Being a small converter I was a bit reluctant to join TLMI with all of the large national converters. As a business owner it is one of the best decisions that I have made. The members are incredibly open about their challenges and solutions and I now have the ability to call a number of other owners to see how they are able to handle situations. I have a strong interest in sustainability and TLMI shares that. Through their Environmental Committee and the L.I.F.E.® certification program the association is addressing issues I care about."

Robert Parker  
President, Label King



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scratches and attrition.

'During the development program our R&D team tested many different formulations and raw materials and one of the outcomes was what we know today as Soft Touch.'

Soft Touch was launched in early 2009, and since then R&D has been ongoing to improve the features of the film and make them suitable for different applications. There are seven different Soft Touch versions available with different properties, such as adhesion properties, UV resistance and for suitability for high speed conversion.

The most successful applications of Soft Touch have been in folding cartons for luxury products – cosmetics, perfumes, spirits and fine foods. Ti and Derprosa are now working to take the product line into new markets, namely labels'

#### Future developments

'In the near future we will launch new versions on which we are currently working to cover more market applications both in labels and outside,' confirms López-Baillo. An early example has seen Soft Touch films used in IML applications, as an overlamine after printing, for stadium cups and bins using larger format labels (see boxout). And development of a matte IML label with a Soft Touch finish has now reached the trial phase, with the first industrial samples being tested by key converters in the label market.

López-Baillo says Ti is 'positive about

**"Studies confirm that not only is consumer positivity substantially increased, but also that seven out of 10 customers would choose products packaged with Soft Touch over any other film"**

future growth for Soft Touch', as well as other tactile label materials, as different studies, including the aforementioned neuromarketing studies, have shown that consumers are attracted to tactile labels. 'They have a positive emotional impact on them and therefore the chances of choosing that product using a Soft Touch label or finish increases.

'Our current installed capacity is enough to satisfy our sales forecast for the near future, but Ti is ready to invest when and where needed to support the market growth.'



For further info, see *Labels & Labeling* issue 1 2017 for an update on label and packaging films markets

#### *Soft Touch and foil creates premium label*

Guatemala-based Dacsa-Etiflex has used Ti's black, matte Soft Touch film in combination with metallic foil stamping to generate a premium label. This eye-catching look provides a luxurious finish to bottles, which are gifted at the end of each year by Dacsa-Etiflex to its customers. This saw Soft Touch used as the base color of the label, combined with different finishing techniques in order to print a combination of metalized foils and Braille effects.

'Dacsa-Etiflex is a prime label printer who looks forward to innovate not only as a brand but also by combining the most differentiated printing techniques that are available in our industry,' notes Alejandro Carrasco, commercial director at Dacsa-Etiflex.

'We constantly help our customers by giving our recommendation of how their product can be unique, by mixing different materials with finishing effects. This helps our customers reach their target market and live the experience of their brands.

'With this Soft Touch label we wanted to capture some of the Guatemalan culture by incorporating some of the native colors of the Mayan civilization and the national bird. In order to represent this effect, we use different foils so they can bring a simulation of a typical cloth. Also, we printed with screen making a Braille effect on the sides of the label. This effect combined with Soft Touch makes our customers experience the neurological effects of the material. The purpose of the Braille was to motivate the customer to touch the label so they can experience different sensations through the entire label.

'We are promoting the use of this material to the brands that are focused on premium markets, mainly because the Soft Touch material gives the appearance of elegance. The markets that have shown more interest on this material are the personal care, cosmetics, wine and spirits.

'Our goal with this product is to impact our clients by demonstrating the diversity and different finishing effects we can offer in the prime label market.'

Dacsa-Etiflex used Soft Touch as the base color of the label for a luxury gift for its customers



Taghleef and Derprosa expect 'big success' with the use of Soft Touch in labels



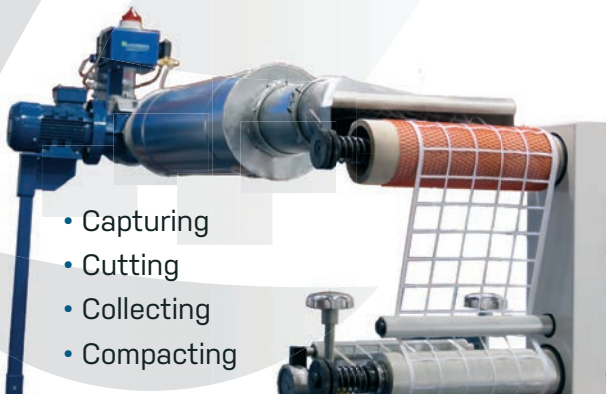
The bio-based packaging for Mars and Snickers bars avoids fossil resources by using starch derived from the waste water of the potato processing industry



