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LABELS & LABELING

THE WORLD OF PACKAGE PRINTING

LABELXPO AMERICAS 2022 REVIEW

Digital transformation takes hold

FIGHTING FAKES

Brand protection measures to thwart counterfeiters

ASIA-PACIFIC MARKET

Opportunities in a faraway place

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L&L

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Labels & Labeling is the leading global information source for the label and package print converting industries with an editorial team and network of correspondents spread throughout the world



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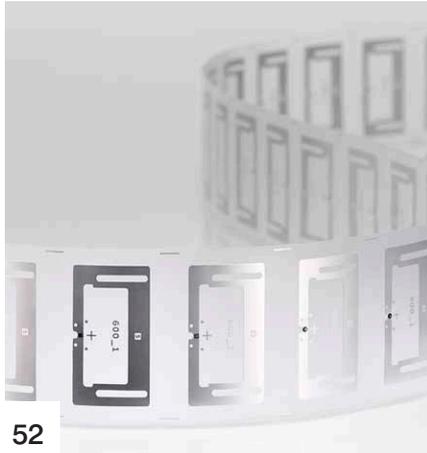
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L&L speaks with the winner of the R Stanton Avery Global Achievement Award



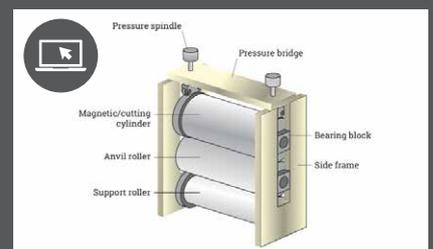
Read L&L issue 3 online (magazine)

Previous issue of L&L is now available to read online



L&L team recaps key trends of Labelexpo Americas (video)

Our team recaps the key trends in materials, finishing and converting and press technology



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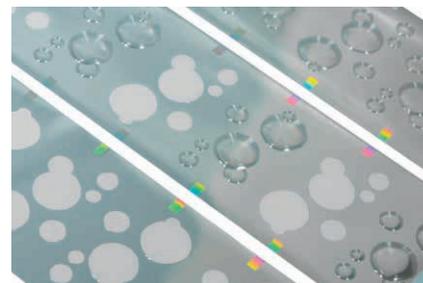
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L&L looks back (L&L issue 3, 2009)



P40 At the June Finat Congress in Turkey, Jan Frederik Vink handed over the presidency of Finat to Andrea Vimercati of Pilot Italia. Frederik Vink also was the owner of Dutch label converter Kolibri. The last two years had been challenging ones for the pressure-sensitive labels industry, L&L asked him to reflect on the future of Finat.



European converting group with a global reputation

MIKE FAIRLEY with the Bopack Group headquarters in Belgium and talks to CEO Marc Boehlen about the company's success and performance.

P48 Mike Fairley visited the Bopack Group headquarters in Belgium and spoke with CEO Marc Boehlen about the company's success and performance. Specializing in the development and production of self-adhesive labels, the family-owned business had built an enviable reputation that spanned a total of six converting plants.



EFI hosts German open house

EFI hosted an open house in Germany to showcase its new Jetrion 4000 inkjet printer.

Digital printing has been established here in the label industry and the new Jetrion 4000 is a significant milestone in the digital label sector. The printer is designed to meet the needs of the label industry and offers a range of features that make it a compelling choice for label converters.

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Skaneem's Jupiter solves tension issues

A PRATI INSPECTION SYSTEM has increased productivity and quality at Skaneem Industries, reports Andy Thomas.



ANDY THOMAS reports on the installation of a Prati Jupiter TC400 slitter rewinding inspection machine at Skaneem Industries.

The Prati Jupiter TC400 slitter rewinding inspection machine has been installed at Skaneem Industries to improve productivity and quality. The machine is designed to detect and reject defective labels during the slitting process, reducing waste and improving overall production efficiency.

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P83 Andy Thomas reported on international label converting specialist Skaneem, which in line with its strategic commitment to cost- and waste-reduction policies, invested in a Prati Jupiter TC400 slitter rewinding inspection machine. Installed in its Danish premises at Hobro, the unit improved converter's overall productivity and throughput.

Labelexpo afterglow

Editor's note

It's a running competitive joke at Labelexpo events, to see who on the Labels & Labeling team walks the most steps each day. It's not uncommon for our journalists to cover 20,000 steps a day as we're making our way through the showfloor to bring you coverage of the key trends and technology.

At the return of Labelexpo Americas 2022, I lost this competition. Big time. I was lucky to cover even half of that.

It's not that I was lazy or stuck in a boardroom somewhere far from the action, but rather, I could hardly walk five steps without seeing a familiar face, an industry friend, or a colleague looking to reconnect. And I was not alone.

Throughout the majority of

"A four-year absence made this edition of Labelexpo Americas that much more special"

the three-day show, I saw so many handshakes given, hugs shared and laughs enjoyed. They say 'absence makes the heart grow fonder,' and a four-year absence made this edition of Labelexpo Americas that much more special.

Digital technology was undoubtedly the star of this show, and industry experts are convinced there's a digital transformation underfoot. While we missed seeing the advancements that flexo has made in recent years, I predict that we'll see what conventional press OEMs have been up to when

Labelexpo returns to Brussels in September.

Though it may have taken us longer to get through the showfloor, the Labels & Labeling team was at Labelexpo in full force, gathering the industry's leading coverage and keeping you updated online during the event.

Turn to page 100 to read about all the trends and technology in case you missed the show. Or in case you had the same problem making your way through it.

Finally, this edition of the magazine offers Mike Fairley's final column as he's announced

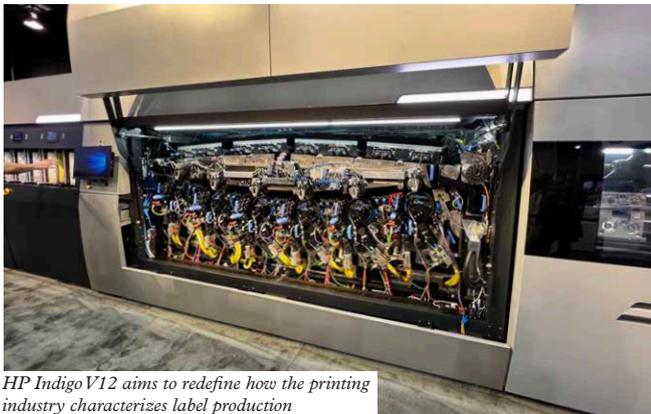
he will retire after five decades of leading change and driving innovation in this dynamic industry. It's my honor to take over in Mike's footsteps and edit his final column.

I will work to uphold Mike's legacy as editor of this magazine, but first, I offer sincere appreciation to Mike for an incredible career, for setting the groundwork of this storied magazine, and for everything he's done for those in the label industry.

Cheers, Mike, on your second act. May it be as rewarding as your first.

Chelsea McDougall
Group managing editor

News



HP Indigo V12 aims to redefine how the printing industry characterizes label production

HP Indigo V12 gathers major interest at Labelexpo Americas

Sixteen letters of intent were signed by customers worldwide

HP has run 74 demonstrations of the HP Indigo V12 giving Labelexpo Americas attendees the chance to experience the capabilities of the new press up close, and learn more about new business opportunities, including brand protection, smart packaging, sustainable packaging and diversification to flexible packaging.

The narrow web label press is the world's first to utilize the new LEPx technology and has the power to print at 120 m/min, with all the capabilities of HP Indigo's technology for label production.

Attendees were also able to hear from Massimiliano Martino, CTO of All4Labels, one of the HP Indigo V12 digital press' first beta customers, who shared insights into why the company has chosen to partner with HP.

'The successful industry reception of The HP Indigo V12 is showing us a true analog to digital transformation,' said Haim Levit, SVP and general manager of HP's Industrial Print Business. 'The Indigo V12 is redefining how the print industry thinks about label production and the overwhelming interest from our customers into digital solutions as they look to expand their operations demonstrates that our portfolio is moving the needle on the digital share of the market and driving forward the digital transformation.'

TLMI becomes signatory of US Plastics Pact

The US Pact brings together interested parties working collectively toward the common vision of a circular economy

Through the collaboration of its stakeholders, the US Pact's vision is to ensure that plastics never become waste by eliminating the plastics we do not need, innovating to ensure that the plastics we do need are reusable, recyclable, or compostable, and circulating the plastic items we use, to keep them in the economy and out of the environment.

As a signatory, TLMI will be active in working with the US Pact's members in jointly delivering a roadmap to reach established targets through collaborative, action-oriented workstreams that tackle key barriers in the plastics life cycle process.

The US Pact is part of a network of Plastics Pacts around the world that share a common central vision: to change the way that plastics are designed, used, and reused to transition to a circular economy where plastics never become waste.



Partnership to integrate SAP Analytics Cloud into atma.io connected product cloud

Avery Dennison partners with SAP to reduce waste

Partnership between companies allows item-level data insights

Transparency provides unique supply chain information, enabling expiry date management and automation. Driving these efficiencies is item-level data delivered to the SAP Analytics Cloud dashboard via atma.io and products tagged with unique digital Identification (ID) technology by Avery Dennison, including radio frequency identification (RFID). It means retailers can experience accurate and timely analysis, enabling them to automate food expiration management at the store. It also means that grocers can go deeper into their supply chain and implement 'dwell time' measurements to boost the speed with which items move through warehouses and distribution centers to arrive in stores with longer shelf lives.

The new partnership will benefit omnichannel retail and help retailers with Click & Collect and home delivery, where sending and delivering products with the correct expiration date has been a challenge. It can also help in certain 'emergency' situations, such as when a product recall needs to be initiated quickly.

Max Winograd, vice president at Avery Dennison Smartrac, said: 'Accurate real-time supply chain management is more important than ever, and we're pleased to partner with SAP to help businesses manage their supply chain operations. Food waste is a global problem, impacting people, the planet and profits. We're greatly encouraged by the remarkable results digital ID technology and atma.io has already achieved with some of our existing retail customers.'

Epson to construct new printhead factory in Japan

Akita Epson Corporation will invest approximately 3.5 billion yen (24.1 million USD) in the construction of a new factory

Construction work on the new factory will begin in November 2022 and is scheduled for completion in December 2023.

The new factory will be used to manufacture and assemble inkjet printheads, the core devices used in inkjet printers. The investment plan will ensure that Epson has enough production space to meet the predicted future growth in demand.

It will also enable Epson to strengthen its product lineup and expand printhead sales to third parties, to increase the supply of inkjet printers equipped with cutting-edge PrecisionCore MicroTFP printheads.



The latest study by Smithers forecasts the global labels and packaging market to grow at CAGR of 3.1 percent until 2027

Smithers forecasts digital printing boom

New study estimates digital technology to grow the fastest with a CAGR of over 10 percent through to 2027

Smithers released a new study, *The Future of Package Printing to 2027*, forecasting that the labels and printed packaging markets will continue to increase in demand and represent a strategic priority for press OEMs, ink suppliers and print service providers across the next five years.

The new study of the labels and packaging markets shows how these sectors are emerging from Covid-19 and will evolve in the medium term.

Smithers' data forecasting charts show a global market worth USD 456.3 billion in 2021 will increase to 473.7 billion USD, and grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 3.1 percent to reach 551.3 billion USD in 2027 (constant 2021 prices).

Flexo will remain the most widely used print process – due to its popularity in long-run corrugated board, labels and flexible plastics work. It represents around 36 percent of the contemporary market and natural expansion gives flexo a positive growth outlook (+2.4 percent CAGR, by value) through to 2027.

Other analog processes, including offset litho (+2.5 percent CAGR), will see similar organic growth across the five-year Smithers study period, mainly from developing markets.

The greatest expansion, however, will come from digital print for packaging – with a CAGR of over 10 percent forecast through 2027.

Print service providers are poised to reap the benefits of significant R&D investment by digital OEMs, delivering improvements in productivity and reliability and expanding the number of print commissions where digital is price-competitive with established analog production.

Packaging print is becoming increasingly competitive and will be the focus of further technical innovation through the 2020s, such as improving the sustainability of print systems by minimizing waste, optimizing the energy efficiency of print equipment, and developing systems that can print on an array of new more sustainable packaging substrates, including flexible barrier papers, molded fiber, and mono-material polymer constructions.

According to the study, print supply will become more resilient and agile to withstand disruption, following the post-pandemic trend to re-shore or near-shore production of certain essential FMCGs.

Furthermore, implementing the latest automation will advance both digital and analog production.

These Industry 4.0 technologies have the potential to simultaneously reduce the need for skilled print room labor while increasing responsiveness and overall print quality, consistency and uptime.

All these factors above will contribute to further the penetration of digital printing – especially inkjet – in packaging and labels.

A trend that will also benefit from advances in workflow software, making printing more streamlined and cost-efficient, thereby allowing more low-run jobs to be produced.

News in Brief

Resource Label Group acquires Deco Flexible Packaging

Resource Label Group (Resource Label), a full-service provider of pressure-sensitive labels, shrink sleeve and RFID/NFC technology for the packaging industry, has acquired Chicago-based Deco Flexible Packaging expanding its presence in the Midwest. The addition of Deco Flexible Packaging represents the twenty-fourth acquisition for Resource Label.

Deco Flexible Packaging is one of the leading pressure-sensitive and flexible packaging companies specializing in the production of custom, pressure-sensitive products, narrow web flexible packaging, promotional items, and tags for a variety of industries. The Chicagoland location was opened in 1999.

Phoseon partners with Vinsak Group

Phoseon Technology, one of the leaders in UV LED curing technologies, has signed an agreement with Vinsak Group to integrate Phoseon UV LED light sources into printing presses for the narrow web flexographic market.

According to Phoseon, UV LED curing technology brings higher yields and lower operating costs, including up to 80 percent energy savings compared to mercury arc lamp technology. There is no warm-up time with instant-on LEDs, increasing productivity and profitability.

Arben Graphic to represent GMG in Balkans

GMG Color has partnered with Arben Graphic Systems to expand its presence in Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, and North Macedonia.

Headquartered in Ljubljana, Arben Graphic Systems is one of the leading companies providing color management technologies for the printing and packaging industry. Founded in 1999, Arben has brought advanced technology products to the Balkan markets through its region-wide network serving a broad range of market segments from design and pre-press to press for both digital and conventional environments.

News



Full integration of Kurz Unline module into Grafotronic DCL2 platform

Grafotronic and Leonhard Kurz announce partnership

Grafotronic partnered with Leonhard Kurz to combine its converting and finishing technologies with Kurz's patented digital inkjet metallization system

Inkjet on foil technology delivers a seamless application of metallic finishes and bright color effects on a wide range of substrates, including uncoated papers, offering maximum flexibility. This sustainable finishing technology applies decorative finishes with minimal waste and without the need for tooling, such as printing plates or screens, which significantly reduces production time and costs.

According to the company, this unique technology guarantees consistent and repeatable quality and reliability in label production for wine and spirits, health and beauty, and luxury-packaging markets, regardless of the job size.

Full integration of Kurz Unline module into Grafotronic DCL2 platform, thanks to Grafotronic's 100 percent modular concept, allows to combine it with any DCL2 modules.

Amcor increases strategic investment in ePac

One of the global leaders in developing and producing responsible packaging has confirmed it will make a further strategic investment of up to 45 million USD in ePac Flexible Packaging to increase its minority shareholding in ePac Holdings.

ePac operates 25 sites globally, all with an identical set-up, offering customers automated quoting, digital printing capabilities and fast service times across several product specifications.

Amcor's executive vice president of strategy and development, Ian Wilson, said: 'This additional investment reflects our confidence in ePac's entrepreneurial team and its proven ability to rapidly scale in the high growth, often higher value short-run segment. Since our initial investment last year, we have been deeply impressed with ePac's focused and innovative business model centered around deploying a very high level of digitalization and customization.

'ePac's proven digital technologies enable the delivery of exceptional service levels and significantly reduced lead times. These specializations are designed to meet the unique speed to market and service needs of locally based small to medium customers, skill sets that are highly transferable to areas of Amcor's core business.'

UPM receives all-time high EcoVadis score

EcoVadis has recognized UPM with a Platinum level based on the company's sustainability performance in the following four categories: environment, labour and human rights, ethics and sustainable procurement. Only one percent of the 90,000 global companies assessed received the Platinum score.

Compared to previous years' assessments, UPM received its all-time high score of 87/100.

Packed open house for MPS Systems Asia

The open house in Malaysia featured presentations from five guest speakers covering industry trends and a demo of the MPS EF-530 seventh-generation flexo press with eight color flexo units and one EXLp packaging station. The focus of the open house was on flexible packaging as well as the benefits of connectivity and performance optimization.

The company also hosted a tabletop exhibition where customers had the opportunity to interact directly with 14 participating industry partners, including DIC, Miraclon, Apex International, UPM Raflatac, Flexo Wash, Böttcher, Esko, CGS ORIS, BST, Press Systems (GEW), Tesa, Martin Automatic, Fedrigoni and Univacco.

Cerm and GM cement partnership

Labelexpo Americas 2022 cemented the partnership between GM and Cerm. The possibility of integration with the Cerm system increases efficiency and automates the workflow at all levels of label production.

Uffe Nielsen, CEO at GM, said: 'Interfacing Cerm software with the GM automation platform gives print shop owners instant in-depth production overview. At the same time cost is saved as external "data collection" boxes are no longer needed. A small but significant improvement to GM finishing equipment.'

Geert Van Damme, managing director of Cerm, added: 'We are happy that GM has joined our large group of industry partners. Step by step, we will continue to integrate and automate together and improve the efficiency of our customers.'

All4Labels launches Human Blend campaign

All4Labels has launched The Human Blend campaign, offering new perspectives to the rapidly growing market of shrink sleeves combining the company's experience in digital printing and variable data.

All4Labels' approach creates a model aimed at guiding brand owners from projects' conception to completion. With the dedicated business unit All4Graphics, brand owners can now use packaging to build memorable consumer experiences and meet broader business goals.

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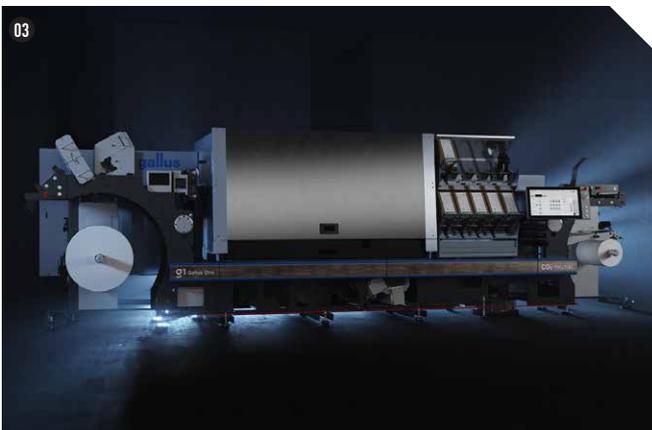
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04



01 HP Indigo V12

The V12 uses a new press architecture to achieve print speeds up to 120m/min on a 340mm-wide web, replacing the LEP imaging system, which has recently powered all HP Indigo label presses. The LEP imaging engine found in the 6K-series press transfers up to seven colors sequentially onto a sensitized semi-rotary drum imaged by a laser writing head. This allows speeds of 30m/min using four colors. The greater the number of colors, the slower the print speed. The new LEPx technology, by contrast, consists of six imaging engines that simultaneously deposit their color separations onto a six-meter-long blanket belt. The registered image is applied from the blanket belt to the substrate in one shot. Each separation is generated by a LEPx writing head consisting of an LED array, a photo imaging drum (PID) and two switchable HP Electroink sources. Six LEPx imaging engines

work simultaneously to apply each color separation and create a complete image on the blanket belt. The V12 press incorporates a new PID design, while the new LED writing heads consist of thousands of LEDs that compose an image as an electrostatic field at 1,600 DPI resolution. Up to six colors can be printed at full press speed, requiring one rotation of the blanket belt. If more colors are used, the blanket requires a second rotation, halving the speed to 60m/min.

02 Digital Pro Max

The latest version of Mark Andy's Digital Pro toner-based press, the Digital Pro Max, now adds digital white to the standard CMYK and increases speeds to 130ft/min (40m/min). This third generation of the Digital Pro line uses Konica Minolta's toner-based imaging technology. As with the existing Digital Pro systems, a full suite of converting and decorating modules are

available. The partnership between Mark Andy and Konica Minolta has been in place for over five years, successfully leveraging the strengths of each company - Konica Minolta in digital marking technology and Mark Andy in web handling, converting, and robust narrow web press design. There are more than 300 Digital One/Digital Pro installations.

03 Gallus One

Gallus One is based on the Labelmaster press platform. As a reel-to-reel UV inkjet digital in-line label press, it offers a width of 340mm, a resolution of 1,200 DPI, four colors plus white, and a print speed of up to 70m/min. Gallus One can be fully integrated into the Prinect workflow from Heidelberg. Developed jointly, the system combines the digital printing and software know-how of Heidelberg sheetfed offset printing with the many years of extensive expertise Gallus has in label printing. 'Digital

printing is and will remain a key technology for Heidelberg. The new Gallus One is further proof of this,' said Dr Ludwin Monz, CEO of Heidelberg. 'Our innovations in digital printing are targeting the growth markets in our core business, providing our customers with an attractive and future-proof solution, and thus creating the prerequisites for enhanced competitiveness.'

04 KFlex flexo press

Omet The KFlex is a modular platform press handling substrates from 12 microns up to aluminum lidding and light carton board. Targeted at end-use applications in the wine and spirits, food and beverage, household, industrial, healthcare, and cosmetics markets, the press handles everything from self-adhesive labels to wet glue, multi-layer, wraparound and shrink sleeve labels to lids. The KFlex press is available in two web widths, 430mm (16in) and 530mm (20in), with a

New Products

05



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08



maximum print speed of 200m/min (656ft/min). Omet's new 'Switch' platform technology enables the rapid exchange of trolley-mounted slide-in/slide-out printing and converting units, allowing the KFlex to be quickly reconfigured and optimized for different production tasks.

05 U510 UV laser coder Domino

The new UV-based laser coder has been developed for high-speed, high-precision coding on recyclable, mono-material, colored plastics, including flexible food packaging films in horizontal and vertical form-fill-seal (HFFS and VFFS) applications. The U510 codes directly onto white and colored mono-material plastics and films without requiring additional additives or laser-activated fields on the substrate. Codes result from a photochemical reaction on the top of the plastic, creating a smooth, indelible mark without the risk of compromising the product

packaging. The new laser is optimized to deliver high-contrast text, graphics and 2D codes at high speeds to satisfy the demands of the fast-paced food production lines. The all-in-one laser head and the controller unit are protected against dust and water (IP55 rating).

06 GE363VJL digital embellishment concept Cartes

Cartes has unveiled a digital embellishment concept building a 'perfect blend for digital converting processing'. The New Jet D-Screen module has been designed to create outstanding labels finished with multi-layer effects, spot coating, complex tactile raise volumes and braille printing as well as detailed foiling and metallic doming transferring. The GE363VJL combines the Jet D-Screen with the company's laser die-cutting system, adding various options for process automation, such as automatic job changeover by barcode reading and automatic

slitting positioning and turret rewinding systems.

07 Woodpecker Nevis Xsys

The new version of ThermoFlexX Woodpecker surface microstructure technology enables higher imaging speeds of flat-top dot flexographic plates for standard white inks. It aims to control the ink more accurately as it is transferred from the anilox to the plate and onto the substrate. The result is a smoother, higher opacity ink laydown, sharper line work, and cleaner screens, without any of the standard printing defects often found in flexo printing, such as pin holing, trail edge voids, and halo effects, at full press speed. Woodpecker surface microstructures are applied at the imaging stage and are adaptable systems that work with open RIPs. Furthermore, as the pattern is not embedded in the file, which usually increases its size significantly, much faster

data exchange and computer processing times can be achieved. This significant reduction in workflow complexity also improves plate delivery times and ultimately speed to market for brand owners.

08 Direct thermal (DT) linerless labels Avery Dennison

The new DT linerless label platform has been developed for variable information labels used in e-commerce, food delivery and pickup, quick-serve restaurants, weigh scale, and transportation, and logistics applications. Avery Dennison has eliminated the liner waste associated with label printing while offering a DT labeling technology that reduces matrix waste and improves process efficiency and productivity.