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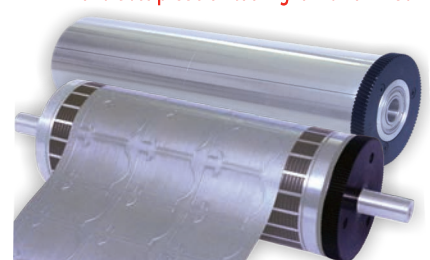


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# Selling the sheet-fed digital package

*Barry Hunt examines the growing role of sheet-fed digital presses in package printing*

Label converters pay scant attention to sheet-fed digital printing. Some may recall it kick-started the concept of print-on-demand in respect of booklets, manuals and similar documents. Yet, over the years, various imaging technologies have ensured its place not only in full-color commercial printing, but also in several package print markets. This influence may expand still further with the latest page-wide UV inkjet presses.

The story really begins with drupa 2012, when several prototype sheet-fed UV inkjet presses appeared, notably from Screen, Fujifilm, Konica-Minolta, MGI and Delphax. Four years on and several of them have reached commercial fruition. Crucially, the uncertainties surrounding their ability to compete with toner-based printers, and HP Indigo's liquid ink system, in terms of print quality and operating speeds, seem no longer an issue.

Again, the current showcase was drupa, but this time with an increased emphasis on package printing following the noteworthy input of such leading offset-litho press manufacturers as Heidelberg, Komori and KBA. They supplied the press platforms and sheet handling technology for new inkjet models, while their OEM inkjet partners developed new single-pass printheads and control systems.

The press manufacturers see these joint ventures as key to ensuring their long-term future. While successfully involved with package printing, their mainstream commercial print markets are declining, or about to disappear. There is a parallel here with what happened in the business forms and direct mailer markets from the mid-1990s, albeit from a web-offset perspective. By contrast, the disruptive effects of the internet, online shopping and other computer-based activities have hardly affected the packaging industry.

With a growing short-run dynamic now in play, sheet-fed UV inkjet is considered as an expedient way of handling it, while helping end-users reduce inventories and minimize waste. Equipped with variable data and encoding facilities, the latest inkjet presses also

**“Over the years, various imaging technologies have ensured sheet-fed digital printing’s place not only in full-color commercial printing, but also in several package print markets. This influence may expand still further with the latest page-wide UV inkjet presses”**

offer versioning and customized packaging.

So while the traditional offset, flexo and gravure processes will remain essential for longer runs, further advances in digital press speeds, substrate sizes and overall flexibility will erode their commanding role. Arguably there is a two-edged sword here: these benefits could encourage more brand owners to set-up their own digitally-based print services in-house, especially where reconciliation of the packaging with the product is absolutely vital.

Technically, the new inkjet presses offer a near-perfect synergy: most are B2 format models with maximum sheet sizes of 500mm x 707mm (19.6in x 28in). Nearly all can print carton board, while some print directly to micro-flute corrugated board or sheeted films for flexible packaging. Backed with suitable cutting and creasing equipment, press owners can produce small folding cartons for the cosmetics, food, luxury goods and pharmaceutical sectors in short-to-medium run lengths. The same press could print the leaflets for consumer information or mandatory pharmaceutical data.

Arguably wet-glue (glue-applied) labels are on the menu, however the run lengths would have to be considerably smaller than those required for supplying cut labels for application on high-speed filling/bottling lines. The global growth of semi-automatic wet-glue and hot-melt label applicators for labeling pharmaceutical vials and



Konica Minolta KM-1



Pemara's HP Indigo 30000

similar round containers offers a possible market. Other applications could include customized or versionized cut-and-stack film labels, in-mold labels and sheeted pressure-sensitive labels for, say, premium wines and spirits, or point-of-sale applications.

Long before UV inkjet became acceptable for good quality package printing, it's worth noting that HP Indigo's sheet-fed models helped pioneer this sector. The current top-end model, the 30000 B2-plus press, prints carton board with a seven-color ink set at up to 4,600 sheets/hour. Other models in the series also produce short-run cartons, flexible packaging, swing tags and similar products. Interestingly, one of the first European users of the 7-color HP

**“With a growing short-run dynamic now in play, sheet-fed UV inkjet is considered as an expedient way of helping end-users reduce inventories and minimize waste”**

Indigo 12000 B2+ press is a commercial print group. Nava Press, part of the Rotolito Lombarda group in Italy, installed it to augment its existing HP Indigo 7800 and 10000 presses. The company not only prints commercial products, but also short-run

packaging for luxury goods and cosmetics.

This crossover is also apparent with Presstek's plateless four-color direct imaging (DI) presses. They print on substrates ranging from thin films up to carton board. They are said to offer printers a smooth transition into package printing, and seemingly end-users too: a Californian bottler of mineral waters uses a DI press to produce in-house customized cut-and-stack filmic labels (see boxout on p88 for details).

Not only is there more emphasis on package printing, firms outside the converting industry are also taking note, as are industry commentators. Dr Harvey R Levenson, professor emeritus and former department head of Graphic Communication at Cal Poly State University in California, is one of them. He highlights the singular growth of package printing when compared with traditional print segments in a white paper entitled 'The lure of digital packaging: a growth area in the printing industry'.

'The growth and focus on packaging by OEMs and service providers (printers) is a statement on the viability of the industrial, capitalist and market-driven material interests of the western world, and is rapidly becoming a value in Asia and elsewhere,' he observes.


This societal value is nothing new, he adds, stating that it explains why nearly



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every digital press vendor now focuses on packaging. He cites the Smithers Pira 2013 report, 'The Future of Digital Print for Packaging to 2018', which links population increases and income growth in industrialized regions with increased packaging growth.

Geographically, Europe/Middle East/Africa (EMEA) and North America are the largest markets for color digital label and packaging presses. Asia-Pacific and Japan, and the rest of world, are the smaller but faster-growing regions. Meanwhile, in more developed regions, average household sizes are falling, reducing the size of average print runs and, therefore, playing to the strengths of digital packaging. The report says the estimated worth of digitally-printed packaging in 2013 was 6.6 billion USD, and is forecast to reach 14.4 billion USD by 2018.

**Sheet-fed inkjet technology**

As unveiled at drupa, the partnership between Heidelberg and Fujifilm yielded the Primefire 106, based on the larger B1 format (700mm x 1,000mm) Speedmaster XL 106 packaging press. ('Fire' is the umbrella name for Heidelberg's digital products, such as Labelfire the former Gallus DCS 340 press and the Versafire CP/CV dry-toner series developed with Ricoh.)

The Primefire 106 uses Fujifilm's Samba



VariJet 106

piezoelectric print bars printing CMYK, orange, green and violet to cover 90+ percent of the Pantone color space with four levels of grayscale at a native resolution of 1,200 x 1,200 DPI. Top speed is 2,500 sheets/hour, printing carton board up to 0.8mm thick using food-safe inks. It includes Heidelberg's Prinect Digital Center Inline with Perfect Stack technology to ensure the

delivery of good sheets. Combined with the Prinect digital front-end, the press is said to offer seamless integration within the user's existing overall workflow. Operators can output test sheets directly to the control panel at the push of a button for visual quality checks.

Fujifilm's own J Press 720, introduced in 2012, popularized the concept of sending

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WarnekePaperBox signs for Primefire

ripped PDF files directly to the press without requiring plates or make-ready for short-run work. The upgraded J Press 720S version prints most uncoated and coated offset stocks to a maximum sheet size of 533mm x 748mm (21in x 29.5in) using Samba print bars. The top speed is 2,700 sheets/hour. (As widely known, Fujifilm has a commercial link with the Graphium hybrid inkjet roll-label press from FFEI, which uses Xaar's printheads.)

Komori's partner is Konica Minolta, whose latest MEMS printheads are integrated in the four-color Impremia IS29 press. With a native resolution of 1,200 x 1,200 DPI, the IS29 prints on standard stocks for commercial print and package printing applications to a maximum sheet size of 585mm x 750mm. A simplex and duplex capability offers respective speeds of 3,000sph and 1,500sph. Post-press equipment includes the Komori Appresia CT115/CT137 programmable cutter and DC105 die-cutter for packaging products.