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Color & Comfort

Installations



01 50 HP Indigo presses ePac Flexible Packaging, USA

The all-HP Indigo converter in digital flexible packaging has purchased 50 new HP Indigo digital presses to be deployed in existing and new sites worldwide as part of the company's global expansion plan. According to HP, ePac has been a principal adopter of HP Indigo digital presses since ePac's inception in 2016 and has since upheld a strong and deeply rooted collaboration with HP. Over the past six years, the company's fleet of HP Indigo digital presses has grown enormously, overseeing large-scale investments in HP Indigo 20000 and HP Indigo 25K presses. The new wave of presses, the largest single order in HP Indigo's history, will be distributed within 36 new and existing sites across five continents. These presses incorporating HP Indigo's latest technologies will also support ePac's strategy to expand its share and business in existing markets.

02 Mark Andy Digital Series iQ Century Printing & Packaging (CP&P), USA

CP&P, a family-owned label converting company located in Greer, South Carolina, invested in one of the newly launched Mark Andy Digital Series iQ digital hybrid presses to grow its digital capacity. The company already operates five Mark Andy flexo presses: three 10in 2200 models and a 13in Performance Series P5, in addition to the new Digital Series iQ. All the flexo presses are 8-color and use water-based technology with UV on the last station for lacquer. The CP&P press has a 4-color digital capability with three flexo units and Mark Andy's QCDC die-cutting unit. It offers production speeds of up to 230ft/min (70m/min) in high-speed mode and 164 ft/min (50m/min) in high-quality mode, while the print resolution is 600 x 600 DPI across its 13in (330mm) web. 'One of the company's assets has always been an

open-minded approach. We had no previous print industry experience to draw on, so we had no preconceived ideas. We just kept investing in the latest and best technology we could afford, and the Digital One and Digital Series iQ are the latest examples of that,' said Neil Waldrop, one of the CP&P founders.

03 Etirama SPS2 flexo press Megalabel, Brazil

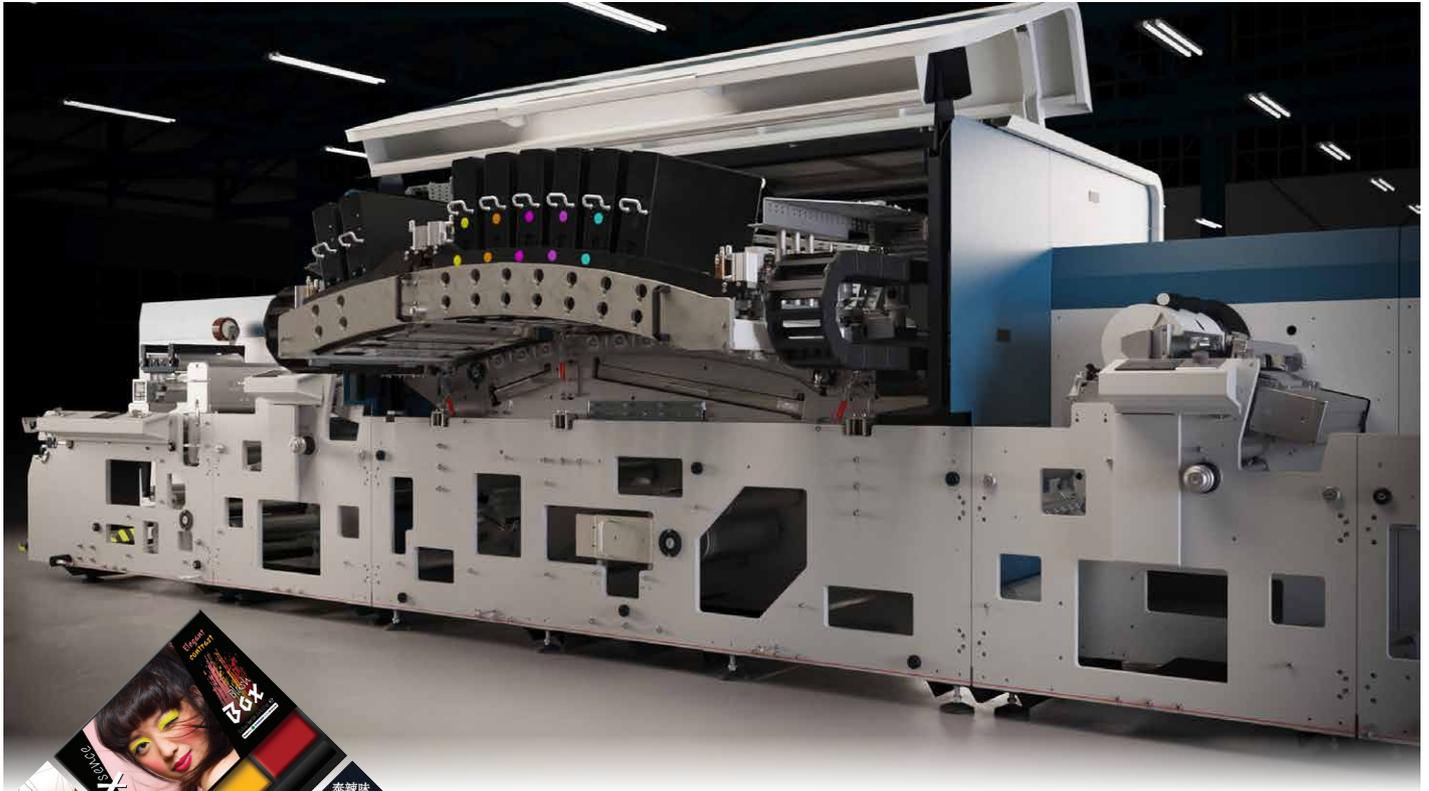
Brazilian label converter has invested in a new SPS2 flexo press, the fourth Etirama machine installed at its production plant in Sao Paolo. The company opted for the 12-color configuration precision model, equipped with servo motors in its transmission system. The new press also features in-feed and out-feed synchronization with servo motors, manual or electronic printing register adjustment, 360-degree rotation of the plate cylinder, and quick anilox changeover. Megalabel's machine

is also fitted with a coil lifter with movement support, a rail for cold stamping, silkscreen printing, lamination, and offers a production speed of up to 150m/min. The SPS2 servo press was launched two years ago and already had more than 30 units sold and installed in ten countries, including Brazil, Argentina, Peru, Guatemala, Mexico, Spain, Nigeria, Uganda, United Arab Emirates and Russia.

04 Nilpeter FA-17 Inland Packaging, USA

Wisconsin-based converter installed a new press to increase capacity and expand product lines in label and flexible packaging production for various markets, including household, food, beverage, health and wellness. Nilpeter FA-17 provides printing on multiple substrates, such as all standard self-adhesive materials, including flexible packaging films, polymer films, metallic films and paper.

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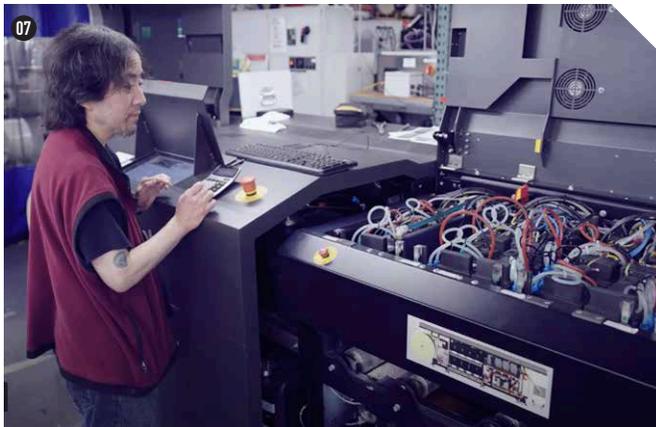
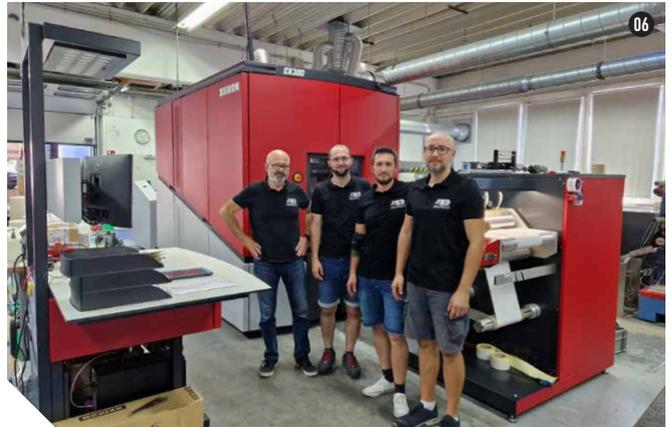
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- A global company providing personalised local service and support
- Consultative approach with leasing options to maximise your ROI



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Installations



05 Epson SurePress L-6534VW Palco Industrial Marking and Labeling, USA

Currently celebrating its 50th anniversary, Palco chose the SurePress aqueous inkjet label press as its first digital printing press in 2019 and recently onboarded the SurePress L-6534VW UV press to support the surge in client demand. 'We originally chose Epson because it was a great prime label solution for entry into digital. It's economical, high-quality, and was able to help speed up some of our jobs by taking pressure off our flexo equipment,' said Tony Lasauskas, president of Palco. 'The surge in business required us to meet faster delivery times while still providing customers with exceptional quality prints, so we turned to what we trusted.' Palco serves clients in many industries, including food and beverage, pharmaceutical, wine, spirits and craft, industrial manufacturing, and pet and animal products, with print jobs

ranging from 200 to 30,000 labels per job.

06 Xeiikon CX300 digital press Rudolf Koehler Etiketten, Germany

German converter purchased a Xeiikon CX300 digital printing system to reduce gaps in production capacity and decrease lead times. The newly installed press complements a Xeiikon CX3, which has been operating at Koehler's factory for the last six years. Several factors contributed to that press being another Xeiikon machine. Firstly, operators are already familiar with the manufacturer's dry toner technology. Secondly, the dry toner concept is suited for food labels, a mainstay of Koehler's label business. Another benefit is the wide variety of substrates the Xeiikon press can handle without special surface treatment. Koehler Etiketten uses the press for jobs ranging from 300 to millions of units in various formats. This includes high-quality

sleeves for shipping in a 320 x 500 mm format and customized mini labels with consecutive barcodes. Koehler Etiketten also opted for VariOne, the AI-inspired software from Xeiikon, enabling the company to print 100,000 labels or more with different backgrounds in a single batch.

07 Four Bobst presses Richmark Labels, USA

The Seattle-based converter has doubled its investment with Bobst by adding another two UV inkjet presses to the first two installed in early 2021. All four digital machines leverage Bobst Digital Inkjet Technology delivering unrivaled speed, quality and productivity. In October 2020, Richmark invested in two Bobst digital label presses – an LB701-UV and an LB702-UV – to replace its original and aging presses. The plan was to replace the existing presses with presses that could deal with its short runs and handle much longer runs that were being run flexographically.

Bill Donner, Richmark Label's president, looked at several options before choosing the Bobst presses.

08 Screen L350 SAI S digital press Sita 3000, Italy

Italian converter, specializing in producing labels for the food industry, is taking its first steps into the world of digital printing. The company chose the Truepress Jet L350 SAI S 7-color press for its reliability, efficiency and print quality. The SAI builds on the technology of the highly successful Truepress Jet L350UV and L350UV+ series of machines, expanding digital printing capabilities for narrow-web label and packaging applications. 'One of Sita 3000's strengths is that we have always been able to invest in new technologies, as is the case with the Truepress Jet L350 SAI S 7-color, our company's first digital label press,' commented Gianluigi De Blasio, technical area manager at Sita 3000.

Installations



09 Bobst Master M6
Revere Group, USA
 Already running two Bobst Master M5 presses for film products and labels, Revere Group installed a Master M6 machine with a quicker setup and lower waste will allow the Seattle, Washington-based company to take further advantage of the growing demand for sustainable packaging products. Revere's 10-color Master M6 features turret unwinders and rewinders and runs with in-line solventless lamination. Digital automation on the press ensures productivity and process repeatability, which Bobst says makes it easy for less experienced operators to run as it requires only minimum and tool-free intervention. The company is leveraging Bobst's oneECG technology for seven-color expanded gamut printing with highly reliable color consistency to hit over 93 percent of the Pantone colors and Digiflexo automation technology for pressure setting, registration

control and adjustments while the press is running.

10 Durst Tau 330 RSC
Grafimax, Brazil
 Grafimax has migrated to the label segment looking for new opportunities and chose the Durst Tau 330 RSC technology to produce labels in small and medium runs. Mainly serving companies in the beverage, toys, food and plastic sectors, made Grafimax expand its production park, investing in conventional flexography equipment. However, with the growing demand for smaller print runs and special applications (such as customization), there was an opportunity to invest in digital technology. 'We researched several brands doing quality tests. The equipment offered good quality, but Durst differentiated itself,' said Elimar Reinhold, founder of Grafimax. 'It is equipment that will not only allow us to meet this volume of medium and small print runs

with quality but will also give us the security to expand the segments into areas where we still do not have much volume, such as cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, among others.'

11 Two ABG non-stop unwinders
Cartor, UK
 AB Graphic International has installed two nonstop unwinders at Wolverhampton-based security printing firm, Cartor. According to ABG, the investment has helped Cartor save valuable production time and create workflow efficiencies. 'The main reason for purchasing the nonstop unwinders from ABG was to improve efficiency,' said Ian Brigham, Cartor's managing director. 'Beforehand, we would lose about 15 minutes of productivity per hour changing reels. Now, because this excellent piece of equipment has been seamlessly integrated with our Omega Converter 430 machine, we are now saving vital minutes of production time, which makes a huge difference on

long-term contracts.'
12 GM DC330Mini compact finisher
Cambridge Label, Canada
 Canadian converter invested in a GM DC330Mini compact finisher to meet the demands of the fast-growing short- to medium-runs digital label printing market. The DC330Mini includes all the components for automated label finishing, such as semi-rotary die-cutting, corona treater, varnishing, laminating, and quick set slitting. This model has also fitted an instant register system. Deanne Sinclair, owner of Cambridge Label, said: -'My focus is to invest for the future, in both equipment and our people, to continue to drive growth and offer our clients the best products and services possible.'

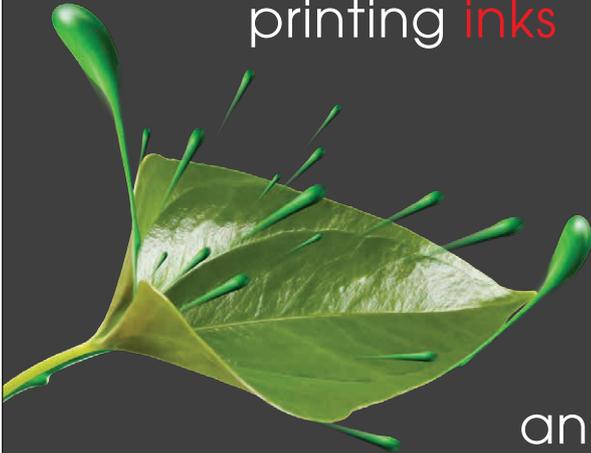


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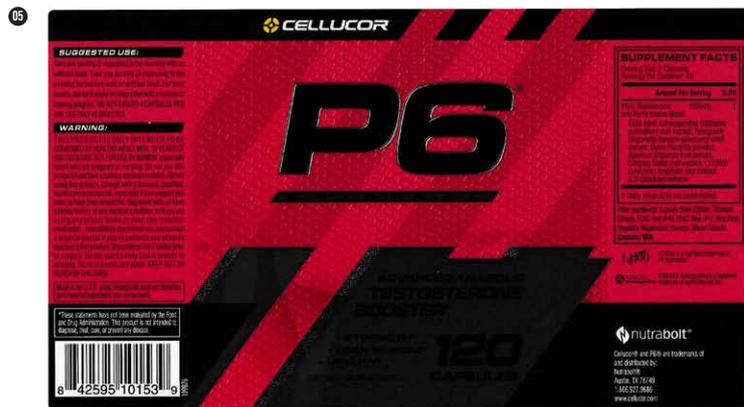
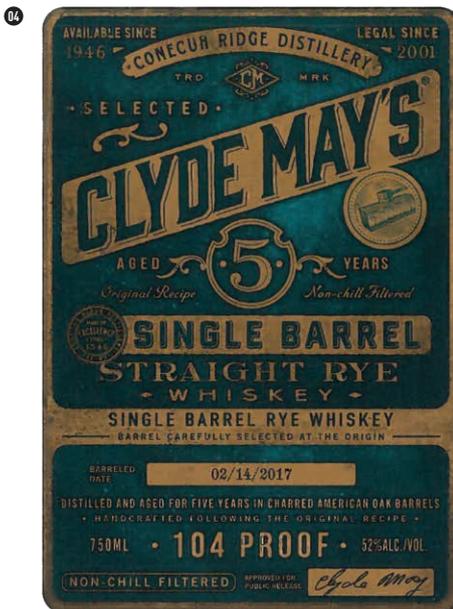
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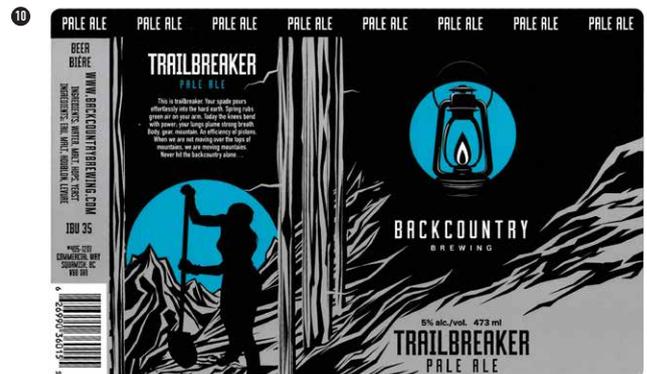
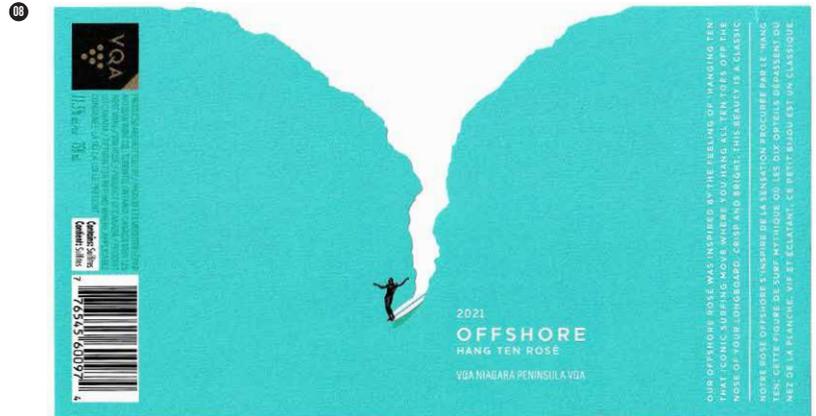
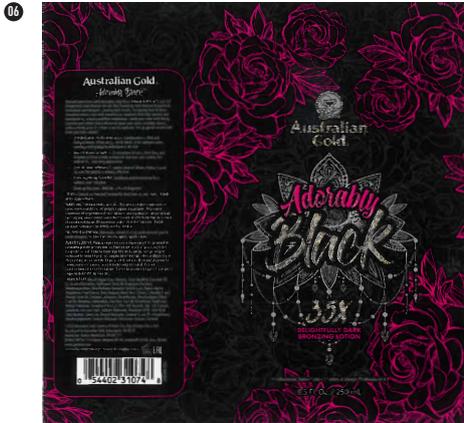
TLMI Annual Print Award Winners

01 Multi-Color Corporation North America
One Stone
Best in Show Overall

02 Labeltronix / an AWT company
RLG Tequila
Best in Class, Digital Toner, Wine & Spirits

03 Syracuse Label & Surround Printing
Blueberry Hard Seltzer
Best in Class, Flexo or Letterpress

04 McDowell Label / a RLG company
5 Year Single Barrel
Best in Class, Flexo or Letterpress, Wine & Spirits



05 McDowell Label / a RLG company

P6

Best in Class, Multi-Process

07 McDowell Label / a RLG company

Le Remedie

Best in Class, Flexo and Letterpress

09 Blue Label Packaging Company

Maplewood: Cryo Double Charlatan

First Place, Digital Toner

10 Great Little Box Company / Ideon Packaging

Backcountry Trailbreaker Pale Ale

First Place, Flexo and Letterpress

06 McDowell Label / a RLG company

Adorably Black

Best in Class, Roll-to-Roll Cut and Stack

08 Multi-Color Corporation North America

Offshore Hang Ten Rose

First Place, Digital Inkjet

A WORD FROM A NILPETER PARTNER

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Andy Thomas-Emans column

Labelexpo lessons

Labelexpo Americas finally gave us a chance to see the new technology developed over the last three years. Andy Thomas-Emans looks at the key trends

It was a fantastic experience to be back at a physical Labelexpo for the first time in three years. After the excitement of the show, what have we learned about the future direction of the labels industry?

Firstly – is flexo dead? There were no flexo presses at the show, even from champions of the technology like Mark Andy, which had three digital/hybrid machines on stand, including the global launch of its 5-color (CMYK+W) DMax Pro press. Gallus, Omet and MPS had stands but no presses and Gallus was mainly promoting its GallusONE standalone UV inkjet press.

Interestingly, visitors certainly were interested in flexo, and flexo sales were actually made at the show. And after conversations with suppliers at Labelexpo and in visits after the show – most recently to Nilpeter – this writer is convinced that flexo will be back with a bang at Labelexpo Europe next year. And it will be all about automation and the total cost of ownership. Some very exciting developments are on the horizon.

In the meantime, digital technology had the show to itself – and digital OEMs took full advantage of the fact. The worldwide launch by HP Indigo of its much-anticipated V12 press delivered the goods, producing high-quality fully variable print at 120m/min (394ft/min). Durst meanwhile showed its RSCi UV inkjet press printing at 100m/min (328 ft/min). These presses are fully able to match the speed and productivity of flexography – a major milestone in the progress of digital print.

Both presses were shown printing roll-to-roll. High-speed finishing systems will initially be near-line. However, we learned that high-speed in-line finishing systems with extensive automation are under development by ABC and these will again move the digital story forward.

What 'lights out' automation might look like on a finishing line was demonstrated by Cartes and Prati, combining inkjet varnishing, digital foiling and laser die-cutting. Indeed, the advance of digital

“I am convinced that flexo will be back with a bang at Labelexpo Europe next year. And it will be all about automation and the total cost of ownership. Some very exciting developments are on the horizon. In the meantime, digital technology had Labelexpo Americas to itself – and digital OEMs took full advantage of the fact”

embellishment was a key theme of the show and point to the future.

Particularly interesting from a digital embellishment point of view was JetFX's 30in-wide (762mm) print bar, which operates at 100m/minute using both EB and UV inks. JetFX was showing examples of embellishments on pouches and shrink sleeves as well as PS labels.

This opens another route for converters to add digital embellishment to existing or new mid-web flexo presses.

Colordyne also produces modules that give flexo presses a digital hybrid capability. The company was demonstrating a very promising water-based inkjet module capable of jetting onto nonporous materials using pigmented WB inks developed by Kao.

Practical approaches to sustainability were another key theme of the show, with sustainability-based technologies dominating the Global Label Award categories. Actega won an award for its Signite technology that allows a decorated label, including adhesive, to be printed onto a backing liner and applied to a glass container, eliminating the need for die-cutting or even a face material. It was demonstrated on the company's stand along with its award-nominated Ecoleaf digital foiling technology, which uses a donor roll and printed target to eliminate tooling in foiling applications.

Flint Group won an award for its Evolution de-inking primer, which allows UV flexo ink to delaminate from a PET

shrink sleeve surface in recycling systems. This demonstrates a trend towards label systems that promote the recovery of clean PET waste without contamination from inks or adhesives. The label thus becomes a positive enabler of the circular materials economy.

S-OneLP was awarded for its ReEarth compostable prelaminate flexible packaging film.

Xeikon was also keen to hitch its star to the sustainability wagon with the launch of its Titon toner, which contributes to a move towards paper-based flexible packaging as a substitute for multi-layer plastics. Titon toners incorporate additional protective layers for heat, sunlight, water, scratch and scuff resistance and are safe for both direct and indirect food contact.

TLMI's Eco Stage featured a range of interesting speakers on sustainability. Perhaps the most interesting was on gasification technology, which promises to allow the recovery of methanol – the precursor for plastics production – from mixed packaging waste.

These are some of the key trends evident at this exciting show, and you can read about each technology in more detail throughout this edition of Labels & Labeling. Now we can start looking forward to Labelexpo Europe 2023.