Komori also offers the innovative Impremia NS40 digital press, which uses the long-awaited nanotechnology print engine developed under license from the Landa Corporation. The B1-sized press prints carton board at up to 6,500sph.

Konica Minolta's own 4-color AccurioJet KM-1 has a similar B2+ format for commercial and packaging print, including cartons. Order processing, file handling and material stock control on the KM-1 is through cloud-based web2print technology from Vpress while an integrated Tharsten MIS creates the production workflow. It prints up to 3,000 sheet/hour in simplex mode using offset coated and uncoated substrates, including textured grades, to a sheet thickness of 0.6mm, with LED curing.

Konica Minolta recently increased its financial and technical stake in MGI Digital Technology. Its Jetvarnish 3DW spot UV varnishing, hot-foiling and embossing system (which was shown at Labelexpo Americas) can integrate with the KM-1 (as well as with KM's new bizhub C71hc SRA3 sheet-fed inkjet commercial press). The Jetvarnish 3D Evolution is a B1+ version. MGI also supplies the established Meteor DP series of toner-based digital presses, which have a multi-substrate capability, including carton board.

KBA Sheet-fed Solutions, part of the Koenig & Bauer Group, markets its VariJet 106 to folding carton printers. Based on the KBA Rapida 106 offset press it runs with integrated Xerox's Impika inkjet technology and High Fusion inks. The B1+ format gives a sheet size of 750mm x 1,060mm (29.5 in x 41.7in) and the top speed is 4,500 sheets/hour. Optional in-line capabilities include coating, cold foiling, rotary die-cutting, creasing and perforating.

First shown at Ipex 2010, the B2 format Truepress JetSX from Screen prints 1,620 simplex sheets/hour or half that rate for duplex printing. It prints with quick-drying water-based inks using



Presstek 34 EcoDI

## Riviera Beverages

Riviera Beverages in southern California uses a Presstek 34 direct imaging (DI) press to print cut-and-stack labels in-house for customized bottled waters. Batches may include versioning for special events, such as weddings. Run lengths range from a few hundred to several thousand labels using a 0.05mm substrate from Exxon Mobile. To meet increased demand Riviera plans to upgrade to a 52 DI press fitted with Presstek's energy-efficient ECO UV system.

The DI's V-shaped central-impression design eliminates sheet transfers between units, so reducing substrate waste and make-ready times. The water and air-cooled lamps operate within a narrow waveband to reduce IR heat without ozone emissions. The presses give consistent color quality at 300 lpi, plus FM screening with minimal dot gain at 10,000 sheets/hour.

Ian Pollock, sales director of Presstek Europe, says plateless direct imaging is ideal for short runs of sheeted labels and folded cartons. 'Presstek DI with ECO UV technology still allows the greatest range of substrates with minimal pre-treatment prior to printing. Toner systems have stock limitations and inkjet technology costs are still fairly high. This means inkjet is more suited to extra short print runs, as opposed to short-to-medium run lengths.'

conventional coated or uncoated offset and inkjet substrates, including thin carton board, with an integrated postcoating process. The Equios digital workflow system uses a spot color editor to match the closest CMYK reproduction for specific spot colors.

One was recently installed at Brogle Druck, an integrated media company in Switzerland. It mainly uses Heidelberg Speedmaster offset-litho presses, but has an established digital strategy. Roger Brogle said the latest Truepress JetSX emulates offset quality, with a resolution up to 1,440 x 1,440 DPI and variable grayscale. 'The fact that the press prints sheets up to 0.6mm thick was also special,' adding that Brogle Druck is preparing for expansion into the packaging sector.

Developments like these underline the growing influence of sheet-fed digital printing for short-run packaging. Its growing appeal among offset-litho printers seeking new business opportunities is a newer phenomenon, but one that reflects the shifting of tectonic plates within the graphics industry. It also implies that finishing equipment suppliers have an opportunity to capitalize on the new opportunities it presents. It could be based on adapting existing systems, such as Esko's Kongsberg XE series designed to handle small-format digital cutting and creasing.



For more information on digital pack print developments, see *L&L Yearbook 2017*

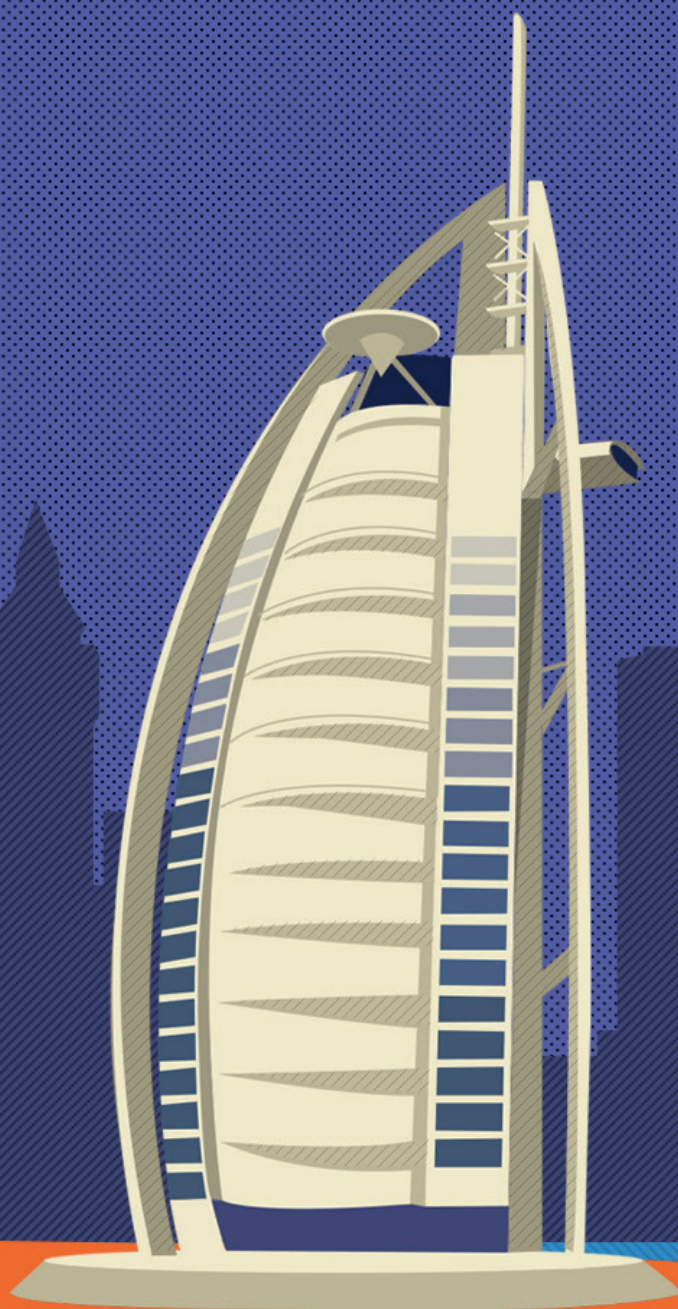




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01 L-R: Hemanth Paruchuri, chief executive officer at Pragati Pack with a colleague and Andy Thomas of Labels & Labeling at the LMAI Awards conducted during Labelexpo India 2016



01



03



04



05



06



07

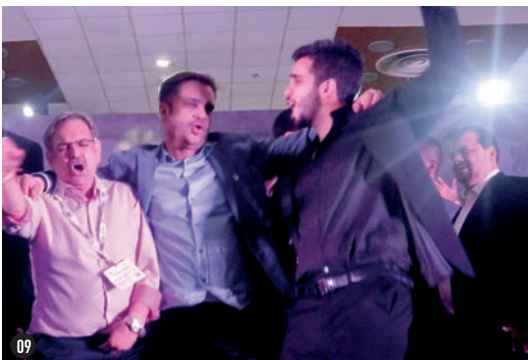
04 Hank Guitjens, commercial manager label printing at SPGPrints, dancing bollywood numbers with the Monotech team after the award ceremony

05 Kishore Kumar, senior marketing manager and Jimit Mittal, vice president, inkjet products, Monotech Systems at the LMAI Awards

06 Hank Guitjens, commercial manager label printing at SPGPrints with Mona Desai, sales manager, Graphics at Stovec Industry



08



09

07 The Fujifilm Sericol team at the LMAI Awards night

08 Jai Chandra, managing director, Veepee Graphic Solutions with his wife and business partner Nalini Jai Chandra and colleague from Esko India

09 L-R: Manish Desai, director, Mudrika Labels; Sandeep Zaveri, president, LMAI; and Rohit Mehta, director at SMI Coated Products dancing on stage at the LMAI Awards night