Turn to page 98 to read a full review of Labelexpo Americas 2022

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Equipment investment for continuous improvement strategies

Label converters should start with a simple investment before looking for larger, more complex equipment, writes continuous improvement columnist Paul Brauss



All organizations with a continuous improvement conviction have future equipment investment planning as part of its strategy. Nothing is more exciting to a production operation than bringing in a new piece of equipment. The operational employees see this as a commitment to the company and their futures. The sales force considers this an opportunity to remain competitive or become even more competitive with the offering.

Selecting the equipment in concert with the overall company strategy is essential. Is the equipment required to provide better productivity, enhanced capability, solve old equipment cost of maintenance, or automate operations that free up people and open capacity hours? These are essential questions as they drive the decision process.

In many companies, the opportunity to acquire new equipment does not come very often. The justification process is arduous, and the selection process brings out opinions from every facet of the organization. When this happens, there is often a debate about new revenue generation commitments, as these added capabilities drive up the cost of the equipment.

Speaking from experience

Early in my career, I was often involved in this seesaw battle as a project engineer, and looking to gain consensus, I helped design configurations that answered the need for today but with the capability to address the future based on sales projections.

I'll never forget the opportunity to replace machine center fabrication equipment used in our manufacturing process. After months of review, capital justification scenarios, and a drive to gain consensus, we selected and acquired a machine with five-axis capabilities to cut

parts that were so specialized that many of the competitors could not step up to the ability.

Our sales team was excited about the added competitive differentiation, our manufacturing group was excited about new equipment, and as a project engineer, I could not have been more excited to have the responsibility of making this happen. As with highly specialized equipment, I understood the lengthy lead time for delivery. I began to worry a little about the larger footprint of the new equipment and the long lead time for installation. I started to panic when the operators were not catching on to the operational training for the equipment.

The complexity added 'time to market,' and running late on the project commitments drove extreme pressure on everyone. I began to believe I could not meet the objective and the project would not be successful.

We marshaled through the commissioning and began producing good parts, relieving much of the pressure a start-up of new equipment receives. After commissioning, I spent time with the machine in operation without watchful eyes. I worked with scheduling, designed run speeds, developed setup sheets, and studied the device's success. It took me about six months to realize that we had made a wrong purchasing decision.

Our desire to add the capability for the future overshadowed our focus on simplification and improvement in the present. Instead of decreasing the setup time, the complexity added to the setup time. The machining center went from 58 percent uptime to 38 percent uptime. Worse yet, the new capability did not bring in added sales because the sales strategy did not align with the manufacturing strategy.

I spent six months realigning the bill of

“A much more palatable low-risk equipment investment strategy begins with a detailed evaluation of the current capacity that can improve with more straightforward equipment”

materials and process flow so that the machine only worked on extremely long runs. In the end, we increased the uptime with output levels meeting financial projections—something I could have quickly done with a much less complicated and costly piece of equipment.

I speak of this now because many converters went through a capital spending cycle a few years ago. They acquired equipment with increased decorating capability because of perceived higher margin opportunities of high value-added labels. Many of these added equipment features have now been in place for over a year without being used. Adding complex equipment to an operation demands that the equipment be run and utilized. This constant need impacts operational focus.

Further study outlines the sales organizations of these companies could not sell the perceived value. Many converters struggle to maintain existing margins, let alone increase margins against larger foes willing to leverage size and reduce prices. Gaps in technical capability surfaced in the shops looking to operate the new complex equipment uncovering new resource

“The best strategy is lower cost and more aggressive capacity improvements that strengthen competitiveness in this dynamic market”

requirements that are yet to be solved.

New industry studies indicate equipment purchasing trends will be positive over the next few years. Reviewing market trends supporting the study’s purchasing plan data for small, medium and mid-size converters, I see a real opportunity to seize the moment and overtake another super machine cycle as described by Dr Richard Schonberger in the book *World Class Manufacturing*. A much more palatable low-risk equipment investment strategy begins with a detailed evaluation of the current capacity that can improve with more straightforward equipment. Achieving operational improvements can be quick, speeding up the benefit to the organization.

Large multi-facility roll-ups by private equity will face equipment acquisition decisions to determine the most logical course of action with their older fleet of equipment purchased. Privately held small, medium and mid-size converters segments typically have a fleet of equipment designed and built in the 1980s and 90s. Now 30 years old, this equipment often performs well, but replacement parts and maintenance are becoming increasingly problematic. Many converters with older equipment have considered purchasing new equipment several times but held back on the decision because the equipment they specified was extraordinarily costly and overly complex.

There is no doubt the graphics in the industry continue to impress, but it is also a fact that conventional low-end labels and prime labels account for the lion’s share of the market. We

also know that in downturned economies, specialty market label demands decrease significantly as well.

Simplify first

Our continuous improvement focus reminds us that we must simplify before we automate. Automate repetitive process operations and buy capacity for eight to 12 months of projected demand growth. A smart continuous improvement strategy is to support the production growth plan by adding simple equipment every year. For example, many single factory operations have legacy 4-, 6-, or 8-color flexo equipment. Jumping to new technology like digital could strain the organization, but replacing old flexo equipment with unencumbered new flexo equipment provides a step change in productivity with known technology. I just completed a facility study with a location with five 10in and 13in flexo presses that were more than 20 years old. The presses had very little ancillary equipment other than a turn bar and an occasionally used sheeter conveyor. Assessing the products printed, the workforce capability, and building on the success already being recognized drove my recommendations.

It was more advantageous to purchase a wider flexo press but also with the ability to accommodate the existing smaller print plates library. Still, it could begin a transformation to a more expansive, more advantaged width. We could prove a five-month payback with its existing book of business. The new flexo press had no extra alternate printing capabilities. Still, it was straightforward



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to set up, and several of the manual steps on the old presses were automated on the new flexo press. This lower cost, lower risk approach checked all the boxes for an excellent investment.

The new equipment can be retrofitted later as growth patterns change or if a change of strategic direction is part of future consideration. The benefit to the converter included an immediate reduction of production labor costs, revitalization of the workforce now excited the company was investing, and improved print quality. Critical quality attributes like registration, dot control, color matching and die-cutting all were improved. Another immediate benefit was the reduction of waste by more than 50 percent.

Some companies will insist on the new technology spend for digital. I believe there is a lower cost, lower risk investment approach for simplified digital and finishing equipment as well. The investment cost will be higher than an essential flexo press, but the message is similar. Start with a simple investment before looking for larger, more complex equipment. There are a lot of competing resources for investment capital.

The time is now

Small, medium and mid-range converters who have been very frugal and cautious buying equipment should invest in upgraded equipment now as part of their commitment to continuous improvement. Simple press and finishing equipment are easier to set up, operate and maintain. Several smaller pieces of equipment provide project risk mitigation and operational protection should a facility have a catastrophic problem.

Larger multi-national and multi-facility converters should also look to newer simplified equipment spending as part of their strategic plans. They may have more capability to spend for larger

super machines, but they should measure the proposition. In the label and packaging printing equipment world, there will always be a need for larger, more complex equipment. These purchasing cycles for this type of equipment are less frequent. The justification for the increased capital required includes much longer production runs with graphic and design differentiation.

Complex equipment increases the organization's cost structure because overhead spending will need to grow with the marketing and advertising campaigns required for the new capacity. Overhead costs will increase when leaders realize people development in sales, engineering, maintenance and operator training are gaps that need to be filled to support the investment.

Complex equipment capacity requires increased production demands often taking a year or more for an organization to digest. Those companies buying the larger equipment typically run one shift in the first year, two shifts in the second year, and three in the third.

I'm hopeful that the discussion with converters leads to a commitment to replacing old equipment lines with new simplified equipment at a smaller investment level that fuels manufacturing capability. The best strategy is lower cost and more aggressive capacity improvements that strengthen competitiveness in this dynamic market.



Paul Brauss, former CEO of Mark Andy and a past board member of TLMI, is a consultant and executive coach. See Braussconsulting.com, and buy his book at amzn.to/2NFzXkB

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The language of value

Branding and design columnist Vicki Stull offers tips for moving the conversation beyond price

Let me paint a picture that's probably familiar to most of you: You meet with a client or a brand team about their latest product and packaging needs. They're excited, you're excited, the ideas are flying. You're wowing them about what you can do with embellishments, tactics, finishings and more. Then they ask you how much those special features are going to cost, and the conversation comes to a screeching halt.

It's a reality in our business: As soon as the client gets caught up in a conversation about cost, it's no longer a conversation about value. Even more distressing, when your client is focused on price comparison, your print services become a commodity instead of an innovative solution.

So how do you avoid this conversational rabbit hole? By steering the conversation away from price and instead speaking the language of business. When you think about it, our customers may have roles in procurement, sales, operations, finance, marketing or other areas. Their focus is not so much on the substrate or finishing we're recommending, but on their business goals and how the project can meet them. For example, in conversations with finance, earnings are the priority; in conversations with marketing, consumer engagement is the focus. Talking with clients in their language, using the business terms they use, reshapes conversations from subjective to objective; it allows us to discuss the 'why' behind certain materials and designs and how those elements can achieve their specific business goals. But first, we have to understand just what those business goals are. And that means speaking 'the language of business.'

Just as in the labels and packaging world, the world of business has a long list of relevant terms.

I've narrowed it down to what I call 'the business six' – the top six terms that should be in every designer's and converter's business vocabulary. When we understand these terms, synthesize them, and use them correctly in conversations and meetings, we're no longer just talking about presses, run rates, inline, offline, CMYK, extended gamut, etc. Instead, we're talking about economics. We're talking about sales goals, revenue projections, customer value and strategies for gaining market share.

'The business six' are tools we can use to expand our credibility and impact. Once we understand our client's goals, then when we do share our knowledge about

the advantages of a particular technique, substrate or embellishment, we can frame our printing expertise and behavior-based knowledge within those goals. You'll find that clients are more receptive to your input when the point you make is in their language with their goals top of mind.

1: Revenue

Let's kick off 'the business six' with revenue. Revenue is simply the money that a company receives in exchange for its products and/or services. Now, there are a lot of terms that are associated with revenue. You might hear gross revenue, net revenue and top line. For example, gross revenue (also called top line) is the total amount of money a business receives from its sales. Net revenue is the amount of money a business makes from sales minus the expenses the business incurred making that product or providing that service. The exact word a person uses often depends on their role. I've been in cross-functional meetings that include the CEO, CFO, plus someone from sales, operations and HR. With so many different points of view, one person might use the term top line, while someone else uses the term gross revenue. They are talking about the same thing.

2: Margin

The second term in 'the business six' is margin. Margin is typically discussed as a ratio. (If you know all about margin, feel free to skip ahead). Let's say a company has a product that sells for 10 USD and the cost of producing that product is 8 USD. That means the company has 2 USD left. Two dollars out of 10 is one-fifth; the margin, then, is 20 percent. Why is margin important to designers and converters? Often the budget for printing, design, branding, and marketing comes out of the product's margin. When we're in conversations with our clients, we want to understand where the budget is coming from so we can address it as their investment in their labels, packaging and merchandising.

If we know the product's margin, then we can predict a client's receptivity to adding various finishing elements. This becomes even more enticing when we can tie those elements to their specific business goals. For example, an embellishment might enhance a brand's position as the premium brand, which can help increase sales and capture additional market share. While the client may initially think the embellishment is



too expensive, they may re-think the cost if the packaging drives volume, increases sales, and the company earns more – even though their margins are less. The point is, you'll never know how to help clients meet their goals if you don't ask what they are.

3: De-commoditize

De-commoditize is a cousin to 'differentiate.' When we're developing packaging and labels, we are striving to differentiate the product so it doesn't feel like everything else on the shelf. In contrast, a commodity is typically not branded. When you walk into The Home Depot to get nails, for example, you just pick out the size and type you need. They're not branded, they're a commodity. You're buying them based on size, application, quantity and price.

Let's look at spices to illustrate how branding and packaging can de-commoditize a product. For example, if we look at a pile of dried basil that's not packaged, there is no doubt that it is a commodity. We're thinking, 'basil is basil.' But companies like McCormick & Company, Simply Organic, Spice Islands, and others package basil differently so it's elevated in the consumer's mind. For example, McCormick has added a grinder to its dried basil packaging and it is able to charge about 11 USD an ounce (instead of



“As soon as the client gets caught up in a conversation about cost, it’s no longer a conversation about value. When your client is focused on price comparison, your print services become a commodity instead of an innovative solution”

50 cents to 2 USD an ounce, the average price of loose dried basil without branding). In this case, the packaging contributed to McCormick’s pricing strategy and its premium positioning.

4: Market share

Market share is the percentage of sales within an industry that a particular brand achieves over a set period. For example, Domino’s, Papa John’s and Pizza Hut each have a certain market share in the pizza industry. If the business goal of the print piece I’m creating for a client is to help increase market share, I talk about how brand design and packaging can drive that. We discuss how improving conversions can increase sales to capture more market share. This conversation is not about special inks or foil stamps or how fast we can print.

Yes, we care about that. But what gets your client excited? When you keep showing up as a true partner, providing solutions to help them achieve their goals.

5: Customer value

The fifth term is customer value. This is the calculation of how much a customer is worth during their relationship with a brand. It’s not only what the customer is currently spending, but also the amount they are projected to spend in the future. Additionally, customer value relates to how much and how frequently a customer posts online because social sharing can significantly influence others to become customers. The more a customer posts pictures or videos about a brand, its products, and the unboxing experience, plus the more followers they have, the

greater their influence and the higher their customer value.

Relating that back to packaging design and development, if I suggest a finishing technique that makes the packaging more share-worthy but cuts into margins, I steer the conversation toward customer value and the brand’s social media goals, brand loyalty and customer acquisition.

6: Return on investment (ROI)

Our last term in ‘the business six’ is ROI – return on investment. I’m assuming you’re familiar with this term as a calculation that brands use to measure the profitability of an investment. But have you considered the differences between tangible and intangible ROI factors? Tangible ROI factors are quantifiable costs and benefits, such as production, materials, and design fees measured against the cost of conversions, sales and market share, for example. Intangible ROI factors are more qualitative and include factors of a customer’s experience, such as social sharing, brand loyalty and customers’ feelings of delight, satisfaction or frustration. Intangibles are more difficult to measure and are often undervalued in financial-based companies. However, intangible ROI factors are extremely valuable to the brand in terms of brand loyalty, brand trust and brand equity. I like to call these factors ‘return on impact.’

It’s not just packaging; it’s packaging strategy

I’m sure you could add your own go-to business terms to ‘the business six.’ (Email me; I’d love to hear!)

It’s not only about what the terms are; it’s also about how you use them to strategize with your clients. Listen as your clients talk about their business challenges and objectives. Ask questions. Explain why the work you do has the potential to achieve their goals. Share success stories from your other projects. And keep the conversation focused on ‘the language of business’ and the value you bring to support your client’s business goals.



Vicki Strull is a design strategist with more than 25 years in the industry designing packaging, brand identities and a multitude of packaging and online touchpoints. Vicki co-founded MarketWise Academy

to help fellow designers and marketers accelerate their impact, level up their design strategies, and thrive in a world dominated by business. That’s where the idea for The Business 6 originated. To learn more about The Business 6 and other strategies, visit marketwiseacademy.com or contact Vicki directly at vicki@vickistrull.com

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Top 5 issues that can change the trajectory of your business

by Bob Cronin, *The Open Approach*

Succeeding in the label business is as much about carving out your position as it is defending it. Certainly, we're used to the typical challenges (for example competitors undercutting prices, turnover in client entities, subcontractor reliability, etc.). But there are a few new issues that we need to get a handle on. While these may have seemed fleeting just a few months ago, it now looks like they're here to stay. We need to be aware of these and work every day to minimize their impacts on our operations – and our industry – today, tomorrow and beyond.

Let's take a look at these escalating issues and how we can address them:

Supply chain shortages We continue to hear frustrations over the supply chain. Stock availability, manufacturing shutdowns, freight problems and other elements are affecting our ability to serve our customers. We can't expect customers to just put up with this, and we can't expect their loyalty. Instead of getting beaten up by the supply chain, we should be thinking about a 'supply change.' And we should be doing this proactively. Customers won't be happy if you have to substitute material mid-production. But they won't mind if you find solutions that help them save money, be greener, or gain other benefits – in advance. Look at standard/repeat programs and find ways to improve or better navigate the current supply chain. Doing this will put factors back in your control and shield your customer from the impact. Moreover, it will show that you are forward-thinking, innovative, and committed to customer growth – the hallmarks of our great industry.

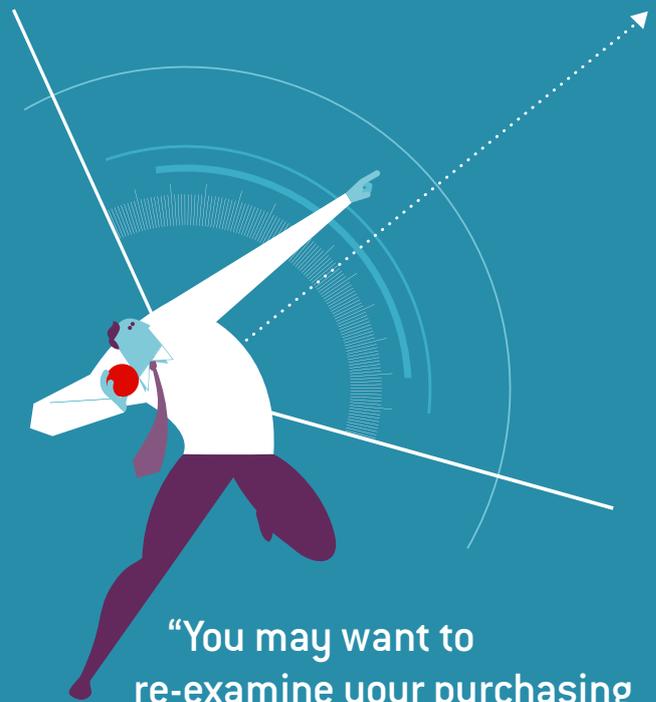
You may also want to re-examine your purchasing/warehousing strategies, as the just-in-time model simply doesn't work in the current marketplace. Repurpose existing space or create an alliance with those who can provide the space. Having materials on hand may make the difference in winning the order – and the continued trust of your customer.

Inflation and recession impact Our current financial environment has become tenuous, as we teeter between inflation and recession. Either way, we don't win. What's important is that we shield ourselves from the impacts as much as possible, so we don't have to push these through to our customers.

Take a look at vendor relationships, purchasing contracts, economies of scale, and even office/human resources expenditures, and see where you can get leaner. Consider collective buying groups where you can offset price increases. Review your sources, and ask long-time vendors about prices, options and terms. Maximize your buying power better than your competitors to ensure you'll stay strong through these pressures.

Manpower Every industry is struggling to get and keep great employees. People are what make a business, and relationships are what keep your customers connected. Manufacturing in general has had difficulty attracting new entrants into the field as it may appear stodgy.

This effect is exacerbated by the educational system's emphasis on STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) careers.



“You may want to re-examine your purchasing strategies, as the just-in-time model simply doesn't work in the current marketplace”

We need to capture the innovation, excitement and opportunity of labels and packaging in our recruiting efforts. Moreover, we need to showcase our technologies.

Market with video, partner with schools, run demos, provide work-study options, and broadcast our industry's vibrancy on social media and the web. Remember also to show new candidates how we are sustainable and invite them to help lead the effort. By speaking in younger workers' terms and expectations, we'll open their eyes to the opportunities to be part of the thriving label industry.

Changing Competition Ongoing consolidation is changing the face of labels and packaging, and it will continue to create new powerhouses and displace others. We need to develop a plan that allows us to compete without impacting our customers. For some of us, we may need to acquire or sell to remain competitive. Consolidation will affect our customers only if they begin seeing gaps or better opportunities. Our customers have choices. Stay cognizant of your position and your competitors, and do everything possible to ensure your customers keep choosing you.

Covid-19, war in Ukraine, global pressures The things which we have the least control over are the things we need to be most aware of. Follow the news and watch for events that have implications for your business, your customer's business, and those businesses that support both. Awareness gives you the chance to plan and prepare to mitigate potential problems – or capitalize on changing dynamics.

When you look at these five issues, it may seem overwhelming. Yet, our great industry has thrived because of our ability to combat obstacles or invent solutions to turn them around. We've all faced difficult times, and we'll get through them. We just have a new set of adversaries.



Bob Cronin is managing partner of *The Open Approach*, an M&A consultancy focused exclusively on the world of print. To learn more, visit www.theopenapproach.net, email bobrcronin@aol.com, or call +1 630 323 9700



Mike Fairley with his wife Pat, who also played a key role in the early days of Labels & Labeling



The Mike Fairley column

A fond farewell

Label industry stalwart and Labels & Labeling founder Mike Fairley is retiring after an industry-defining career that spanned more than 50 years. This is his final column. It is our honor to print it.

It's almost impossible to believe that I first started writing and talking about labels some 50-plus years ago while working as deputy head of training at PIRA, the world-renowned Paper, Printing and Packaging Industries Research Association. At the time, I was asked to write an education and training handbook about the fast-emerging new technology of pressure-sensitive labels.

Throughout these past year years, I've been witness to innovative ideas, new materials and technologies, problem-solving and opportunities, global growth and even challenges.

Today, the label industry is one of the most sophisticated of all the printing industry sectors that brings together the widest range of substrates and printing and converting processes, highly advanced computerized design and pre-press solutions, the latest in inspection technologies, workflow automation and MIS – all combining to provide world-leading branding and marketing innovations.

It's certainly been a privilege to be part of this amazing industry, and to not only have personally known many of the early industry pioneers – Stan Avery, Chuck Miller, Ferdinand Rüesch III, Mark Andrews Jnr, Werner Jackstädt, Juhani Stromberg, Nozumo Shiwaku – but to have worked with most of their companies, and many other of the emerging pressure-sensitive industry suppliers and converters of the 1970s and 1980s, on market and technology research strategies, education, and training or editorial projects.

Now, after 50 years of writing and talking about labels, it's time to bring my time in the industry to a close with this final Mike Fairley column, but not without a last look over these 50 incredible years.

The early beginnings

Going back to the time I first started researching and writing the PIRA label handbook in 1971 it was little more than a handful of years after Fasson, the base materials division of the Avery Adhesive Label Company in America, had expanded the division's

“I can happily retire from the industry by being reassured that Labels & Labeling, The Label Academy, Labelexpo global shows and all aspects of label production and usage, look set to be in capable hands for the industry's ongoing future and success”

“What a journey it has been. When I took over the leadership of Nilpeter in 1981, Mike had already founded Labels & Labeling. More than 40 years have passed since then. Mike's contribution to the label industry cannot be overrated and he has played a significant role for the industry as a whole and for Nilpeter. We have always had a tight partnership with Mike and have shared many good memories and experiences over the years. Mike's role as an active and insightful contributor to the industry will be missed – there is no doubt about that. I wish him all the best in his next chapter.”

Lars Eriksen, president & CEO, Nilpeter

“I first met Mike in 2007-08, when on behalf of Domino Printing Sciences, I attended a digital label conference hosted by him held in Barcelona. At the time, I was thinking this could be an area we could invest and grow in. Mike was a friendly, clear and concise communicator, having a great depth of knowledge. I only made a last-minute decision to go to the conference thinking we were already too late to do this, but we proceeded with a new business plan. We subsequently invested 10 million GBP, employed more than 100 additional people and established what is today a substantial multi-million-pound digital label equipment and inks business. Subsequently, Mike also contributed with training, consultancy and case studies and I always enjoyed catching up with him. However, I will always remember that the business started with that conference hosted by Mike. Thank you for your support and happy retirement.”

Philip Easton, Industrial Inkjet



A Roman-themed evening at the Latma conference in Australia in 2001

“The entire team at Gallus was extremely nervous when, in 1986, the ‘King’ of the label industry himself, Mike Fairley, came to St Gallen as a young man for the first time. I had the honor to get to know Mike, who was then known as a highly professional journalist who questioned everything and then some. Mike has carried himself with an independent, critical and professional manner since day one, and he deserves the greatest respect for bringing the whole industry together with his highly respected magazine. We thank Mike for all his many years of expertise and friendship, and we wish him well for the future.”

Ferdinand Rüesch Sr, senior vice president, Gallus Group & Anchor Investor Heidelberger Druckmaschinen AG

customer base in Europe beyond its label franchise holders to that of supplying all converters. At that time, the company had installed what was the largest pressure-sensitive coater in the world at that time (80in/2m wide) in Fasson Europe.