10 Gabriele D'Onofrio of Labeltech with his son Gregorio, L&L's youngest fan



10



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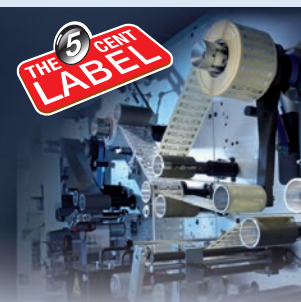
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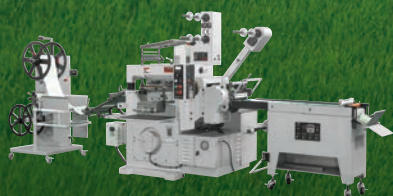
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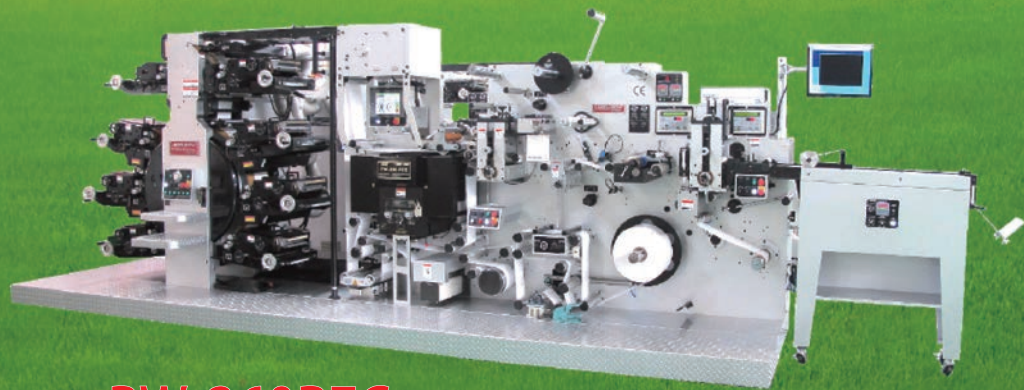


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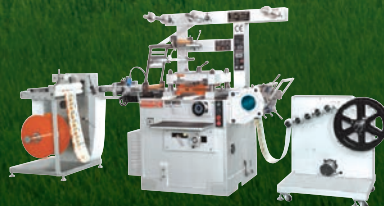
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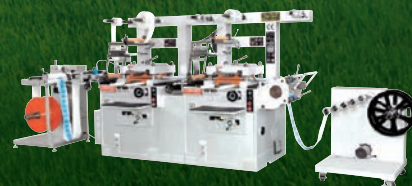
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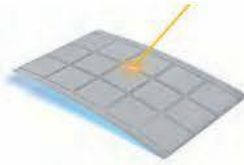


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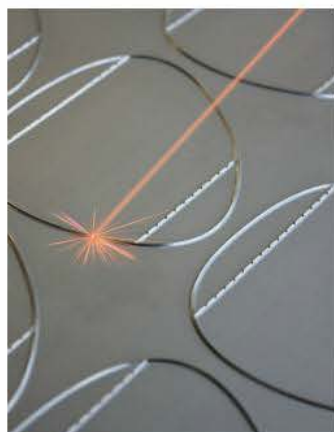


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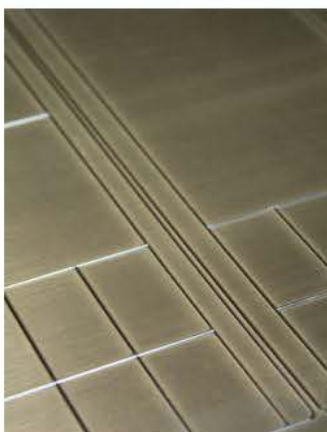


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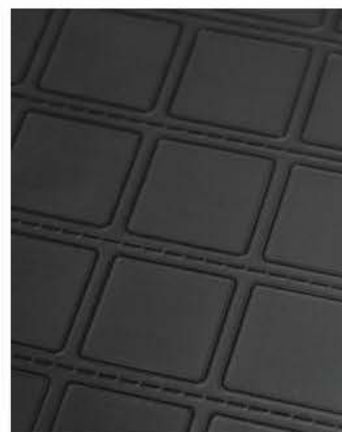
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