During the 1970s Raf Haarla, the foundation for UPM Raflatac's labelstock business was building and installing its first laminating machine in Europe. Jackstädt was shipping pressure-sensitive sheet products throughout Europe and establishing plants in Brazil and Australia. Ritrama was also developing and learning about the new world of pressure-sensitive products.

It was not just the availability of label materials that were evolving in the 1970s and early '80s.

New printing solutions were being developed to both print and die-cut pressure-sensitive labels. Converters were moving from flat-bed semi-rotary printing presses. Nilpeter was developing and introducing the first full rotary and modular in-line flexo presses. Mark Andy, too, was bringing in-line roll-label flexographic presses to the market, while Gallus was developing rotary letterpress – including the incorporation of rotary die-cutting and UV-curing and, along with innovations by Stork, the use of rotary screen. Ko-Pack was also successfully bringing rotary letterpress into Europe. DuPont also introduced the first photo-sensitive polymer plates.

Pressure-sensitive label printing and converting at this time was fast becoming an exciting new world of opportunity.

Meeting new retail demands

Developments in inks, coating and varnishes – and ink drying and UV-curing – were then becoming necessary to meet the demands of the new, higher quality and performance, rotary printing presses, and, by the mid-1970s, a new world of standardized Universal Product Coding (UPC) was rapidly changing the retail world. The demand for UCC and EAN barcodes on labels and packaging sent the growth demand for pressure-sensitive barcoded labels well into double figures.

Little wonder then that the whole label world was looking for information and help with all the many changes in label production and usage taking place.

There were new materials and suppliers, new inks, new types of rotary presses, the choice of flexo, rotary letterpress or screen, new pre-press systems, developments in flexible dies, die-cutting, and tooling, the challenges of printing barcodes that reliably scanned, advances in hot-foil label opportunities, new products for on-press inspection and monitoring – as well as demand for market trends and opportunities information.

Such was the background to the launch of Labels & Labeling magazine in January 1979. That first issue was just 20 pages and, apart from the front and back covers was printed in black only for a largely UK-based pressure-sensitive label industry. Within a couple of years, the magazine was already considered as an international journal with subscribers across Europe and in more than 20 countries, including North America, India, Australia and New Zealand.

In May 1980 the first-ever Labelex show was held in London. Just 44 exhibitors, most of whom were label converters showing everything from label and tag products to table-top printers, overprinters, and label application equipment. By 1985, the first Labelex show was held in Brussels with some 70 participants, including major international press manufacturers, Mark Andy, Nilpeter, Webtron, Ko-Pack, Edale and FSK and, for the first time, a seminar program sponsored by Finat.

Demand for information, education, and new solutions

By the mid-1980s I had traveled to almost all the global subscriber countries, interviewing label industry suppliers and converters, presenting in-house market and technology trends seminars and workshops, as well as attending product launches and all kinds

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“When I started working for Labelexpo in 2004, I remember Mike introducing me to the industry and the wonderful people within it. He was so patient with me and so generous with his knowledge. He never lost any of his enthusiasm for initiatives and projects that we took on over the years. It has been such a pleasure to have worked with him, and to witness how he brought about brilliant collaborations and ideas to the industry.”

Jade Grace, portfolio director, Labelexpo Global Series



Taken at Labelexpo Europe 2017, this picture shows 150 years of industry experience. L&L founder Mike Fairley, Demy McGee and Dilip Shah, MPS

of industry association events in Europe, North America and Australia. Such was the demand for market and trends information, even by major labelstock suppliers, that I was by now providing workshops to management, sales and production employees in Fasson, Raflatrac and Jackstädt facilities in Europe and Australia, as well as Fasson in the US.

The 1980s was also an intense period in the early development of today's sophisticated pre-press systems with the introduction of digital design technology by DISC, Barco Graphics and Purup. Technology that was to enable a designer to create and place on a computer screen all the elements for producing labels. This included positives, negatives, screened text, key lines, logo scanning, choke and spread, step-and-repeat, text rotation, barcodes and dispo,

right up to making plate-ready films.

This was not completely new technology to me as I had previously been at the forefront of introducing photo- and computer-typesetting and page make-up workshops to the newspaper world when I was working at PIRA in the early 1970s.

So, alongside Labels & Labeling magazine, a separate label consultancy company also was formed. This I used as a vehicle to work with emerging supplier companies, interested groups and product teams to provide research, solutions and development projects and support to further grow the industry.

Key initiatives during the 1980s included bringing materials and equipment suppliers and converters together to successfully trial and launch new thermal labelstock materials for retail weigh-price labeling;

working with the main film producers to develop new, thinner, flexible, dispensable and highly printable PE, PP and PET label films; undertaking UV ink projects; and initiating some of the early inkjet label printing trials.

Spreading the word

The label consultancy was also busy researching and writing all kinds of technical and market research publications during the second half of the 1980s and much of the early 1990s.

Market reports covered Europe, with separate studies on the UK and France, as well as Japan and global trends. Technical reports included thermal labeling, label applicators, barcoding, food labeling and other label legislation, filmic label stocks, in-house coating, counterfeit deterrence

“When I made my first baby steps into labels, Mike already had gray hair, and I looked up at him with great respect. The articles, interviews and papers he wrote were for me a great foundation to build upon. Later on, I had the opportunity to work closely with him during Labelexpo shows, setting up ‘the experience zone,’ to meet with him around the world but also to visit him at his private house. His lady made nice English sandwiches and he talked about the pheasants and foxes that roam around in his garden. The purpose of that visit was to ask his opinion about some new developments we had in mind. We went in with full confidence and left with a puzzled mind. It was not the feeling we were looking for initially, but afterward it helped us to challenge our ideas from different angles and that's exactly what we wanted and needed. Mike has written articles that as I was reading, I asked myself ‘Mike, are you sure that's going to happen?’ History has proven him right in most cases.

Filip Weymans, Xeikon



A karaoke evening in Tokyo in 1987 during a Finat tour to Japan

and brand protection, as well as specialized studies for individual companies.

A specialized conference, teach-in and training division was formed by the now-named, Labelex/Cowise group in 1990 and was soon organizing regular label and packaging-related conferences, as well as regular teach-ins in Amsterdam and Chicago. Labelexpo shows also were expanded from the original Europe shows in Brussels to America (Chicago) and Asia (firstly Singapore and then China).

Other industry-related magazines were also launched by the Group, including Package Print & Design and Product & Image Security, as well as starting the very first development of a sophisticated Label Resource website – the beginnings of a one-stop resource for anything to do with labels, from books, reports, conference proceedings and papers, magazine articles, a calendar of events, and links to supplier, association and converter websites.

Then, in 1998, the Labelex/Cowise Group was reverse-engineered into a shell plc company before being relaunched as Tarsus plc.

A new phase of group expansion and growth was underway.

Recording and documenting the industry

Much of the last 20 years or so with Tarsus involved me as a strategy consultant and the founder of the Label Academy, and in the writing of some nine education and training publications within the Academy series of titles, plus the world's first labels and brand protection encyclopedias, working with Tony White on the History of Labels book, and establishing and speaking on or chairing Masterclasses at Labelexpo shows in Europe and the USA.

These events were built around the chapters and specialist contributors from some of the Academy books, such as Digital Label Printing, Shrink Sleeve Technology and Flexible Packaging.

I also was provided with my own Mike Fairley column in each issue of Labels & Labeling magazine and continued to write specific feature articles. These have continued to the present day, which I have already mentioned will be my last contribution.

During these latter years, I have still undertaken some specific consultancy projects within the industry, mainly those that particularly interested me, but also established a small historical and biographical publishing company through which I could write and publish non-industry, non-technical books, of special interest.

These books, (a total of seven at the time of publishing) cover topics as diverse as the industrial revolution, World War II, Victorian music hall, and my own biography, which I have called 'A Catalyst for Growth.' Available from Amazon Books.

Half a century has passed by

Looking back over 50 years of researching, writing and talking about labels – especially during the 1980s and 90s – I can probably claim to have provided some level of consultancy services, market strategy, technology and market education and training, acquisition guidance and support, investment and development information, specialist reports to a great many of the label industry's leading national and international labelstock suppliers, paper and plastic/synthetic substrate producers, ink and chemical manufacturers, conventional and digital press manufacturers, ancillary suppliers, and existing and start-up label converters, as well as to investment banks, government bodies, national organizations, and to the EU.

It is particularly interesting for me to look back over this time and today and see and talk with companies that have grown from a few million pounds, euros or dollars when I first worked with them, into multi-million global corporations.

It seems strange that many of the earlier pioneers and founders that I knew and worked with as a consultant or editor have retired or passed on, and that I often now have a greater knowledge of the history and evolution of a label-related business than the people

"I could fill several pages with souvenirs from the help and information Mike has given me over the years. Since 1995 where I appeared in the labels world with a revolutionizing digital printing at Labelexpo, Mike was interested and was there answering, suggesting, guiding, giving, but also asking, analyzing, consolidating, reporting. Mike, you did it with me, but you equally did it with many people. A market can grow only when known, when understood, when visible and you have been over the years this information hub collecting, crunching and giving back. I learned so much from Mike and so did the labels market. His professional guidance, expertise, neutrality and kindness will be missed. A huge thank you to Mike for his support during these decades. I wish you a fantastic restful next chapter of your life!"

Christian Menegon, HP Indigo



Receiving the R Stanton Avery Lifetime Achievement Award in 2009

"I started working with Mike in 1998 and over the following years, Mike taught me everything there was to know about the labels industry. It was a real honor and also very exciting to be working with one of the key founders of the narrow web converting industry, not only in founding L&L and working with Clive Smith to launch Labelexpo, but also in the industry reports Mike was writing and the conferences he organized which drove the strategies of both converters and manufacturers. Mike continued to be a mentor through my 20 years editing L&L and, with both of us living a few miles from each other, I am fortunate to still benefit from Mike's incomparable experience and knowledge."

Andy Thomas-Emans, Strategic Director, Tarsus Labels & Packaging Group



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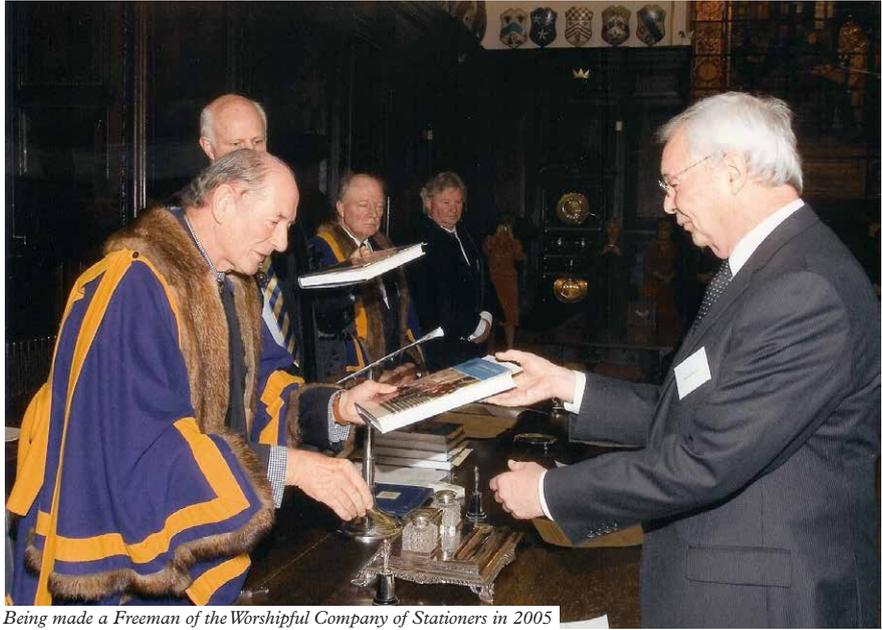
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“Mike’s expansive knowledge and global scope was invaluable to me when I joined the industry as a novice at the start of my career at RotoMetrics. Mike always respected the industry’s history whilst firmly pointing toward the future, whether in spotting and exploring printing and packaging technology trends or fostering geographies and cultures coming together to develop the global label and packaging businesses. He was quick to share information, eager to facilitate supplier and converter networking for the betterment of the industry, and an expert in providing actionable information rather than simply facts and figures. He was a keystone!”

Karen Moreland, RotoMetrics



Being made a Freeman of the Worshipful Company of Stationers in 2005

“Throughout the past half century, Mike has been a well-respected source of knowledge and inspiration, but above all the kind and interested gentleman who has become an inseparable part of the global label industry’s history.”

Jules Lejeune, Finat

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OUR EXPERIENCE...YOUR ADVANTAGE

“I first met Mike in the early 1980s when Labels & Labeling was in its infancy, and I was working with Edlon Machinery on the Gallus and Comco accounts. I spent many happy and informative hours in his company at the early Labelexpo shows and other industry events, along with his colleagues Barry Hunt, Tom Lewington, and a young Andy Thomas! We also had some cracking golf days at Moor Park – whatever happened to those? Most of all I’ve valued his friendship, loyalty and the endless knowledge he gives so generously. Many in the label industry have no concept of how much they owe Mike Fairley – he’s a ‘one-off’ and I feel privileged to have known and worked with him.”

Nick Coombes, The Publicity Studio

who are the company’s managers today.

Being at the forefront of helping to build and grow an industry has been both challenging and exciting.

A unique combination of earlier years in publishing, education, research, training, consultancy, writing and speaking all seemed to come together at the right time for an emerging and fast-growing self-adhesive label industry that needed information, help, advice, support and encouragement.

I would like to think that I have indeed played an interesting role as a kind of catalyst in both the growth and globalization of the label industry.

A dedicated label industry magazine

and exhibition, together with workshops, masterclasses, seminars, conferences, summits, the Label Academy, and the consultancy company support, have all come together over these past 50 years to help build a global label industry that is at the forefront of technological change, digital innovation and environmental evolution.

As I now come to the end of my 50 years in the world of labels, I can happily retire from the industry by being reassured that Labels & Labeling, The Label Academy, Labelexpo global shows and, of course, all aspects of label production and usage, are set to be in capable hands for the industry’s ongoing future and success.

May I, therefore, wish a fond farewell to all my many friends, colleagues, suppliers and converters in all the many countries I have visited, or have met at shows, association meetings, and through masterclasses and conferences. Indeed, wherever people who know me happen to be in the world of labels.

It has been a privilege to know and work with all of you during this historic time.



To read Mike Fairley’s past columns in *Labels & Labeling*, visit www.labelsandlabeling.com/contributors/michael-fairley

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Small brands are rising up and taking market share away from larger brands, presenting an exciting opportunity for packaging converters. Digital printing

allows smaller brands to order in limited quantities and accommodate multiple SKUs and versioning. They can also print vibrant, professional quality folding cartons that easily compete with the larger brands' packaging on crowded shelves. Packaging converters can take this opportunity to support small brands as they grow into larger brands. At the same time, they can help larger brands trying to compete via more SKUs, versioning, short-life seasonal packaging, and more.

Tap into more industries and applications with digital capabilities.

Packaging continues to grow. You can leverage the inherent advantages of HP Indigo digital technology to complement your offset production and address key needs in healthcare, confectionary, and personal care.

Of course, every industry is unique with different requirements and challenges. However, more agile digital production can help you accommodate these different needs and tap into new industries.

For example, some industries must adhere to government regulations, which creates additional challenges for converters.

Did you know? Over 50% of pharma and cosmetics brands face regulatory changes at least once a quarter.

Your ability to print short runs on-demand with HP Indigo can help you address these frequent changes.

LEP technology provides excellent quality and color matching, a wide gamut, and specialty inks that are food packaging safety compliant. The broad substrate range and bright high opacity white ink enables more applications. You can offer high-value jobs with multi-layer brand protection elements using invisible inks, variable data, and unique designs with HP SmartStream Mosaic, HP Collage, and the new HP Spark.



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As consumers and brands become more environmentally conscious, they're demanding more from converters. **Did you know? In a recent study, nearly 85% of converters reported that their customers were requesting sustainable products, manufacturing processes, or both.** Now is the time to gain business from environmentally conscious brands.

Digital production brings a new level of efficiency and sustainability to

folding carton production through reduced waste, lower energy emissions, and responsible printing. With digitalization you can easily print short runs on demand, avoiding obsolescence, minimizing waste, and preserving precious materials. **Did you know? You can save more than 90% in job set-up waste when you use HP Indigo which uses 7 sheets to get the right color versus 200 sheets with offset printing.**

Energy-efficient HP Indigo Digital Presses are shown to be significantly less environmentally damaging than traditional methods. HP Indigo's Electrolinks are certified for use on compostable packaging. HP Indigo Digital Presses are compatible with over 15,000 media carrying environmental credentials like FSC, PEFC, etc. Now is the perfect time to leverage HP's efforts to address the demand for increased sustainability in packaging.

Choose HP Indigo for digital expansion.

Did you know? **Digital folding cartons is a relatively untapped area with tremendous potential.** That's why incorporating digitalization into your existing production mix is not a matter of if, but when. It's important to note that the HP Indigo 35K Digital Press is the platform of choice for folding carton production.

HP has the knowledge, technology, and support capabilities to help you bring digital printing capabilities into your

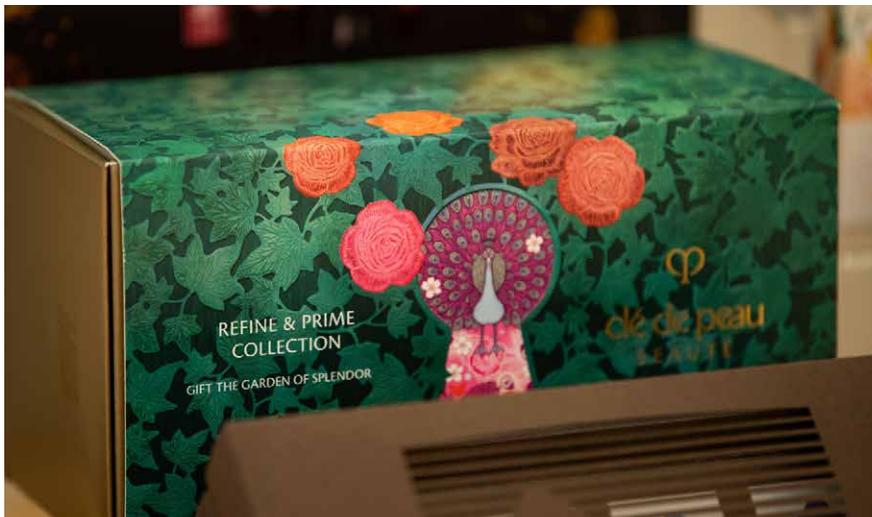
environment. HP Indigo technology has inherent advantages that complement offset production to meet packaging needs across industries. The HP Indigo 35K Digital Press, in particular, brings high productivity, color confidence, and ink and media versatility well suited for folding carton production.

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ahead to future evolutions. Adopting HP digital printing technology into your existing operations will only help complement today's production needs

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Q&A

Harveer Sahni, chairman of Weldon Celloplast has won the R Stanton Avery Global Achievement Award. In this interview with Akanksha Meena, Sahni takes us through his career and experiences in the label industry.

Labels & Labeling: Tell us about your career and how has Weldon Celloplast changed since its inception?

Harveer Sahni: Weldon Sales as a parental company was started by my father in 1939 as a stationary company. Weldon Celloplast, promoted by me, was established in 1982 but we were siliconizing since 1978.

The journey of the company is very long. We started a family glue and writing ink business. Initially, we were outsourcing some adhesive products from international companies. I joined the family business in the early 1970s. As a chemistry graduate, I started developing these outsourced products in our laboratory and produced the glues ourselves. We then migrated to industrial adhesives, especially for labeling applications and later moved on to corrugated board applications. At that time, pasting glue for corrugation would last just for seven days before becoming unusable. I started producing and offering a glue formulation that is still prevalent in the industry and offers guaranteed shelf life of two years.

These are the kind of changes I brought in Weldon. We developed different types of inks and office glues to package them we needed containers. Initially, we were using glass containers but in the late 1960s, when polyethylene was introduced in India, we started buying polyethylene and plastic containers to package our products. But then eventually I started molding myself for captive consumption.

I set up automatic injection and blow molding machines to produce containers, caps and plastic scales and later we started supplying these outside as well. At one time, we were the largest supplier of ketchup bottle caps to large multinational manufacturers. However, gradually we moved away from it because our interest was more focused toward stationary.

Panning further in stationery, we set up a coater to manufacture self-adhesive tapes. But immediately at that time, I saw there was a big demand for release paper and a supply shortage. Because of that, we started making release liners. That became a big success for us and the start of our journey in labels.

I started siliconizing and produced several kinds of silicone release papers. And that time, I noticed a substantial shift from wet glue to self-adhesive labels which caught my interest. I did some label manufacturing as well using manual screen printing in-house. And it was a very primitive screen-printing system, not at all how it is today. We made labels and did it well. But we found it too cumbersome and were losing focus on manufacturing other products that we were doing on the side.

Since some of our customers started producing release papers on their own, we started making labelstocks. Once multinational manufacturers started coming to India and taking away our market share, we had to rethink and change course again. We started exporting but when recession hit globally, we started moving out of producing labelstock. However, since we were able to retain our customer base of label printers. Finally, we started getting agencies of global machine suppliers so that we would retain our customers, we started getting agencies of global equipment and tooling manufacturers. That is the way the present structure of Weldon exists. Now we supply total label machinery from label presses, inspection systems, and tooling to corona treaters and more.

I don't look after day-to-day business now because my sons do that. My elder son is now the MD of Italian press manufacturer Omet's subsidiary in India, while my younger son looks after Weldon's business. I like to spend my time writing for the industry and networking. In this journey, I have seen the label industry's evolution in India. As I was growing, networking has always been my passion. I have been successful in striking relations not just in India but globally.

L&L: Why do you think you won the R Stanton Avery Global Achievement Award?

HS: The reasons for winning this award are many. Out of the

“The R Stanton Avery Global Achievement Award on the global level gives me immense satisfaction and justifies my endeavors in sharing my knowledge with the industry. It encourages me to continue working”

51 years I spent in business, 46 were spent in labels alone. One of the major reasons is leading changes in the label industry in India. When I started siliconizing, the silicone chemistries used in India were evolving and not consistent in quality in comparison to what we have today.

We moved on to a solventless silicone chemistry that is still used in India. And we led that change. Another thing that I was recognized for is innovating and adapting to change. Being a chemistry graduate, I could do things differently – I could analyze what was needed and keep innovating accordingly.

Right from stationery days, we were developing new products and things to do. Usually, release paper is used as a liner in a sticker. And liner initially was just glassine. We improvised and did poly-coated papers and then replaced poly with sustainable solutions. Sustainability was not an issue at that time, but we addressed it nonetheless. I developed barrier coatings and coatings that could accept siliconizing. These are a few examples of my innovations and adapting to the changing times. The biggest thing for me was staying connected with the global label industry. There was no internet back then. I used postal mail and letters to stay connected with industry peers. Learning was through reading. The biggest thing that helped me in my career was networking. In my family, we are six brothers, and all of us are very well connected in our industries. Friendships are very wide and that helps.

L&L: What does this award mean to you personally?

HS: In 2017, I received a similar award for lifetime support to Indian label industry from Label Manufacturers Association of India (LMAI). It was very good and 700 people gave me a standing ovation. The R Stanton Avery Global Achievement Award on the global level gives me immense satisfaction and justifies my endeavors in sharing my knowledge with the industry. It encourages me to continue working. When they give you an award such as this, it seems like an end of a journey but for me, it is not an end. It is an inspiration for generations that follow. They will find inspiration from this to network with industry friends and share their knowledge. When new technologies emerge in the market, the newcomers need to learn and sources such as my blog and L&L help them or else they learn when they network together. This award will provide them the inspiration to go out there and share their knowledge as well. It definitely means a lot to me.

L&L: What are some of the major highlights from your career?

HS: The biggest highlight of my career was accepting the changes that came along. If you are unable to accept changes, you will not be able to move on as stagnation is not good.

A very important highlight was being awarded the lifetime achievement award from LMAI and later the global achievement award. Another highlight was the string of incidents that led me to my connections worldwide like meeting Mike Fairley and Andy Thomas-Emans. I wrote an article for L&L at the beginning of the millennium. I felt encouraged to write further because of that. And bringing Andy to the first India label show which became Labelexpo

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Out of the 51 years Sahni has spent in business, 46 were spent in labels alone

“When they give you an award such as this, it seems like an end of a journey but for me, it is not an end. It is an inspiration for generations that follow”

India. My friendship with Douglas Emslie, Roger Pellow and Lisa Milburn was very vibrant, supportive and indulgent. And then making India Label Show a success and supporting Tarsus and Anil Arora, founder of India label show to come together were among the big highlights of my career.

L&L: What are some of the best lessons you’ve learned in your career?

HS: There are four major lessons I have learned. I had a platform that I inherited from which I later established Weldon Celloplast. Inheritance was just a stepping stone and not a story scripted in stone. One has to move out of that inheritance and do something on one’s own.

The second learning was that in case of disruptive times in business, one needs to move out of comfort zone. One must never be scared to do this because success comes to those who get out of their comfort zone. I was comfortable in stationary, but I moved out of it. I got comfortable in siliconizing but again, I moved out of there as well.

My passion and forte is networking. You are as valuable as your network. You should always be a giver and you can rise in life.

The final reason why I think I got the award is my willingness to learn and share my knowledge. It is key to be knowledgeable to be accepted and searched by the industry. You will be able to help others with your knowledge. If you are a giver, naturally the word spreads and you are accepted.

Marking your presence in all industry events is an important thing. I was the first Indian labelstock manufacturer to exhibit in Labelexpo Europe. It is one of the highlights of my career and another was being the first Indian to be on the Finat committees. I never shied away from sharing my knowledge. If someone comes to you with an idea, my thinking is eventually they will do it. But if you help them, they will remember, and it goes a long way. I tried to give back and I tried

to stay connected with small and big players in the industry.

L&L: What changes have you witnessed in the label industry?

HS: Until about a certain period, when printing evolved and self-adhesive labels that were invented by R Stanton Avery, the label industry in India was somewhat stable. Self-adhesive labels were being produced on a flat bed letterpress printing machine in roll form.

Changes started happening when flexo came in. There were a lot of changes in printing, converting and embellishment from letterpress to flexo to digital to hybrid.

Then the label application technology also changed over the years. It went from unsupported glue applied plain labels to self-adhesive to wrap around to shrink sleeves now linerless labels to digital on product.

In terms of speed, technology evolved right from earliest screen printed labels that were produced one label at a time in sheets to 5-7in wide slow flatbed presses in roll form. And they were doing 5-10m/min. Now there are flexo presses that can print over 200m/min and are going wider than 500mm. Even hybrid and digital label presses are printing over 100m per min now.

Waste matrix removal became more efficient as shapes got complex. Technology is changing every day.

L&L: What trends are you observing among your customers?

HS: I am noticing that large label printers who are growing have certain reservations about multinationals coming in the market with takeovers happening and posing intense competition. They are growing but are open to being acquired. The number of larger Indian label players of the industry is shrinking at the top level due to acquisitions and or mergers. There is constant worry about the return on large investments made in high-end printing and converting machines.

However, when you look at the other half of the industry or the bottom of triangle, they are now able to compete with the big players. The smaller-scale businesses, that make up the bigger portion of label printers, have also started growing steadily.

Local printing machine manufacturers are coming of age and getting acceptability. They are exporting as well. They are offering all kinds of modular presses and automation which is a very good sign.

However, there’s a concern that unless driven by print buyers or the need for innovation, Indian label converters do not take up high-cost investments. Most expansions are driven by print buyers or by forward-looking converters who innovate to get a better return on

products and higher margin.

L&L: The label industry is seeing a shortage of workforce. What can the industry do to attract young talent?

HS: Attracting young talent, training and retaining them is very important and the need of the hour. There are a few converters who have already set up training centers at their premises but that is not enough.

It is imperative to train different teams such as machine operators, sales and marketing on technology. Some universities in India provide training but there is no training available specific to labels. There is a need for label and packaging-related education. Today, due to intense competition, printers can no longer print simple labels and they need to innovate. They invest in high-end machinery but the return on investment is not what it used to be. This can be taken care of if converters are able to create labels that are different and add features that compel end-users to pick a product from the shelf. There is a need for a trained workforce that can produce such packaging.

When it comes to equipment, there is no training in place before employees join a manufacturer. Every supplier has to train its workforce individually depending on its product and technology. When an employee switches a company, they might not be able to perform in a new technical environment due to the difference and advancements in technology.

The top management is shrinking in large organizations in the industry due to acquisitions. They can afford highly paid trained employees at top management. But fresh blood is required at the lower-level jobs as well. There is a need for a system in place to attract young people to the industry.



Harveer Sahni, chairman of Weldon Celloplast

“I never shied away from sharing my knowledge. If someone comes to you with an idea, my thinking is eventually they will do it. But if you help them, they will remember and it goes a long way”

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Harveer Sahmi has won R Stanton Avery Global Achievement Award

The other issue is that a highly skilled employee is often poached due to a shortage of trained manpower in the industry. Weldon, fortunately, is a family business. So, we were not dependent on outside workforce. However, my elder son was hired by Omet, one of the manufacturers we represent. He is among the best-trained people in the industry as far as technology is concerned. He was trained by each of the manufacturers we represent. My younger son is also well-trained. We still have access to expertise through my sons. But getting people to replace us is an issue. Most of the companies in the label industry are family driven. As we grow, professionalism needs to

come and newly trained people need to be hired.

A lot of manufacturers do have training centers dedicated to their technology and products. But even though these training centers in place, converters are hesitant to send their employees. The moment their employees interact with each other, converters are afraid of trade secrets being shared. This is a concern that needs to be addressed. There is a need for a uniform end-to-end educational program from pre-press to finishing.

L&L: What are your hobbies and interests outside of work?

HS: My biggest passion after labels is cooking. Some time ago, I stopped posting personal photos on social media and now I mostly share my cooking posts.

My daughter-in-law comments that I can cook different dishes 365 days. And I do different ranges of food. For example, I can do a whole range of dishes without a drop of oil. I indulge in creating dry spice mixes for different dishes and you don't need anything else. They are still in the development stage.

Apart from that, I have recently started taking to gardening. We have a garden at home in front, back and at the rooftop. We grow a range of fruits and vegetables in our gardens such as mango, oranges and lemons and lots of flowers.

Spending time in the mountains is also something I enjoy. I go to the mountains every alternate month to spend two to three weeks. It is a beautiful and very good change for me.

And the best part of aging for me is playing with my grandchildren.



Turn to page 106 for more from the Label Industry Global Awards at Labelexpo Americas 2022

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Protection for fighting fakes

As counterfeiting continues to grow at a staggering rate, how does a company develop a brand protection strategy? Luis Rodriguez reports

Counterfeiting across the globe is at an all-time high. According to a 2019 report on international trade and counterfeiting by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the total value of counterfeit and pirated goods accounted for just over 3 percent of world trade, an estimated 590 billion USD. That number is expected to have nearly tripled, and is predicted to grow to a monumental 2.3 trillion USD by the end of 2022.

Looking at the past decade, there have been many factors that have influenced the growth of counterfeit goods. One of which is the rising use of e-commerce websites such as Amazon, Alibaba, Etsy and eBay.

In a 2021 report by Dharmesh Mehta, Amazon's vice president, worldwide selling partners services, the e-commerce giant detected, seized and destroyed more than two million counterfeit goods that were sent to its fulfillment centers. In the same report, Mehta mentioned that less than 0.01 percent of all products sold on Amazon received counterfeit complaints from customers. The company also has established its Counterfeit Crimes Unit which looks to 'build and refer cases to law enforcement, undertake independent investigations or joint investigations with brands, and pursue civil litigation against counterfeiters'.

Each of these e-commerce companies are working to combat the rising number of counterfeit goods across the world, cracking down on a number of listings that are alleged to be counterfeit and avoiding any future lawsuits from global, luxury brands such as Gucci and Yves Saint Laurent. This, however, comes at a time when consumers are beginning to be more skeptical of the authenticity of many products and not just luxury goods.

'In addition to the most common categories of counterfeited clothes and luxury products seized, because of the pandemic, there is a growing trade in fake products which has the potential risk on humans' health, such as counterfeit medicines, food and beverages, cosmetics and toys,' says Paola Iannone, vice president marketing and communications, and Nicolas Günther, managing director of

QR marketing – brand by All4Labels, in a report provided to L&L.

A study, carried out by Censuwide and sponsored by Digimarc, surveyed consumers across the UK and US to find out if their desire for authentic products isn't limited to only luxury items. The study found that 40 percent of consumers believe that online shopping has added to the sale of counterfeit goods. This study also found that 67 percent of consumers are worried about product authenticity when buying goods for their homes and families. Fifty-six percent of consumers are worried that they are purchasing new products that may actually be counterfeit.

In the United States, this worry came to fruition during an infant formula shortage in early 2022 when the market was flooded with counterfeit products packaged with forged labels. It left many parents with packages that were expired or formula that contained ingredients that could be dangerous to infants requiring a special diet due to certain allergies or intolerances.

In terms of brand protection and security, this, according to Michael Welch, senior product manager at Avery Dennison Label and Packaging Materials, is where brand owners should start taking notice of what protection methods they're using to ensure only legitimate products reach a consumer's home.

'For specific products, it's easy to take a more simplistic approach to brand protection. But for certain products, as the risk to the consumer is heightened, brands must think about what harm would come to the consumer if the products is tampered with,' says Welch.

This rise in counterfeiting and the growing concern from consumers about purchasing counterfeit goods has been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic. Due to the increased consumer demand, the shifting value chain and unpredictable supply chains, coupled with the subsequent shortages across many markets, counterfeiters have found new opportunities to trade in fake items, exploiting weaknesses by offering similar products at a lower-than-average price point.

'The Covid-19 pandemic has overwhelmed global business and, to date, has created the most substantial negative supply chain security effect in history,' notes the International Chamber of

“For specific products, it's easy to take a more simplistic approach to brand protection. But for certain products, as the risk to the consumer is heightened, brands have to think about what harm would come to the consumer if it's tampered with”

RFID offers for more than just security, bringing traceability to the product itself to see each step on its path in the supply chain



Commerce (ICC). 'The pandemic has also provided opportunities for criminal organizations that seek to take advantage of the rise in demand and subsequent shortages of parts and products. Reduced volume of genuine materials allows criminals to offer counterfeit raw materials that contaminate supply chains.'

Though this may sound like a defeatist mentality, that the rise in counterfeiting is an unstoppable force that cannot be combated, there are ways to slow down the progress. To ensure that a company's product and its brand are at least more difficult to counterfeit.

How to protect your brand

From fluorescent inks, to taggants, to frangible films, to RFID tags, there are several security-based products available on the market to protect brands. But how does a company decide which methods to implement?

With the number of options a company can choose from, it may be easy to fall into option paralysis, where the amount of decisions and choices to select from can make it overwhelming.

'There are a lot of factors to take into account when you're developing a brand protection strategy,' says Tessa Eastman, connected products strategist at Systech International, a company that develops software suites for authentication and traceability systems to combat counterfeiting, prevent diversion and meet regulatory compliance requirements. 'It's not enough to just put a hologram. What are you putting the holograms on? How do you know it's going to be secure? Will it solve your problems? Do you know what your problems are? It's a deeper conversation than just finding a solution itself. There are a lot of solutions out there offered by analog and digital providers.'

Avery Dennison, for instance, provides a wide range of products, both visible and invisible, as well as digital-based security methods like RFID and NFC. Finding the right security label always depends on the product itself and the level of security it needs.

For example, think of a container of orange juice. Typically,

"There is no silver bullet when it comes to brand protection. There is no single solution that will completely stop any counterfeiting"

over the top of the container is a sticker that is meant to be broken when the consumer opens it. Underneath that top is typically a piece of plastic or aluminum that needs to be peeled off before it can be poured. For this application, that level of protection is enough.

But for pharmaceuticals, where the risk of counterfeit products could literally mean life or death, the approach to protection is vastly different.

'Brand protection needs to be looked at on a case-by-case basis. As the price of the item goes up, so does the price of the tamper evidence products the brand owners are looking to use,' says Welch. He adds that to ensure a product doesn't get tampered with or faked, a layered approach towards brand protection is required. Utilizing a high-tech singular approach or visible and invisible protection makes it harder for a counterfeiter to figure out exactly what is happening on the label and/or packaging itself, thus making it harder to counterfeit.

Gerben van Wjik, sales and marketing director at Luminescence Sun Chemical Security, a manufacturer of security inks developing custom-made inks that meet the exacting technical requirements needed by its customers, shares a similar sentiment.

'There is no silver bullet when it comes to brand protection. There is no single solution that will completely stop any counterfeiting,' says Wjik. 'You have to look at the case itself and see where the problem is created – whether it's at the supply chain level or in the shop level – from here you have to look at what solves your issue.'

Figuring out where the flaws are in one's security can be a difficult task. But, Welch says, a layered approach can be a safe bet to ensure that the brand and product are protected. However, utilizing just visible or invisible security may not be the best approach.

'Any time you can have a layered approach to brand protection, it's a good thing,' says Eastman. 'In that layered approach, you should definitely recognize why you're using each layer of protection and whether they are really complimenting or augmenting each other and not just two features you've used just to use them.'

Systech developed e-Fingerprint, a product leveraging serialization. It utilizes a camera system installed onto the converting line to inspect and identify any sort of data carrier – such as QE-code to a UPC to a pharmaceutical data matrix – and to find the micro variations which are inherently caused by the printing processes.

'Within these data carriers, there are small micro variations that we can pick up on and create a unique digital identity for each individual unit without printing anything on it. Just leveraging what's already been printed,' says Eastman.

There are many different means of protecting a company's brand from counterfeiters, but, whether it's a smart system or an analog product, due to the nature of the supply chain – especially in its current state – there are going to be breaks. There are going to be moments where cargo is 'lost,' and these are the spots where counterfeiters will be able to ease their way into the supply chain.

Where protection matters

The brand protection puzzle doesn't begin and end with an ink, a

“Invest in a solution that makes financial sense for the product you are selling”

QR code, or any digital protection system. There are decisions from the brand owner, from the beginning of the lifecycle to its end, that need to be made which will ultimately decide whether the product being sold through e-commerce websites or even on the store shelves is legitimate.

“When thinking about brand protection there are two important aspects that brand owners should think about: why your brand needs protecting and how you should go about protecting it. Because half the battle when it comes to brand protection, isn’t just providing security ink, it’s about the factory the brands are giving the ink to,” says Tom Mitchell, international sales manager at Luminescence Sun Chemical Security.

He adds: ‘if the inks are just given to any factory and not a vetted, trusted one, then half the counterfeits will just come from the factory next door because sometimes all it takes is one employee and a hundred dollar offer.’

Because of this, brand owners need to use a trusted security printer, one that specializes in the application it is looking to use. Take, for example, All4Labels, which according to its report is ‘driven by a strong digital attitude and more than 25 years of experience in digital printing, reliable cross-market partner to support brand-owners to mitigate their brands’ risk exposure to counterfeit and to increase their sales and customers’ loyalty.’

All4Labels has been investing in the expansion of its intelligent QR technologies and cloud services to provide its customers with a cost-effective and quick product for brand protection and customer interaction on an international scale.

Welch gives the example of wine labeling, saying, ‘a singular solution could be a neck label on a bottle of spirits that has a smart label to detect if the cap has been tampered with - if the circuit breaks it will say bottle has been opened. This is unique in that there is really one point of entry. It also provides a form of authenticity since a unique idea could be attached to it.’

When looking at the growth of e-commerce and due to the high volume of online retail shopping especially post-Covid, brand owners can legitimately be sending their products over to these e-commerce giants, but it’s simply impossible for consumers to know whether a product is legitimate until after it hits their doorstep. This is where QR codes and smart labeling can come into play.

Allowing consumers to scan and authenticate the product ensures its legitimacy, and while, ‘if something is just printed with a QR code, its relatively easy to duplicate,’ says Welch. ‘A smart label using an embedded NFC inlay can store a unique identifier, so difficult to work around the security.’

These security features also allow consumers to engage with the brand, helping to garner brand loyalty and up the repurchase rates, while ensuring the reputation of a company’s brand.

At the end of the day, what is the answer to brand protection?

There is no single answer.

Depending on the product, multiple layers of analog and digital protections may be required. For a single product RFID, holograms, security inks, and e-fingerprinting may be the answer. For another, a hologram may be all it needs.

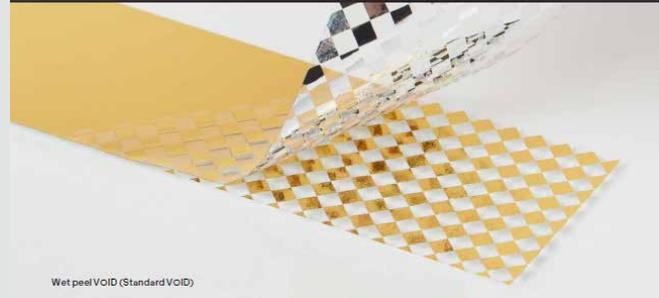
According to Welch, it is important to ‘invest in a solution that makes financial sense for the product you are selling.’



At All4Labels, the company looks to securely protect a company’s brand in the cloud



Dry peel VOID (Flexsecure)



Wet peel VOID (Standard VOID)



No residue VOID (Removable VOID)

A relatively simple yet effective form of security, VOID labels leave either a residue or marking to show that the product or packaging has been tampered with



Layering different forms of protection, from inks to holograms to smart features can ensure ample protection of a company’s brand

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Packaging sustainability: green is the new black

No longer just a buzzword, sustainability occupies a front-row seat in label and packaging materials development. Akanksha Meena reports

Tim Bohlke, director of sustainability at Resource Label Group, says brands without a sustainable packaging strategy need to start converting their portfolio now.

'If you're a brand owner, you want to have this on your radar. Consumers are educating themselves and getting smarter at the shelf. They are paying attention and asking, "Does this brand care about the environment?"'

Consumers first became ecologically conscious in the late 1960s and early 1970s, as worrying environmental signs such as land degradation, species extinction and atmospheric pollution became apparent.

In the 1990s new environmental problems including global warming, the 'ozone hole' and the Exxon Valdez oil spill led consumers to seek environmentally friendly alternatives in their purchases. In the 2000s, the ecological sensitivity of consumers skyrocketed.

A growing body of research shows consumers make purchasing decisions on environment-related grounds, preferring products that are biodegradable, CFC-free and organically grown.

The same research shows they are willing to pay higher prices for environmentally friendly goods. Further, many are shopping at nontraditional distribution outlets, such as organic food outlets, to purchase 'green' products.

These growing pressures from consumers, increasingly reflected in state and national legislation, have led brands to write sustainability into their corporate vision

"As we know, the label is typically not removed prior to consumers putting their recyclables in the bin, so it is important for brands to consider recycling in every element of the package. When compatible materials are chosen, the label can enhance the recyclability of the package"

and goals.

How2Recycle is a North America-based lobby group that brings together 225 brand and retailer members with the aim of reducing consumers' confusion about what can and cannot be recycled.

The group supports the development of a clear, well-understood and nationally harmonized label that enables companies to convey to consumers how to recycle a package, as well as improve the reliability, completeness and transparency of recyclability claims.

The Sustainable Packaging Coalition now reports that 56 percent of its member companies have publicly stated goals to make their packaging more recyclable, compostable and reusable.

Some 44 percent of the packaging that How2Recycle member companies have submitted for the program's review is currently recyclable.

Ashley Drew, sustainability manager, UPM Raflatac says that the company is approaching its sustainability objectives from different angles, including increasing the percentage of post-consumer recycled

content in its labels, both films and paper, and in the face stock and liner. This is particularly important for brands working towards recycled content goals and supporting the circular economy.

Drew says recyclability must be considered from a holistic perspective when designing a recycling-ready package.

'As we know, the label is typically not removed prior to consumers putting their recyclables in the bin, so it is important for brands to consider recycling in every element of the package (packaging type, closures, labels, inks, decoration). When compatible materials are chosen, the label can enhance the recyclability of the package to ensure we are enabling the highest possible recycling outcomes. On the liner side, paper and PET liner is considered recyclable, however, this will vary among different geographic regions, and is dependent on local recycling infrastructure and capabilities, so we recommend checking with your local recycler.'

UPM Raflatac is focusing heavily on providing recycle-compatible materials for a variety of substrates and educating



Amit Shah, joint president and CMO, Flexible Packaging, UFlex



Coveris has developed fully recyclable packaging, MonoFlexE, for Aldi's store brand rice



Jindal has introduced new high-barrier Ethy-Lyte films, which can be adopted in the flexible packaging market as PE printing films for recyclable mono-PE structures

Material recycling in India

Amit Shah, joint president and CMO at flexible packaging specialist UFlex, explains that the Indian government has introduced important directives for plastic and flexible packaging.

In the past, plastic waste was ultimately incinerated instead of being recycled. Under EPR regulations the partners in the packaging chain would provide certification to brand owners based on the quantity of material disposed of.

'But now the regulation is different. It clearly emphasizes the element pertaining to recyclability. It has been clearly laid out that you have to recycle 70 percent of the plastic quantity that you're buying.' Uflex has set up a pilot recycling plant in Noida, and all its plants are equipped with plastic reprocessing facilities.

The new version of the plastic waste management rules states that brand owners using biodegradable materials will be absolved from their Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) obligations.

Shah notes that in India 80 percent of the flexible packaging manufactured is for low-volume, low-cost packs, meaning that plastic material becomes difficult to collect for reprocessing.



Eco Flexibles has developed recyclable flexible packaging for Lantmännen Unibake

“The government has introduced clear directives for plastic and flexible packaging [in India]. The latest draft of the plastic waste management rules enforces the expectation from the brand owners, producers and manufacturers”

customers and brands on how to design for recyclability.

In general, within the Americas market recycling infrastructure does have limitations, says Drew.

'So this is a consideration when working towards increasing recycling rates. Recycling capabilities and availability vary from region to region. UPM is working towards creating a better, more circular economy for plastics and paper packaging materials. Recycled content is generally calculated on a mass balance basis within the PCR market, so what we can do is ensure we have third-party validation of the percentage PCR content that we are using in our products.'

She continues: 'One other way to influence this system is to ensure this high-value material stays within our value chain. As part of our strategy, we collaborate and want to continue to grow in our partnerships with recyclers so that we can work together to create a more circular economy.'

Masaaki Yoshitake, executive general manager, printing and variable information products operations at Lintec, says the company is committed to reducing the consumption of plastic materials along with

reducing carbon dioxide emissions.

The company has developed products made from post-consumer waste, increased its range of biodegradable materials, and developed paper-based alternatives to plastic using its specialty production technology.

Lintec has also developed new approaches to encourage the recycling and reuse of plastic containers, including a new generation of hotmelt adhesives that do not contain any organic solvents and will release from the container surface in recycling systems. Lintec is also working to establish a paper and film release liner recycling system.

Flexible packaging goes green

Label converters diversifying into flexible packaging are often faced with using nonrecyclable multi-layer constructions. However, this situation is changing fast as suppliers of flexible packaging develop more sustainable materials with similar mechanical characteristics.

UK-based Eco Flexibles, for example, has developed a recyclable surface-printed mono-polymer film for Lantmännen Unibake, one of Europe's largest bakery groups.

Sun Chemical has collaborated with HP to launch more sustainable flexible packaging produced with HP's Indigo 25K digital press and Sun Chemical's new SunLam solventless lamination process.

As part of the partnership, Sun Chemical and HP developed stand-up pouches printed on mono-material polyethylene (PE) and polypropylene (PP) substrates and laminated with Sun Chemical's SunLam technology. The pouch was certified by Germany's Institute Cyclos-HTP for a recyclability rate of 96 percent.

Packaging manufacturer Coveris has teamed up with one of the UK's largest rice suppliers, Veetee, to launch fully recyclable packaging called MonoFlexE, for Aldi's store-brand rice. With the new packaging, Coveris supports the retailer's target to have all its own-label packaging certified as reusable, recyclable or compostable by the end of the year.

Previously packed in a nonrecyclable, OPP/PE mixed laminate, Aldi has switched to Coveris' fully recyclable MonoFlexE monomaterial PE/PE laminate packaging for its own-brand Worldwide Foods 1kg basmati rice and 1kg brown rice SKUs. The move to MonoFlexE will enable about 30 tons of film to enter the plastic recycling

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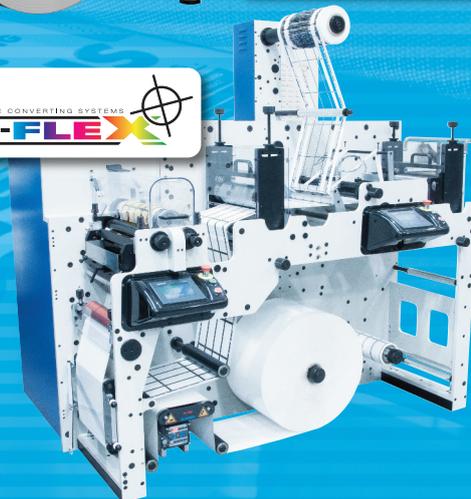
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Mondi recognized by the Swiss Packaging Institute (SVI) for its RetortPouch Recyclable pouch



Mondi has developed a recyclable high-barrier packaging for Norwegian pet food manufacturer Felleskjøpet

“India is a low unit pack market which means that 80 percent flexible packaging manufactured in the country is low volume packs priced low to enable a larger part of the population to consume a product. The challenge that emanates is that plastic material becomes difficult to collect and reprocess”

stream annually.

Flexible packaging manufacturer Emsur has launched its Ecoem-Sleeves range of sustainable shrink sleeves,

The range includes the Ecoem-Full PET sleeve, which is based on a combination of films and washable inks that can be mixed and recycled with PET bottles without any clumping of residues or interruption in the drying and decontamination process.

The Ecoem-Full PET sleeve has APR certification for washable inks – preventing discoloration of the flakes from the recycled PET bottles – and can include post-consumer recycled content.

Another sleeve in the range is Emfull, manufactured from polyolefin-based material which can also include post-consumer waste.

The film's floatability properties allow the sleeve to be separated directly from the bottle during the washing phase of the recycling process. The product range features other materials such as PETG.

Mondi has been recognized by the Swiss Packaging Institute (SVI) for its RetortPouch Recyclable pouch. The packaging won the Swiss Packaging Award in the Sustainability category and was developed for Coop's private label range of healthy pulses and grains sold in Switzerland. RetortPouch Recyclable is made of a polypropylene (PP)-based mono-material and is claimed capable of replacing complex multilayer packaging

that uses aluminum or metalized layers to provide high-barrier food protection.

Mondi has also developed FlexiBag Recyclable, a recyclable high-barrier packaging material now being used by Norwegian pet food manufacturer Felleskjøpet for the relaunch of its Appetitt range of dry cat and dog foods. FlexiBag Recyclable is a mono-material polyethylene (PE) and again replaces multi-layer packaging, delivering packaging constructions. It is designed for recycling according to CEFlex D4ACE guidelines and is recyclable in existing Norwegian plastic recycling streams.

Jindal has introduced PE-based high-barrier Ethy-Lyte films, which can be used as substitutes for conventional polyester or nylon printing films in lamination with PE films, thus creating fully recyclable mono-PE packaging.

The new generation of films includes 25HD800, a 25µm transparent, high-barrier BOPE printing film, one side coated with EVOH.

The film provides gas and aroma protection and is designed to be used as an outer printing web to be laminated with PE sealing films for creating recyclable, two-ply mono-PE laminates.

25HDM285 is a 25µm metalized, high-barrier BOPE lamination film, one side metalized and treated on the other. The film provides gas and aroma protection and is designed to be used as a mid-layer

in three-ply mono-PE laminates. This film is a substitute for conventional metalized PET or aluminum films resulting in fully recyclable mono-PE laminates.

Sustainable paper

Fedrigoni is now producing a range of multi-use paper products for industries ranging from fashion and food to personal care. Materia Viva Metamorphosis products are treated to maintain some characteristics of plastic without the need for lamination while remaining fully recyclable.

Mondi has collaborated with converter Fiorini International to create new paper-based packaging for Antico Pastificio Umbro, an Italian manufacturer of premium pasta products. The new packaging is fully recyclable and will eliminate up to 20 tons of plastic annually. The new paper bag design with a large window made of transparent, recyclable and biodegradable cellulose allows the end user to see the contents.

The bag is entirely recyclable while offering the same protective properties as the previous plastic packaging.

UPM Specialty Papers has expanded its selection of sustainable packaging papers with UPM Confidio and UPM Confidio Pro combining moisture, and grease resistance with heat-sealing properties.

Made from renewable fibers, UPM Confidio and UPM Confidio Pro are repulpable and designed to be recycled in regular fiber recycling streams.

Sustainable flexible packaging specialist Parkside has collaborated with UK-based supermarket chain Iceland to deliver what is claimed a world first paper-based recyclable pack for frozen food.

The packaging has been designed for the supermarket's Northcoast range of frozen seafood, previously packed in an LDPE bag.



To read more about a sustainable initiative for plastic waste, read an article on gasification on page 63

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Gasification promises solution to landfill crisis

A pilot project run by the University of Florida has demonstrated that gasification plants can recover chemical feedstock from mixed packaging waste. Now a consortium of packaging groups aims to scale the process up, as Andy Thomas-Emans reports

A 400-year-old technology to derive flammable gas from fossil fuels could provide the key to sustainability for today's label and packaging industries, according to a presentation by the Consortium for Waste Circularity (CWC) delivered at the TLMI Eco Stage at Labelexpo Americas.

The Consortium vision proposes using demonstrated pilot robust gasification technology at a landfill site to transform all unrecycled organic waste into methanol - the precursor for manufacturing plastics.

The principles of gasification were established in the 1600s when experimenters discovered that heating organic materials to temperatures above 700degC with a controlled amount of oxygen or steam breaks their molecular bonds to produce synthetic gas, or syngas, consisting of carbon and hydrogen.

By the 1850s, coal-based gasification was producing 'town gas' that powered streetlights in cities across the US and Europe.

In principle, everything that can be made from fossil fuels can also be made from syngas. Syngas can be converted into feedstock chemicals such as methanol, ethanol, dimethyl ether and acetic acid to be used for subsequent synthesis by the chemical industry.

Ancient principles for today's problems

The Consortium for Waste Circularity employs a more advanced form of gasification technology, though still based on the same fundamental principles, called robust gasification. This process achieves higher temperatures than previous gasification – in excess of 2,000degC. At these temperatures, organic chemical bonds are broken, and inorganic materials are melted down. Carbon-rich organics are primarily converted into syngas while metals and inorganic oxides, primarily metals and glass, are melted down and recovered as ingots and glassy materials. All these products become feedstocks for subsequent value-added commercial applications.

There are two key innovations in the business model pursued by the CWC. Firstly, to co-locate the gasification plant with landfills to provide an almost limitless amount of feedstock, and secondly to sell the methanol (called Eco-Methanol) derived from syngas to the plastics industry. Methanol can be used as a feedstock for manufacturing plastics.

Plastics produced from syngas-derived eco-methanol are 'virgin' plastics with the same quality and properties as plastics produced from fossil fuels. 'Waste-to-syngas-to-methanol-to-plastics offers a true pathway to the sustainable circular economy,' proclaims Mike Ferrari, president of the Consortium for Waste Circularity.

Ferrari points out that some 85 percent of landfill volume consists of organic waste, which includes mixed packaging waste.

Because gasification is not incineration – the chemical bonds are broken at a temperature below the combustion point - there are no smokestacks, few carbon emissions and no toxic ash, all typical by-products of incineration.

Pilot program

The technology has been used commercially to treat hazardous chemical and medical wastes. The CWC has been working with Professor Bruce Welt at the University of Florida to arrange

“Any other model of collecting and processing packaging waste is just chopping at the edges”

pilot-scale trials for packaging industry stakeholders. Trials are proving the promise of the process's robustness.

Ferrari says, 'to date, no material has been refused, and all trials, even those laden with chlorinated barrier polymer, PVDC, have been successful.'

Robust gasification can accept all organic waste including food, corrugate, paper, multi-layer packages, with fitments, unwashed peanut butter jars, flexo plates, all plastic films regardless of layers, metallization, chlorine, PFAS, etc. All organic feedstock with no exception can produce syngas and resulting in post-consumer recycled-content Eco-Methanol.

By co-locating regenerative robust gasification facilities at landfills, landfill gas (methane) can be collected to power the process. Additionally, landfill area is freed up, potentially to install solar power to also power the gasification process.

'The real breakthrough idea is that you co-locate regenerative gasification plants with a landfill making this compatible with all current recycling streams,' Ferrari says. 'So whatever comes to the landfill can be processed and the logistics are already in place,' says Ferrari.

'We are taking any kind of mixed label and packaging waste. It does not have to be pre-sorted and everything can be recovered without any harmful emissions. Any other model of collecting and processing packaging waste is just chopping away at the edges.'

One of the most difficult packaging-related products to recycle is the flexo plate.

MacDermid engaged the University of Florida to test its flexo plates that were sent to a laboratory size robust gasifier where they were successfully processed. 'And those plates were contaminated with inks when they were shredded and fed to the gasification plant,' Ferrari points out.

The Consortium for Waste Circularity is now seeking private equity backing to create the first commercial scale plant at a landfill sites across Florida to prove the concept at scale. Founder members of the CWC are the Flexible Packaging Association, Belmark, the PPI Technologies Group, Sixto Packaging, Tamperguard, Intertape Polymer Group (IPG) and Tempo Flexible Packaging.

Ferrari speaks passionately about why the gasification project needs to succeed.

'Firstly, our major cities are rapidly running out of landfill space and in many cases are trucking waste to other states for burial. Secondly, landfills are the third biggest source of CO2 emissions globally. Other carbon-intensive industries like aerospace have already committed to net zero carbon and the packaging and waste industries need to make a similar commitment.'



To find out more about the Consortium for Waste Circularity's work, visit wastecircularity.org

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AWA takes on flexible packaging

Alexander Watson Associates held a two-day conference covering label and packaging platform, featuring a pouch converting seminar for the first time. Luis Rodriguez reports

Alexander Watson Associates (AWA) held a two-day seminar featuring presentations from speakers across the label and packaging industry highlighting market trends, challenges and improvement opportunities for converters.

Coinciding with Labelexpo Americas 2022, the seminar took place at the Hyatt Rosemont on September 11-12.

“Companies are actively looking to invest in converters that can add flexible packaging to their business portfolio”

Each seminar had its own variation of the label and packaging industry's shift to find sustainable materials to create a more circular economy.

For example, Dr Ashish Datt, flexible packaging sustainability technology senior manager at Siegwerk, spoke about an easier deinking method and the creation of mono-material pouches to ease the recycling processes.

Many converters in the North American label industry are looking to expand their offerings and have added or are looking to add flexible packaging capabilities.

According to Mordor Intelligence, the North American flexible packaging market was valued at 40.70 billion USD in 2020 and is estimated to reach 47.58 billion by 2026.

AWA statistics show that the overall growth in the flexible packaging market in Q3-2022 for Europe and North America represented 2.7 percent and 3.3 percent growth respectively, whereas Asia maintains the highest growth rate with 4.2 percent during that same period. This growth was due, in part, to the Covid-19 pandemic when online food and household chemical shopping was on the rise. The lightweight nature of the packaging also appeals to the brands owners because of transport costs savings. AWA also says that flexible pouches showed more than a 60 percent lower environmental impact than its rigid alternatives.

Shift into flexible packaging

Speakers from across the industry covered the flexible packaging landscape, showing how or why converters should consider adding pouch converting.

Sam Schlaich, counsel, government affairs at Flexible Packaging Association, says the flexible packaging industry has maintained steady growth and future projections show further growth patterns. However, considering recent inflation rates, revenue and profits may be slightly lesser than in previous years.

Schlaich says that many of the larger label converting companies are looking to acquire printers with flexible packaging capabilities.

‘Companies are actively looking to invest in converters that can add flexible packaging to their business portfolio,’ Schlaich says. ‘These companies see a future in flexible packaging, they can see that it's only getting bigger, it's not going anywhere.’

According to Thomas Blaige, president and CEO of Blaige & Company, over the past 21 years the number of M&A deals in the industrial, packaging and raw materials sectors have doubled, creating a difficult environment for the mid-size and



The Packaging Lab's presentation at the AWA event looked to show potential pouch converters how to get into flexible packaging

local converters.

‘There's been a lot of consolidation among the large companies, but not as much in the big and small-cap companies. This means there's a lot of pressure on the small to midsize converters because the big companies are only getting bigger, leaving it harder to compete,’ Blaige says.

And although many converters are adding flexible packaging to their offering, Dan Niblo, CEO, and Jeff Searson, COO of The Packaging Lab, think that the addition of flexible packaging isn't very simple.

What to expect when you're expanding

‘When we first started out, we had this beautiful image in our heads on how quickly we could produce products and how easy it would be, but as we started making inquiries, we started to realize how difficult it was. We even had equipment manufacturers asking us if we really wanted to get into making pouches,’ says Searson.

Niblo adds that ‘it's critical for converters to find where their value to the market is. Whether you want to be the fastest, the cheapest, or just to be able to offer the all-around package, you still need to be aware of what's happening in the market right now.’

Niblo also recommends partnerships with companies already equipped for pouch-converting. This, at least to start, would help ease the capital investment and by giving converters solid ground to start with.

‘There's kind of a hybrid loop to getting into pouch converting,’ says Searson. ‘We had a customer which, from the start of our conversations, said that it was using us to roll its market share until it get to the point when it could justify purchasing the equipment.’

For equipment alone, The Packaging Lab spent around 4 million USD, which can be a major hurdle, on top of the long learning curve that's necessary to operate the equipment, but there are benefits to this situation.

‘Once you make the capital investment, you'll have full control over the production, the equipment, and the costs,’ adds Searson. ‘The equipment can be complex and hiring the necessary personnel can also be a headache, but at the end of the day, if you can do all of the converting in-house, then that would be great for your operation.’



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Accu-Label installs Durst Tau RSCi

Accu-Label has added a Durst Tau RSCi to its fleet, the first installation of Durst Group's digital press in the North American market. Luis Rodriguez reports

Accu-Label, a custom pressure-sensitive label converter based in Fort Wayne, Indiana, is a relatively new entrant in the digital arena, making its first installation in 2014 with a Xeikon 3500 digital press. Not long after that installation, the company saw roughly 40 percent of its volume move from flexo to digital.

In just a year, Accu-Label was ready for its second digital press, a Xeikon CX3, becoming the first installation in North America and one of three pilot sites worldwide to have the press installed in its facilities.

Now, in a push to drive its digital transformation further forward, Accu-Label has become another first in the North American digital market.

In mid-2021, the company became Durst Group's first North American label converter using the Tau RSCi digital press.

During Covid, while revenue was up for many companies across the globe, there were many other problems concerning workforce and supplies, and as the pandemic continued, many of these issues were exacerbated.

At Accu-Label, the installation of Durst's digital press came during a time when the company was going through some difficulties, causing internal struggles across Accu-Label to the point where the company wasn't sure it would be able to keep its doors open if things continued down the path it was ambling toward.

'The Tau RSCi press itself is really quite good, it basically does everything we need, it's been a really good fit for us,' says Catie Manning-Ewald, creative and marketing director at Accu-Label, adding that the company may not have been able to survive Covid without the installation of the Durst press.

Currently, Durst Tau RSCi is available in 12in, 16in and 20in versions. Accu-Label opted for the 20in model to maximize label production productivity. Manning-Ewald says it allows the company to use the press for whatever jobs may come its way. The Tau RSCi is capable of print speeds up to 100m/min (80m/min at full resolution) with a resolution of up to 1,200 DPI.

After the Tau RSCi installation, which happened in a relatively short amount of time, the company was able to bounce back in no time, says Manning-Ewald.

Due in part to the speed, some jobs that traditionally ran on flexo at Accu-Label, have now transitioned to run on the Durst digital press because, according to Manning-Ewald, 'we've been seeing so much turnover with art, and if somebody is running reruns with art and they have changes, you just can't keep up with that on flexo.'

For the company, pressure-sensitive labels have been its bread and butter, covering everything from blank labels, to one- or two-color labels and highly decorated and complex jobs with added finishes. Much of these, especially the simpler labels, would traditionally be run on one of the company's Mark Andy flexo presses, but the addition of the Tau RSCi has somewhat changed its business and the way the company approaches its use of the digital press.

There has been a significant shift in the company's digital-to-flexo ratio, where before the installation, it was around a 50/50 split between both systems. However, the Tau RSCi pushed digital well ahead of flexo bringing the ratio to around a 75/25 split,



After 35 years in business, Accu-Label continues to keep up with its family-first and customer-oriented business vision

“The Tau RSCi press itself is really quite good, basically does everything we need, it's been a really good fit for us”

according to Manning-Ewald.

She adds that, as Accu-Label is still learning about its new digital press, the ratio could continue to fall heavier on the digital side.

This shift is partially due to the high speeds of the Durst digital press, but the choice to go with the Tau RSCi was not made solely on the speeds and resolution of the press. One of the main factors Accu-Label based its decision was the support from the machine manufacturer. Though Durst Group is headquartered in Brixen, Italy, the company has spent several years expanding its global reach, and its accessibility in the US was one of the reasons that drove Accu-Label's decision to partner with Durst.

'Service is a big thing in making sure our presses are up and running,' says Manning-Ewald. 'And with Durst's growing client base in the US, the team was very attentive and really guided us through what could've been a difficult learning experience.'

When it comes to a new installation of a machine a converter hasn't touched before, service doesn't just mean fixing something when or if it breaks down, it means helping the company – operators in particular – get accustomed with the new press, and learn the ins and outs of how the press works.

Now, in comparison to flexo presses, the learning curve for a digital system is relatively lower, but on the graphics and pre-press side, ensuring the digital press is set up correctly is key.

For Accu-Label, Durst sent a representative for a week to ensure that everyone from its pre-press department to its press operators knew exactly how to manage the Tau RSCi press. He explained the technology and how to troubleshoot common and complex problems if they do arise. Accu-Label found, especially in transitioning some work from flexo to digital, that it was a relatively easy change.

'Taking a flexo file and transferring over some of the concepts to digital is somewhat of a trip, but it was very easy to get there. With flexo you have to burn the plates before you can even run

tests, sometimes having to go back and make changes, it becomes a labor-intensive process, but obviously, being a digital press, the Tau doesn't have this problem which has made things much easier for us,' says Manning-Ewald

Maintaining a vision

Since the business was founded in the garage of Accu-Label president, Dave Manning, in 1987 with a 7in Allied Gear press, the company has developed a vision of being family-centered and dedicated to surpassing the expectations of its customers.

In 1989, as the ambition of the founders and the work being done could no longer be supported in the garage space, the company moved to a larger facility, added another press, and hired more employees.

And in 1996, the company moved to its current 38,000sqft facility, where that Allied Gear press is still chugging along and printing jobs that make sense to run on the press.

Accu-Label still holds the family-first vision. Four of Manning's children work at Accu-Label in some capacity, with cousins, nieces and nephews coming in and working as well. Accu-Label operates as a true family business.

'We have a really great dynamic that works out in our favor,' says Manning-Ewald. 'We're in kind of a unique situation, I think, where we even have cousins who come and work for the summer and help. I think we're really fortunate in that regard.'

With roughly 25 employees working at Accu-Label today, the company operates with a swath of both digital and flexographic presses.

On the digital end, the company runs both the Xeikon CX3 and Durst Tau RSCi at full capacity, but it also runs flexo on the Allied Gear press, a Mark Andy Performance Series P7, a Mark Andy 2200 and a Mark Andy 4150.

The company also operates converting equipment from AB Graphic International and Grafisk Maskinfabrik.

Accu-Label runs a very tight fleet, only adding to it when it makes sense.

'Our success doesn't just come from adding a new press, and if you look at the scope of any company's success, it's really determined on how well it knows what it needs. My dad, my brother and sister are very keen on knowing what our company exactly needs,' says Manning-Ewald.

At Accu-Label, there are multiple questions the Manning family asks itself before making a capital investment.

For one, it needs to know whether there are benefits to investing in new equipment. Will a new piece of machinery add anything to its shop floor? Will it make its operators' jobs easier, or will it be more difficult to run? And finally, will it add anything for its customers, or will the quality be compromised in the long run?

And while Accu-Label's purchase of the Durst press was made at a time when the company was looking to retire other systems on its shop floor, it was not made on a whim. The company did its due diligence, talking with peers, and conducting extensive research beforehand to make sure that the Durst press was the right fit not only for the company, but what it can provide to its customers, and whether the press will allow Accu-Label to be more efficient.

'We knew that we needed stability on our digital end,' says Manning-Ewald.

She adds that due to the Xeikon toner-based digital presses it already had, Accu-Label was ready to start its search on the inkjet side of the digital press business.

'We also wanted to know if it can get jobs done right and efficiently because, at the end of the day, that is what's important.'



While learning a new workflow is always a task, Accu-Label says they were able to get a hold of the machine in less than a few weeks

“We have a really great dynamic that works out in our favor. We're in kind of a unique situation, I think, where we even have cousins who come and work for the summer and help. I think we're really fortunate in that regard”

Second of firsts

The installation of Durst Group's Tau RSCi isn't the company's first the North American installation.

Accu-Label was part of Xeikon's pilot program for its new toner-based press and became the first North American converter to install the Cheetah digital system in 2015. The other two were placed in CS Labels and Mercian Label, both based in the UK.

Running at a top speed of 30m/min, the Cheetah was among the fastest digital presses on the market at the time, but speed, like with the Tau RSCi, wasn't the company's sole reason for the installation.

Accu-Label's purchase was a response to evolving client demands and expansions into new markets.

'Of course, speed was a big consideration, but there was more. We are a company that has always been dedicated to providing the best quality printing and a high level of service. For us, it doesn't matter how fast a press goes if we can't deliver a quality product,' says David Manning, president at Accu-Label, at the time of the installation.

This press was complemented by Accu-Label's Xeikon 3500, which was installed in 2014.



For more information on Accu-Label, visit www.acculabel.com

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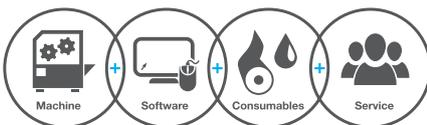
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Opportunities in Asia-Pacific

The Asia-Pacific region tops innumerable market growth projections. It is a robust economy that quickly defeats challenges and seizes opportunities. Piotr Wnuk reports

For many, Asia Pacific is a faraway holiday land with ancient traditions, flavorsome food and welcoming people. It might be a distant land, but it struggles with similar challenges and seizes the same opportunities as more mature markets.

According to the Knowledge Sourcing Intelligence report published in September 2022, the Asia Pacific (APAC) print labels market was valued at 15.778 billion USD in 2020 and is expected to grow at a CAGR of 7.34 percent to reach a market size of 25.092 billion USD by 2027.

The CAGR percentage might not seem impressive initially. Still, compared with the 3.02 percent and 3.47 percent growth prognosis for North America and EMEA, it becomes clear why some of the significant label market players increased their presence in the region.

High economic growth in emerging economies, rising disposable income, and growing health awareness are some of the key factors augmenting the demand for packaged food and beverage products, which boosts the demand for print labels in the region.

Several countries in the Asia-Pacific region were significantly affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. The shutdown of various factories affected global supply chains and negatively impacted manufacturing, delivery schedules and raw material sales. Additionally, sealed borders made it difficult to procure raw materials such as ink, label stock, plates and dies.

Long Covid or fast recovery

'The global economic outlook during the pandemic saw a decrease in gross domestic product and supply chain challenges,' says Singapore-based Arnon Goldman, general manager for HP in Asia Pacific. 'As a result, the print industry was impacted by lower demand and volume slowdown. We immediately set out focused plans to support our customers and partners aimed at business continuity and the needs of customers. Since then, we have seen many of our print service providers (PSPs) demonstrate business agility and a quick reaction to ever-changing market demands by shifting more volume to digital print and leveraging the versatility of our presses to offer new types of products and services.'

'I believe that many companies faced the same issues with longer delivery times beyond their control,' agrees Lena Chmielewska-Bontron, European marketing manager at press manufacturer Mark Andy. 'This meant we all had to change our logistics and supply chains. The advantage for Mark Andy was that most elements are produced in-house at our factory in St Louis, USA.'

The pandemic affected the regional labels market as consumption and demand plummeted due to government restrictions and businesses closing.

'The impact of the pandemic on business has been a mixed bag, varying by segment and country. In general, we saw a rise in demand in the tag and label sector and flexible packaging,' adds Roy Schoettle, vice president of the Asia-Pacific region at XSYS. 'This was largely driven by the high demand for pharmaceutical and sanitary products and by the rise in at-home consumption of packaged goods. However, other areas, such as the beverage industry, dropped. From a regional perspective, China performed strongly, whereas India, for example, experienced a decline.'

'In general, our business has remained resilient despite the impact of government lockdowns,' says Benjamart Fagg (Jane Tan), managing director of Press Systems Group (PSG), a Thailand-based

supplier of UV LED systems. 'The restrictions on travel led to a downturn in the leisure and tourism sector, and as a consequence, we've seen a divergence in demand trends across different sectors. The hygiene and pharma sectors have been solid and the retail food and drink sector performed better than expected.'

Thai KK, a major label and adhesive tape manufacturer, faced a much lower demand for self-adhesive labels for the food industry. However, it could keep a stable volume by supplying more to converters producing labels for the pharmaceutical, home and personal care, and digital advertisement industries.

'A big number of brand owners were supplying labels to specific verticals such as healthcare, retail, home, personal care and education before the pandemic unfolded,' comments Chawaeng Uvimolchai, CEO of Thai KK Industries. 'Now, as businesses have reopened, many brand owners are getting more traction and demand on social distancing labels, smart labels, touchless transactions, etc. We were also able to capitalize on this opportunity during the pandemic.'

Challenges and opportunities for growth

APAC is undoubtedly a rising market with great potential. Although the pandemic has negatively influenced its economy, the region is showing strong economic growth again. It is listed as one of the fastest-growing markets globally, with indicators way above other more mature markets like North America or Western Europe.

'Regional companies will embrace the opportunity for growth and will know that it represents both an advantage and a challenge,' says Jake Roberts, sales director of Sandon Global. 'The advantage will lie in the increased revenue opportunities, but that will, of course, be countered by the challenges. Elsewhere in the world, we've already seen increasing demand for shorter-run work, with fast turnaround expectations and a greater variation in print quality demands. As the market grows, so do these more exacting requirements and increasing quality standards, all of which require technical know-how and agility to uphold consistently.'

'The growth provides a good incentive for companies to invest in the region. The APAC region is characterized by its large population, rising living standards and urbanization trends,' notes Jane Tan of Press Systems Group. 'These are the principal factors driving consumption across all aspects of the packaging market. Overall penetration of supermarkets and convenience stores is relatively low compared with more mature markets. Therefore, there is sustainable growth potential in PSG's key markets, which include Vietnam, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand and Malaysia.'

XSYS, on the other hand, warns that high growth also presents various challenges for individual companies, including PSPs. 'The main challenge for regional companies would be staff retention, new recruitment, and staff training and development. Like in the rest of the world, the conditions are tough in the Asia-Pacific region at the moment with severe cost pressures,



“The impact of the pandemic on business has been a mixed bag, varying by segment and country. In general, we saw a rise in demand in the tag and label sector and flexible packaging”

fast-rising energy costs, supply chain issues and lack of highly skilled staff making life difficult for flexo converters,’ says Schoettle.

Material prices have been increasing substantially throughout 2022. Additionally, companies are hit with higher power, logistics and staffing costs. Consequently, there is a great deal of cost pressure across the entire value chain.

HP lists rising costs as the biggest challenge in the region. These costs are going up to the highest prices for decades and has led to inflation forecasts on a macro level.

‘In addition, a challenge we learned to plan for is shortages of parts, substrates and raw materials. With only a few new offset workers being trained, any shortage in labor in print can be an enduring crisis,’ says HP’s Goldman. ‘Customers that have adopted digital as part of their business strategy are coming on top of those challenges as they react and change faster. We see increased demand for automation in production and a move to more automated workflows. Successful PSPs are shifting to focus on customer experience and diversifying their products offering and services flexibility with digital print on HP.’

Mark Andy’s Chmielewska-Bontron adds that the challenge now, and going forward is finding the right people with the technical know-how and ability to operate a printing press and be responsible for production.

‘This is especially an issue for the flexo sector and is, perhaps, one of the reasons for the growth of digital printing – the presses are easier to learn and operate,’ notes Chmielewska-Bontron. ‘The shortage of printing skills is a global issue facing all converters, irrespective of where they are in the world or which sector they work in. For many major markets, the looming crisis in energy costs will become a critical concern. So strange as it may seem, now is a good time to invest in the latest and most efficient technology.’

Driving the cost curve of flexographic printing down compared to other printing technologies, such as gravure or digital printing, is one of the most significant opportunities for the industry, according to Roy Schoettle of XSYS.

‘This can be achieved by increased machine automation resulting in higher productivity and waste reduction while enhancing quality through a more consistent plate production process,’ says Schoettle. ‘Our ThermoFlexX Catena plate processing systems, in combination with our extensive plate portfolio, are driving this trend with a strong focus on sustainability.’

Many countries in the Asia-Pacific region share similar heritage and are geographically close to China; therefore, they also share a glass-half-full culture and prefer to focus on opportunities rather than challenges.

This approach is apparent in a comment from Carrie Duan, international sales director of vision inspection expert Luster: ‘We are glad to see APAC regions recover from the pandemic, so manufacturing orders are flushing back to their new peak. Companies are busy with new orders, expanding their production and investing in new machines. China’s technology and manufacturing level has grown fast in the past 10 years, and more local companies feel confident about Chinese machines and technologies. Its great ROI level attracts them.’

According to Teemu Ainasoja, sales director of Voyantic, smart label manufacturing is also an ample opportunity in the region with the demand for smart labels, especially RAIN RFID labels, growing faster than traditional label demand.

‘The post-pandemic trends show the world embracing more digital tools. In print and packaging, we are seeing this integration of the best of the physical and digital world for a fuller experience,’ agrees HP’s Goldman. ‘There is the adoption of physical dimension products and services being offered following increased attention and customers online.’

Balancing digital, flexo and hybrid

The latest Knowledge Sourcing Intelligence report confirms that digital printing is anticipated to grow significantly in the region and outpace any other printing technology.

According to HP, as print continues to grow and evolve, so are customer expectations and demands changing. Successful PSPs are now increasing their focus on growth drivers and progressing their digital acceleration.





Domino opened a Digital Centre of Excellence in Bangkok, Thailand, to support regional sales, sampling and training

“Digital inkjet printing is gaining momentum in the Asia-Pacific for label printing and for the increased use of variable data printing witnessed since the Covid-19 pandemic struck”

‘The digital sector is proving popular for smaller runs and niche applications, offering cost benefits and flexibility over flexo. However, we don’t expect digital printing to make big inroads into the core flexo print sector at this time as flexo is still proven to have its cost advantage for mid- to long-run jobs,’ responds Jane Tan of PSG. ‘It’s higher quality in terms of the overall durability of the ink, which supports a longer shelf-life, and is another advantage. Furthermore, flexo can be used for add-on processes such as lamination or cold foiling, which are not supported by a digital press on its own.’

Domino Digital Printing Solutions, which has been present in the APAC market for over three decades, opened a Digital Centre of Excellence in Bangkok, Thailand, with its long-standing partner Harn Engineering Solutions, in June 2021. The facility has been established to support regional sales, sampling and training.

‘Digital inkjet printing is gaining momentum in the Asia-Pacific for label printing and for the increased use of variable data printing witnessed since the Covid-19 pandemic struck,’ comments Paul Myatt, Domino Digital Printing Solutions’ APAC regional service and support manager. ‘Domino is well-placed to serve this demand. We combine our global knowledge and expertise with the local language capabilities and cultural awareness provided by our network of distributors and direct channels in India, China and Korea to deliver personalized local service and support throughout the APAC region.’

Roy Schoettle agrees that the install base of digital presses is growing, but these technologies are still complementary to flexography.

‘Digital does play a role, however, particularly in the tag and label market where we are seeing many printing companies investing in multiple technologies, but in other markets, such as flexible packaging where high-speed printing and long job runs are required, it is still not economically viable,’ he says.

Luster’s Carrie Duan thinks that digital printing is undoubtedly growing fast, along with many technological improvements. However, she expects to see the increasing popularity of hybrid printing machines.

‘Flexo is and will be for some time the major technology in narrow web, and it is important that converters see the two as complementary, not as direct competitors,’ adds Mark Andy’s

Chmielewska-Bontron. ‘Each has advantages and limitations, so we carefully evaluate each customer’s requirements before recommending which technology they should invest in. Mark Andy is in a unique position here, with a portfolio of flexo and digital hybrid presses that no other manufacturer can match. This puts us in a far better position to be objective with our recommendations and honest with our customers – we can supply whatever technology best suits their needs. If I would need to estimate the current split in our sales numbers, I’d say that flexo accounts for around 70 percent and digital hybrid around 30 percent of presses sold.’

Talking about ratios, Thai KK believes digital printing products will have higher growth in percentage in the long run. Although, the company estimates the current balance is only at 10 percent digital, compared to traditional offset labeling, which is around 90 percent. The company predicts that digital printing will grow faster in the next five years.

HP is also expecting all technologies to coexist in the market, noting that there is a shifted focus and investments in digital.

‘All the trends we discussed here motivate PSPs to redefine their strategy and long-term plans,’ says Arnon Goldman. ‘We are seeing more interest in new business models and offerings largely enabled by digital and HP technologies, services and solutions.’

Sustainability goes beyond eco-friendly materials

Sustainability is on everyone’s agenda, and while before, it was mainly just a topic for debate in the APAC region, legislation is now being introduced to reduce the impact of packaging on the environment. The region is proving its maturity when it comes to eco-friendly approaches.

‘People and companies who still see the Asia-Pacific region as a dumping ground for inferior products will have difficulties finding clients, as the converters in the region are supplying high-end quality packaging and continuously improving conditions and the quality of their output,’ says XSYS’s Roy Schoettle. ‘Sustainability has become a key requirement for the packaging industry across the board, with everyone from global brand owners to local startups making pledges to lower their impact on the planet.’

Sandon’s Jake Roberts thinks that sustainability may have been less of a priority during the early stages of the pandemic as hygiene and safety rose in consumer concern, but now that the company operates at full strength, everyone is far more conscious of this when purchasing products, both in their professional and personal lives with sustainability requirements increasing at every step of the value chain.

‘HP leads with sustainability, and the opportunity for it has expanded. Consumers, regulators, and brands are driving the change where consumer pressure and social media supported by focus and regulatory pressure drives bold moves from CPG and retailer,’ comments Arnon Goldman. ‘Print and packaging businesses can become an integral part of the solution and offer a digital-first mindset in manufacturing with reduced waste, a lower carbon footprint, circularity commitments and new sustainable materials.’

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“People and companies who still see the Asia Pacific region as a dumping ground for inferior products will have difficulties finding clients, as the converters in the region are supplying high-end quality packaging and continuously improving conditions and the quality of their output”

end-consumers and brand owners and now covers the entire label and print value chain. For PSG and its local customers, there is a requirement to use sustainable products, reduce waste and lower energy consumption.

‘We expect to see a further transition towards recycled materials in labels,’ states Jane Tan of PSG. ‘Consequently, we work closely with our primary suppliers to test and develop new products to meet these requirements. Our leading suppliers are based in Europe, where these processes are more advanced. PSG constantly reviews ways of reducing waste and increasing efficiency. Earlier in 2022, we installed solar batteries at our Thailand factory to save costs and reduce carbon emissions.’

‘The demand is real, and the APAC region is not different,’ agrees Voyantic’s Ainasoja. ‘The drive towards better sustainability originates from consumers and known overconsumption of earth resources. Brand owners forward the demand to their label suppliers. Supply chains, including labels, are global, and creating sustainable products and supply chains is a globally shared topic.’

Broader environmental, social and governance subjects have also become a significant priority for customers and businesses in the APAC region in recent years.

‘As a responsible business ourselves, the new Sandon Global facility is only fractionally away from being carbon neutral,’ notes Roberts. ‘We can supply 50 percent of our energy requirement through photovoltaic solar panels when weather conditions are favorable.’

Many businesses in the labeling and packaging market in the region have embraced sustainability on many levels. Thai listed firms remain the regional leaders in their commitment to sustainable development, with 24 Thai companies, the highest number in ASEAN, joining the Dow Jones Sustainability Index, proving their

focus on driving toward a more positive and

sustainable future through responsible sourcing and using sustainable materials.

‘Some companies have also committed to being carbon neutral in the next three to five years. Thai KK is also committed to driving sustainability goals by implementing eco-friendly packaging across all businesses while also focusing on developing recyclable and linerless labeling solutions,’ adds Uvimolchai.

What does the future hold?

One of the dominant trends in mature packaging markets is M&A activity. The APAC region is no different.

‘We are seeing M&A activity changing the customer landscape in the APAC and contributing further to global industry consolidation. There are now fewer small and medium-sized printers active in the market than were present 10 years ago, and this trend is expected to continue,’ confirms Jane Tan of PSG. ‘For us, it presents both challenges and opportunities. Challenges are associated with the need to meet global best practices of customers and additional requirements on product consistency across different regions. Ultimately for PSG, this has led to longer testing and trailing periods for some products and additional cost and supply chain pressures.’

As Domino see it, the future lies in inkjet as it offers local businesses to operate more flexibly, efficiently, cost-effectively, sustainably, and with shorter lead times, ultimately driving up their return on investment and digital product development and growth.

‘We strongly believe that the APAC region will adopt hybrid technology in a big way, which means that we will have to stay very close to our customers and partners to help them choose the right solution for their specific needs,’ answers Mark Andy’s Chmielewska-Bontron. ‘It’s impossible to paint an accurate picture for such a large geographic area – different countries have different requirements, priorities, pressures, and financial capabilities. It’s not a one size fits all situation – but with our diverse portfolio of technology, both flexo and digital, we are confident that there is a Mark Andy press to suit all applications.’

Roy Schoettle of XSYS, on the other



According to XSYS, people and companies who still see the Asia Pacific region as a dumping ground for inferior products will have difficulties finding clients

hand, thinks that introducing higher levels of automation into the production process can help alleviate some of these issues, which will no doubt continue to trouble the region, and the world, over the next few years. He thinks that minimizing waste, removing manual intervention, and reducing the total cost of ownership is now conditional to successfully operating in the packaging industry and future-proofing businesses.

In line with automation prediction, Luster’s Carrie Duan sees the future in quality control level, production efficiency, and reduced costs. ‘Currently, most companies are still using manual quality checks. However, more companies are seeking more smart, automatic and efficient solutions, not only for the top player but also middle to small-sized companies,’ says Duan. ‘Our high-speed and zero-defect print inspection system will greatly reduce customer investment, and we will continue to introduce new products with the best total cost of ownership by combining our accumulated experience in AI and industrial vision inspection with the advantages of China’s mature upstream supply chain.’

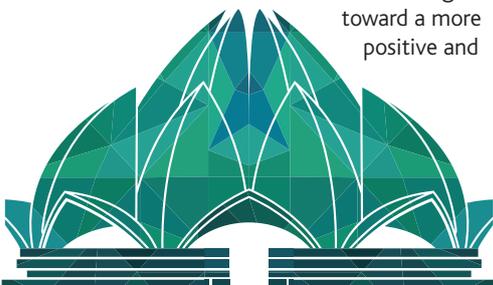
Univac’s sales manager, Patrick Lee, bets on sustainability trends being predominant in the region following the American and European markets, which are seen as leaders of sustainability and carbon footprint topics.

Perhaps the best future trends conclusion comes from Arnon Goldman, who thinks that there are several categories at tipping points for our industry, like digital adoption, sustainability, automation, personalization, e-commerce and growth in packaging.

‘Print is positioned at the intersection between many interesting segments of big logistics and operations and rush for more creative solutions where our PSPs can plan key roles with new business models,’ concludes Goldman.



Labelexpo Southeast Asia returns to Bangkok from 9-11 February. For more information, visit www.labelexpo-seasia.com





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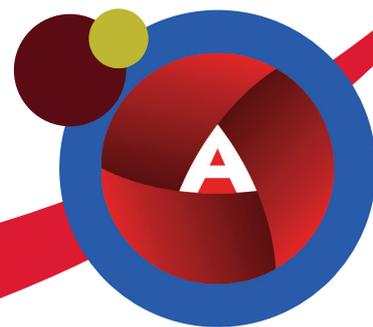
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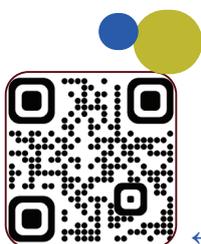
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UVbiz installs Bobst M6 press

Indore-based UVbiz, the packaging division of food company MB Industries, has installed one of the first few Bobst M6 label presses in India. Akanksha Meena reports

MB Industries diversified into the packaging business in 2018 and started operations in 2019. Through previous experience, the company had found a niche in short-run flexible packaging.

The company provides flexible packaging, in-mold labels, shrink sleeves, wet glue, and wraparound labels for the beverage, confectionery, home and personal care, pet care, agro products and frozen food segments.

The company's technology infrastructure includes Bobst M6 flexo press, Brotech inspection system, DuPont Cyrel fast plate processors and Esko CDI Spark flexo imager.

'We felt that other available technologies were not doing enough [for short runs] and lots of start-ups were cropping up at that time. Luckily, Bobst was also, at the time, publicizing the idea of going for short-run flexible packaging technology. So, we decided to go for it,' says Rohit Badlani, managing director of UVbiz.

Badlani says that the Indian market lags in decorative shrink sleeves.

'Since we are in more of gravure driven area, printing has mainly taken place through gravure but there is scope for machines like Bobst to create décor and innovative sleeving options for customers.'

Bobst has been a supportive partner for UVBiz since it is not primarily from the packaging industry.

'Bobst has been one of those fantastic partners, which has been with us from day one from the first trial job, to executing in India and going through the process of multiple jobs every day. It has been fantastic. It is always a message away from us, whenever we are stuck in materials, understanding of the business, Bobst is right there,' Badlani added.

Badlani says a key reason for choosing a Bobst M6 press was its flexibility. Initially, the press was purchased to produce short-run flexible packaging, but later the company realized that it could print both labels and shrink sleeves.

'The flexibility of having multiple substrates on the same system was the main idea that drew us towards it,' notes Badlani. 'When you enter a new industry, it is important to have a backup plan where if one thing doesn't work, the other should. That gave us the confidence to go with a big investment for Bobst.'

According to Badani, India is seeing



Rohit Badlani, managing director of UVbiz

“We felt that other available technologies were not doing enough (for short runs) and lots of start-ups were cropping up at that time. Luckily, Bobst was also, at the time, publicizing the idea of going for short-run flexible packaging technology. So, we decided to go for it”

interest in using new materials for shrink sleeves, particularly PET. UVbiz is now attracting interest in shrink sleeves from the 'big players' because of the company's investment in Bobst M6.

'We partner with them for all kinds of new product development and new decorative materials in the market. Bobst brings that brand value to our organization for which people want to partner with us.'

Impressive automation

Badlani is impressed with the 10-second changeover of the Bobst machine.

'We do it every day, 20 times a day. Most brands are just blown away by the idea of it. They visit just to see it. It has been a fantastic journey. We have had multiple brand owners pitching in their ideas and getting them executed quickly. We have had brand owners coming in at 9 am and returning with printed sleeves by 4 pm. That is the speed we go by.'

UVbiz is impressed by the OneECG feature of the Bobst press.

Badlani says that customer awareness for ECG (Extended Color Gamut) in shrink sleeves is very low in the market. But it is

slowly being discussed in forums.

'Brand owners are discussing it and it is not far when they will start asking for it. We have understood the idea. People have been attempting OneECG for quite some time, but we have been doing it successfully for the last two years. We don't have any other ink in our facility apart from the seven fixed colors. We will continue to follow this system whatever new machine we buy with Bobst and till we print.'

Badlani concludes that Bobst has been extremely supportive.

'Bobst has been connected with us in a manner that it takes direct feedback from my machine operators to find out more about challenging jobs and ask for feedback on the machine for improvements.'

He continues: "It has been a fantastic three-year journey. We will be a loyal Bobst customer for many decades to come."



Bobst will be exhibiting at Labelexpo India from 10-13 November. For more information, visit www.labelexpo-india.com, and read a full review in the next issue.



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Kumar Labels expands and diversifies

Kumar Labels has expanded with three new plants in Noida, Indore and Goa since the Covid-19 pandemic began. The company plans to localize production to offer better service to customers. Kumar Labels has also diversified in the FMCG label segment. Akanksha Meena reports

During the Covid-19 pandemic, Anuj Bhargava, founder of Kumar Labels, realized how important it is to be closer to customers.

'Smaller units are more agile, responsive and offer better service to customers,' Bhargava says. 'Proximity helps in logistics. That prompted us to set up the first unit in Goa during Covid. Those were interesting times. There were travel restrictions imposed in Goa. Anyone entering the state required permission. So, we hired local contractors and electricians to set up the factory from a bare shed.'

The unit was finished within 50 days and was operational in August 2020. More recently, the converter has added a new camera inspection and a screen print machine in the Goa factory. The facility is now equipped with a 10-color flexo machine, two off-line screen print machines, camera inspection and hot foiling equipment along with ancillary machines.

'Covid was an awakening call. We had all our eggs in one basket in Greater Noida. Working from one factory is quite risky, but working from multiple locations really helped us in mitigating risks during lockdowns,' explains Bhargava.

The next plan was to set up a unit in Nepal in 2021. Kumar Labels is one of the largest liquor label suppliers in Nepal. The company even rented premises but canceled that plan due to the economic situation in the region.

However, Bhargava noticed that customers in the Indore region had been expanding and immediately diverted the Nepal investment to Indore and set up a unit.

At the same time, he set up a second plant in Greater Noida next to the old unit.

'Another thing we learned during Covid was that we were dependent on the liquor industry for supplying labels,' he says. 'Pre-Covid, 80 percent of our supplies went to liquor companies. During Covid, liquor stores were closed for a good three months. We realized that depending on one industry was not a good idea. We diversified into FMCG labels. Our focus remains on liquor because it requires high-value innovation.'

Bhargava observes that, unlike liquor labels that require value addition in terms of different papers, textures, and embellishments,

"Women are usually not encouraged to work with machines in India. I am proud to say that I can work with machines just as well as my male colleagues. I am happy about the fact that I will be able to progress in the trade that I chose as my career"

FMCG is relatively simple. 'It is mostly about cost saving, fast and reliable deliveries,' he says.

As the company added FMCG to its portfolio, labels could not be produced with emulsion adhesive labelstock. It needed hot melt adhesive.

Kumar started producing labelstock in-house in early 2012. It has a water-based coater for pure acrylics and a water-based adhesive. In 2022, Bhargava added a hot melt line at his Noida plant.

The new plant houses a water-based coater and the new hot melt line. Both lines are soon to be equipped with NDC contactless adhesive measurement system. The large warehouse stores materials like release liners. The plant also has the provision to add a metallizer soon. Currently, Kumar manufactures 8 million sqm of labelstock. The total manufacturing capacity stands at 18 million sqm.

Sustainability initiatives

Kumar has recently employed LED UV inks from Siegwirk on all its flexo presses to become one of the lowest energy-consuming label printers in India.

It has also developed a labelstock that enables easy removal of pressure-sensitive labels from market-returnable bottles. Bhargava says that removing labels from used liquor bottles is difficult during the bottle recycling process.



Gallus EM280 flexo label press at Kumar Labels' Noida factory



Finished labels at Kumar Labels

'Traditionally, all commercial labelstock manufacturers have been using hot melt in the liquor industry. We have launched a special labelstock that can easily be "erased" from the bottle after use.'

Another development from Kumar Labels includes recyclable barrier-coated and poly-coated liners. Trials are ongoing. This could not only bring recyclability of liners, but also reduce costs.

The converter is using poly-coated liners on craft paper, poster and map litho papers. The coating is claimed to be removable for liner recycling.

Kumar Labels uses polyester films with high 50-70 percent post-consumer recycled content.

Training center

Kumar Labels' Greater Noida facility also houses its new initiative - CO-HELP (Center of High Excellence in Label Printing). The Center had been running informally for the last 10 years to train students and new entrants to the label industry. Since 2011, the company has trained 1,200 people who are now working in the industry across the country. Now a certificate program has started under the new name.

'We have an unsaid no-poach policy. We hire freshers and train them in the label industry. We have hired many students from the Northern Regional Institute Of Printing Technology (NRIPT) in Allahabad. My father graduated from this college in the early 1970s. We have an emotional connection with it.'

Bhargava hires 20 to 25 graduates each year from the college and trains them on label technology.

'We feel that someone has to take the initiative of adding fresh blood to the industry. As technology develops, someone needs to initiate training,' he says.

One of the former professors of SIES College of Arts, Science & Commerce in Mumbai has joined Kumar as head of CO-HELP Center. He is accompanied by a recruiter who approaches colleges and skilled centers for fresh recruits.

The training modules include video-based training that is not just technical but also includes basic professional soft skills. The students are then trained on offline machines and not in production.

'How many companies train freshers on basics such as the theory of anilox rollers? How does it work and why does it need to be handled delicately? What is ultrasonic cleaning, and why is it used? These are basic topics from where training starts. I have come across people in the industry who do not know the basics of printing. We teach our students how to install and remove anilox rollers at least 100 times. With that practice the movement of wrist and hands becomes a skill,' Bhargava adds.

The students are then trained on production presses depending on what course they choose. The training takes place from seven to 25 days.

The training is followed by an online video-based test and those who pass the course receive a certification making them eligible for employment in the label industry.

Kumar encourages women in labels

Kumar Labels plans to recruit more than 30 percent of women employees across its facilities.

'We have been very lucky to have found some brilliant talent. It makes me so proud when I see two young women running a 12-color flexo press at 100m/min,' Bhargava states.

Kumar has recruited women across HR, customer care, business development, printing, camera inspection, platemaking, housekeeping and packaging teams. The converter has more women than men at its Goa factory.

When Chanchal Kumari began her career at Kumar, she was doubtful if she would be able to work on equipment. Her seniors trained her and transferred her to camera inspection. Kumari says



Label finishing equipment at Kumar Labels' Noida factory

“We feel that someone has to take the initiative of adding fresh blood to the industry. As technology develops, someone needs to initiate training”

she has received immense support from the company in terms of guidance and upskilling.

'We get to work in sorting, inspection, printing or job changing. We are not limited by our departments or skills. Everyone gets the chance to learn whatever they are interested in and we can replace each other in case of emergencies,' she says.

Ritika Gautam has been working at Kumar for five years. She started with sorting and quickly moved to inspection, cutting and finishing. 'Anuj Bhargava sir asks us if we are interested in learning further and accordingly provides opportunities to learn new skills. I really enjoy working here.'

Priyanka Verma had heard good things about the company from her peers who said that they get the opportunity to learn several skills. She decided to join Kumar and Bhargava encouraged her to run a printing press.

Kajal Mishra was recruited right after her diploma. She faced family opposition and Kumar's HR spoke with her family to let her work. 'I work on a printing machine. I get massive support from Anuj Bhargava sir and we can reach out to him directly in case of any problems. Our backgrounds and education don't matter when it comes to training. We get to learn whatever interests us.'

Priyanka Verma says that a college education doesn't provide any practical knowledge of printing technology. 'I spoke at home, but my father was against me working. But my grandparents and mother supported me to be able to work here. They were worried about me in the beginning. When I told them that I am happy working here, they were relieved. And I enjoy working here because women are usually not encouraged to work with machines in India. I am proud to say that I can work with machines just as well as my male colleagues. I am happy about the fact that I will be able to progress in the trade that I chose as my career.'

Many other fascinating stories of other women could be heard at Bhargava's facility.



To take a look inside Kumar Labels during the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, visit <https://bit.ly/3FBdKwE>

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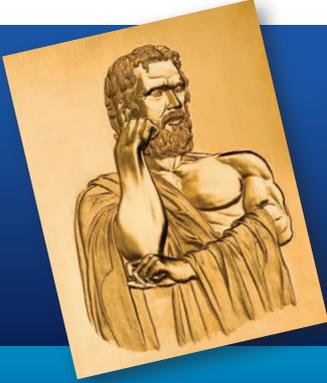
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Brewing new ideas with Beanly

Coffee start-up Beanly discovered a more flexible way to create new product packaging when it shifted from conventional print technologies to HP Indigo digital printing. Akanksha Meena reports

Avid coffee lovers and good friends Rahul Jain and Samayesh Khanna quit their nine-to-five jobs to follow their passion and start a coffee business, Beanly, in 2018.

'We come from very different backgrounds, but what was common between the two of us, was our love for coffee,' Khanna says.

'There were just a few options to have freshly brewed coffee in the Indian market back in the day – buying instant coffee or going to a premium café where it would be expensive,' he adds.

Beanly introduced hot brew coffee bags for freshly brewed on-the-go coffee. 'We were pioneers, back in 2018 and India's first hot brew specific company.'

Today Beanly has more than 22 SKUs in its product portfolio. Out of the four product categories that the company offers, Khanna sees a competitive advantage in a few of them.

'We are still currently India's first specially optimized manufacturing factory for hot brew coffee with near zero [competition] in India. We made hot brewing easy and a thing in the country. A lot of brands have built their products in the category with us, so this was one of the most exciting categories that we started with,' Khanna explains.

The brand has recently launched nitrogen-infused coffee cans for on-the-go consumers. 'We are the first ones to be offering Nitro coffee in a can in India, and all these products have been built ground up in India.'

Beanly is preparing to launch at least four to five new SKUs within the calendar year.

Dedication to innovation

A large part of Beanly's journey has been dedicated to creating new and unique products. Primarily, it is an online-first brand because this gives the company better and quicker access to consumers. The middleman cost is eliminated.

'It also helps you get eyeballs faster and cheaper than traditional models,' Khanna says.

Back when it was established, Beanly was using conventional printing technologies for its labels and packaging. The brand's labels and packaging require several media including matte BOPP laminate, PET laminate, shrink sleeves and SPF sheets.

'There was the challenge of media when using conventional technologies. When you print on different media, the outputs can be very different in terms of color and brand consistency,' Khanna notes.

This became an obstacle when it came to launching new products in new packaging formats. With no option to print short runs, the start-up had to wait 30-60 days for its labels.

Gravure required cylinders, which added to the company's Capex. 'In our early journey, we needed to add new variants and when we launched new products it was a big time for us. We were tight on timelines and gravure wouldn't give quick deliveries,' Khanna explains.

Flexo took 10-20 days and it limited Beanly in terms of the number of artwork iterations it could have in the same print run.

The co-founders discovered HP Indigo digital print technology when their label converter ran tests and samples on the press. The brand instantly preferred the digital quality.

With digital printing, the start-up found a considerable advantage of quicker timelines and color consistency across different media.

'When we were starting, costs and timelines were a constraint



Beanly instant coffee jars

"We are India's first specially optimized manufacturing factory for hot brew coffee with near zero opposition in India. We made hot brewing easy and a thing in the country"

which digital solved instantly. As compared to conventional technologies, our product launch timelines were significantly reduced to seven days when we switched to HP Indigo digital technology,' Khanna highlights.

Launching new products and adding new forms of packaging became easier for Beanly. The co-founders could now create custom packaging for market research as well.

'The minimum run quantity came down. It was not possible anywhere else. I am inclined towards digital as a solution for the long run as well, primarily because it has a much lower carbon footprint. We are actively moving into a time where we are bound to be conscious about what we print, consume, and how we operate,' Khanna adds.

Savings in capital expenditure, which came with the ability to print short runs were used to increase efficiencies on the operational side.

Beanly will be launching new products soon and sampling is done on HP Indigo digital press. The full run of nitro coffee can labels are also printed on the HP press.

'Our costing is still optimized on digital and is my preferred mode of printing.'

The company will soon introduce in-mold labels on its new products.

'We haven't fully utilized HP for brand recognition yet. The larger advantages were faster launch, less Capex, low print runs, quick turnaround time and market testing,' Khanna concludes.



For more news from the Indian label and packaging market, visit www.labelsandlabeling.com/contributors/akanksha-meena



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Avery Dennison inaugurates new plant in India

Avery Dennison has inaugurated a new manufacturing facility in Greater Noida, signaling confidence in the growth of the Indian packaging industry and its commitment to the Indian market. Akanksha Meena reports

Avery Dennison has invested around 250 crore INR (30.8 million USD) in setting up its new manufacturing plant, taking the company's India investment to 1,000 crores INR (123.5 million USD) and doubling the company's pressure-sensitive label production capacity.

With this key business milestone, Avery Dennison celebrates 25 years of business operations in India and is looking for the next phase of growth. The company was largely reliant on imports 25 years ago for its labelstock sales in India.

With the increased foothold in the Indian market, it has now moved to almost 100 percent localized production capability, making it more in sync with the prime minister's 'Make in India' initiative.

Through this new facility, Avery Dennison will be consolidating its manufacturing operations to better serve customer demands while optimizing the improved efficiencies gained from investment in new technology.

Saurabh Agarwal, senior director and general manager, label and packaging materials, South Asia for Avery Dennison, says: 'We are extremely delighted to inaugurate our world-class manufacturing facility in Greater Noida and with this latest expansion, we are looking for the next big chapter in our growth in India. Our new facility is built on one of the most sought-after land allotted by the Uttar Pradesh government. By expanding in UP, we will be able to serve the requirements of our customers better and also enhance the company's production capacity to meet the growing demand of the Indian market.'

Spread over an area of 12 acres, the new plant will produce advanced pressure-sensitive materials for the labeling and packaging industry, incorporating best practices learned from Avery Dennison's global operations. Land for the new facility has been allotted by the Yamuna Expressway Industrial Development Authority (YEIDA). The company was looking for a location in North India for the new plant which would also have scope for future expansion. Yamuna expressway and YEIDA ticked all the boxes in terms of logistics, access to raw materials and airport facilities.



Avery Dennison India's newly inaugurated plant in Greater Noida

“Avery Dennison has invested around 250 crore INR (30.8 million USD) in setting up its new manufacturing plant, taking the company's India investment to 1,000 crores INR (123.5 million USD) and doubling the company's pressure-sensitive label production capacity”

The plant is equipped with coating and lamination lines, along with high-speed slitters and sheeters. It has a high degree of automation, including the widespread use of robotics.

'The coating machine is almost human touch free,' says Agarwal. 'It is the only coating operation in Asia that is Lead certified.'

The 12-acre site is equipped with a 500kw solar panel on the roof.

Pankaj Bhardwaj, VP of marketing, Asia Pacific, Avery Dennison, says that per capita consumption of pressure-sensitive labels in India is 0.3m, which is still very low compared to other countries in the wider region. In Thailand and Malaysia, for example, the figure is 3m, in Australia 8m, Europe 11m and the US 12m per person.

'That clearly means there's a lot of room for growth in this industry. The new plant is going to ensure that we serve the market reliably. It will ensure we are able to localize

products that the market may require as it evolves.' The Indian market will grow in double digits in the next three years, says Bhardwaj.

Bhardwaj adds that around 70 percent of the products Avery Dennison sells in India are from its sustainable portfolio - 70 percent of the paper it buys for India is FSC certified. By 2030, the company plans to source 100 percent of its paper from deforestation-free sources and be 95 percent landfill-free.

The company started its first plant operation in Gurgaon in 1997 with a hot melt coating line. Since then, it has expanded its operations across India in major cities such as Pune, Bangalore, and Kolkata and now in UP.



To read more on the India label market, visit www.labelsandlabeling.com/contributors/akanksha-meena

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South Africa: strong growth in recyclability

Africa correspondent Gill Loubser reports on further recycling advances in Africa in a follow-up piece to an Issue 3 article that described the continent's inefficient waste management systems and resulting economic, social and environmental problems – but also showing evidence of positive initiatives from individual governments and private sector players

Since 2010, South Africa's upmarket retail chain, Woolworths, has been a trailblazer in the introduction of recyclate into packaging. With a reputation similar in stature to the UK's Marks & Spencer (and affectionately referred to simply as 'Woolies'), this premier retailer now sells more than 2,000 of its food and household products in packaging containing between 30 and 70 percent recycled content, and some made from 100 percent post-consumer recycled HDPE.

“This investment represents a huge boost for recycling in South Africa. It reduces packaging waste to landfill, improves the circularity of critical resources, and creates much-needed jobs. This is circularity at its best”

Now, a dozen years since beginning this journey, the recent opening of PET washing and decontamination facilities at Zibo Containers' plant in Cape Town means an additional 1,000 packaging items from this one retailer alone can now be recycled locally.

Explains Latiefa Behardien, chief technology and sustainability officer for Woolworths Foods: 'This investment represents a huge boost for recycling in South Africa. It reduces packaging waste to landfill, improves the circularity of critical resources, and creates much-needed jobs. But it's particularly exciting for us as it means an additional 1,000 of our semi-rigid PET thermoformed food packs can now be recycled, and reused in the production of similar PET thermoformed packaging – this is circularity at its best.'

As part of Woolworths' vision for 'zero packaging waste to landfill,' packs are designed for circularity.

One example Behardien cites is a recent switch to 'easy-wash-off' adhesive, such as Avery Dennison's CleanFlake technology that ensures label adhesive washes off entirely in the recycling process, leaving no residue to compromise the recyclate.

'This results in the entire pack – not just parts of it – being recycled,' Behardien adds.

While acknowledging that recycling alone cannot solve the world's pollution problems, this has significant potential to impact cleaning up waste systems, creating jobs and reducing the use of virgin plastics.

'Every step along the way helps to bring about a cleaner country for all,' Behardien says.

Reducing pack sizes for Africa's retailers

The informal retail sector represents almost 40 percent of retail sales in sub-Saharan Africa. This vibrant market is innovative in



Woolworths rolled out recyclable polypropylene bags for its rotisserie chickens. As a result, some 1.5-million bags per annum – currently destined for landfill – can now be recycled locally

Amazon eyes African market

Africa is a compelling vision for an operation such as Amazon.

With the world's youngest population and enviable growth prospects, Africa's emerging consumers are likely to take up a lot of Amazon's attention once it's officially launched in South Africa in early 2023.

There's also no doubt that Amazon has kept a careful eye on South Africa for some time, but has waited until conditions are right to make it official.

Much initial attention to this yet-unconfirmed move has been on the competition Amazon will bring to existing African e-commerce retailers, such as Takealot. Largely ignored, however, are the potential consequences of Amazon arriving on African shores with a full suite of Amazon-branded offerings, ready to take on all who assume they've got things covered in their part of the continent.

This launch will change the playing field for everyone. South African clothing retailers, grocery brands, pharmacies, booksellers, media companies, and consumer brands – should take this debut seriously and begin thinking about how to compete once Amazon arrives.

Boasting one of the world's strongest brands, a talent pool of innovators who will stop at nothing to get what they want, an enshrined philosophy of playing the long game, and having no legacy systems to weigh them down as they unlock this new market, Amazon's entry into the South African consumer marketplace marks a significant change on the horizon.

We've already witnessed the implosion of several well-known names in the last few years thanks to competition from well-capitalized global brands. Without careful strategic planning as to how to navigate changes ahead, this list will likely include a few more popular household names.

So Africa needs to watch out: it's about to get a marketing lesson from the world champions.



Woolworths' semi-rigid PET thermoformed packaging can now be recycled in South Africa

“We’ve increasingly focused on sustainability and how we can support our customers. Smartfill helps brand owners to transition to more environmentally-conscious packaging options, while still growing their businesses”

meeting consumers’ needs for smaller pack sizes, especially in the face of the ever-increasing cost of living.

Against this scenario, a potentially lucrative opportunity exists to provide low-cost dispensing systems, simultaneously addressing both sales growth and packaging reduction challenges.

From single cigarettes to small bags of sugar, coffee and sweets, informal retailers find ways to break apart manufacturers’ packs to meet consumer needs.

For instance, throughout Africa, commodities such as paraffin and cooking oil are sold in used soft drink bottles.

However, small pack sizes or sachets offer little value to waste pickers (collectors), even if recyclable, and the endemic absence of municipal services in these communities means much rubbish ends up in the environment.

Global retail specialist, Smollan, representing some of the world’s best-known FMCG and commercial brands, promotes responsible retailing activities in sub-Saharan Africa where business can have a positive effect on the environment and society – effortlessly and efficiently.

In conjunction with DY/DX Digital, a global product design

consultancy, Smollan has co-created the Smartfill dispenser to meet this challenge.

The smart dispensers have been proven in the spaza market, not only enhancing sales by offering small pack sizes but also providing valuable data on quantities purchased.

A spaza is an informal convenience shop, selling small everyday household items, usually run from home to supplement household incomes. These shops grew as a result of sprawling townships established during the apartheid era – that made travel to formal shopping areas increasingly difficult or expensive.

By offering smaller purchase volumes, which can’t be manufactured affordably on an industrial scale, brand owners can tap into new customers/markets.

According to Marc Wetselaar, COO of DY/DX Digital, thanks to Smartfill installations, sales in Thembisa, a township to the north of Johannesburg, jumped by some 400 percent monthly and the number of purchasing transactions by 450 percent.

‘People gravitated to the dispensers and easily understood the concept,’ he explains.

However, while technology is a key ingredient, it’s merely part of the solution.

Adds Michael Smollan, the group’s chief growth officer: ‘We’ve increasingly focused on sustainability and how we can support our customers. Smartfill helps brand owners to transition to more environmentally-conscious packaging options, while still growing their businesses.’

As brand owners look for continued sales growth while trying to solve packaging waste challenges, an answer may just lie within the informal trade.



To read more about the recycling infrastructure in Africa, read Gill Loubser’s article in Issue 3 of Labels & Labeling.

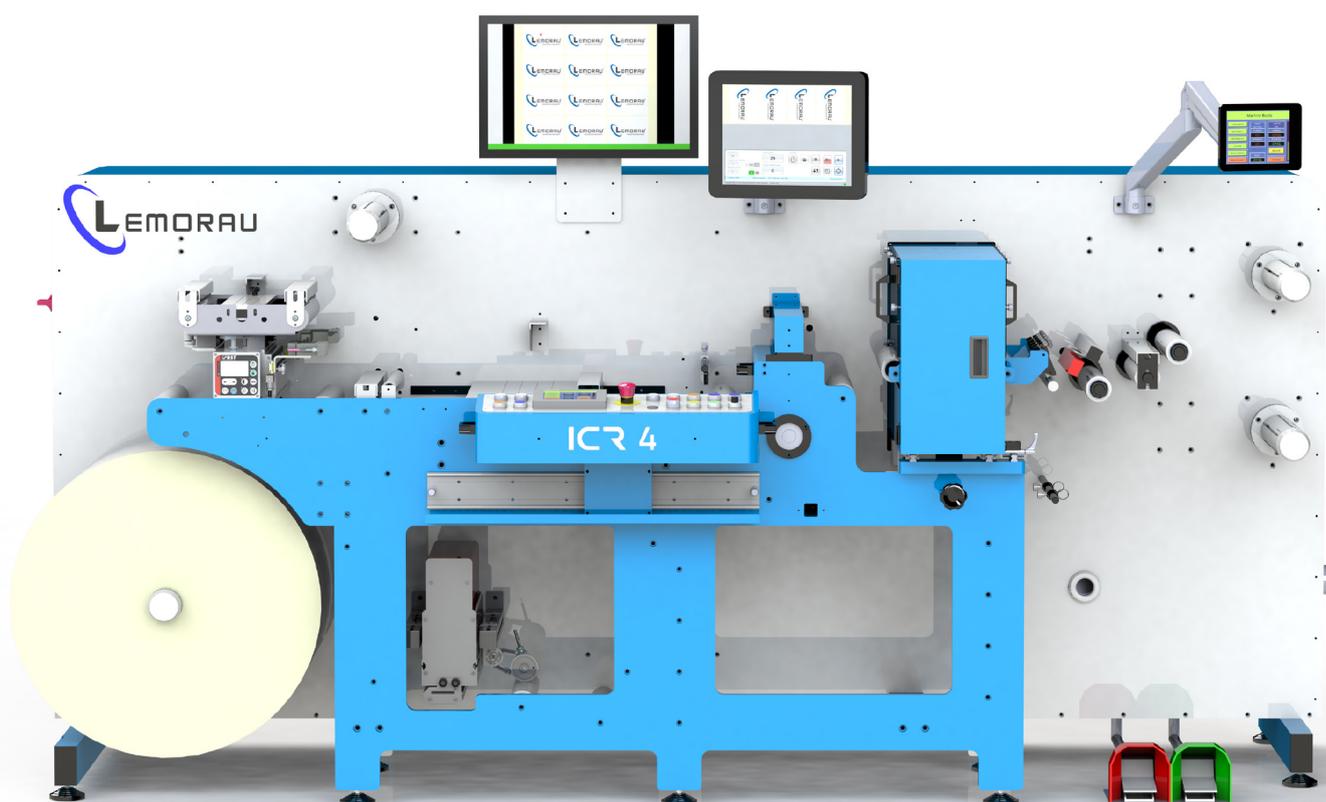


Smartfill dispensers are popular throughout South Africa as a way to reduce packaging



CleanFlake technology means there’s no need to stock separate labels for recyclable packages. This facilitates the recycling of PET and HDPE packs to help brands meet sustainability targets, comply with regulations, and increase the availability of recycle

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Beyond Label has spent five years upgrading from traditional printing equipment to an all-digital print operation

Beyond speeds growth with digital strategy

Beyond Label has spent five years upgrading from traditional printing equipment to an all-digital print operation. A key part of this strategy is to find new customers on social media platforms and digitize its whole workflow, Yolanda Wang reports

Beyond Label, located in Heyuan Hi-Tech Development Zone, Guangdong Province, has been focused on the production and manufacturing of short-run, personalized label orders for nine years. At present, the company has a fleet of HP Indigo digital presses: a 6900, 6K and 25K. The company's machine park is rounded out with several Reborn digital die-cutting machines, a DMS digital foiling unit and the recently installed Esko pre-press software suite. These investments will equip Beyond Label to become a digital one-stop service platform.

Beyond Label's annual turnover now exceeds 50m RMB (6.98m USD), and the company credits digital printing technology as the key to its success.

From conventional to digital

Beyond Label officially entered the package printing field in 2008 when it established a factory in Dongguan, Guangdong Province. At that time, it mainly used sheet offset presses for folding cartons. The company moved into label production in 2013.

Zhang Yu'an, general manager of Beyond Label, explains why: 'When serving our customers, we gradually found that the label printing industry is growing very fast in the Chinese market, although compared to the folding carton sector the overall market volume of labels is much smaller. So, considering the future development of the company, we chose to transform and focus on providing customized, small-run label printing services.'

Beyond Label invested in four Weigang intermittent offset printing presses, a Nickel letterpress printing machine and additional finishing equipment. In 2017, Beyond Label invested in its first digital press, a pre-owned HP Indigo WS4500.

'To be honest, we did not know much about digital printing at that time, so the WS4500 press did not play a major role in our operations. We only used it for some proofing jobs,' says Zhang Yu. 'But through using this equipment, we got first-hand knowledge about how digital technology works.'

When its original plant became too small for further expansion, Beyond Label set up a new factory in Heyuan in 2019 and registered as Heyuan Beyond Label.

The converter had a long-term plan to upgrade all the equipment in the new factory, gradually expanding its digital printing business while reducing the volume of conventional printing equipment.

“The outbreak of Covid-19 did not greatly affect Beyond's business. Because we are not dependent on any one sector, this reduced our business risks during the epidemic. Traveling was blocked under the epidemic regulations, which meant customers' demands for online orders was further stimulated”

Beyond Label had already eliminated two intermittent offset presses and the pre-owned HP Indigo WS4500 before purchasing a new HP Indigo WS6900. In 2021, the company acquired an HP Indigo 6K and eliminated its remaining conventional printing equipment. In 2022, it invested in an HP Indigo 25K digital press.

In addition, Beyond Label invested in Reborn, Vorey, Ritu and other digital die-cutting machines, as well as a DMS 800W UV digital foil machine.

'By upgrading from conventional to digital production equipment, Beyond Label aims to improve its production strength and flexibility and to adapt to the market needs of personalized, short runs with rapid order turnaround,' says Zhang Yu'an.

Beyond Label officially changed its name to Beyond Digital Application Technology Co in 2022.

Business digitization

Digitization is a wider trend across all manufacturing sectors and is now profoundly impacting the development of the label printing industry, especially for Beyond.

'Digitalization has always been the goal of our investment strategy,' says Zhang Yu'an. 'Our orders are mainly concentrated in the area of short and medium runs, and these customers are very scattered and have diversified needs. In the process of

“Two-thirds of Beyond Label employees are dedicated to processing online orders: contacting prospective customers on social media, understanding their needs, and communicating order requirements to internal departments about materials, production, logistics and delivery”

completing such orders, we have to spend much time understanding our customers' needs, and then move quickly to file processing, preparation of materials and arranging logistics, all in addition to the print production part of the order. Our customer relationship managers need to contact our clients every day and often more than once a day to fully understand their requirements. This meant we urgently needed digital management systems to improve our service efficiency, to save time and personnel costs, and to support future business expansion.'

Based on this consideration, Beyond introduced a full Esko software suite, including automated pre-press file processing and layout design. The company also invested in an ERP software suite for production and operations management across the whole company.

Standardization is the foundation when implementing digitalization.

'Our company has already implemented standardization across many aspects of our operations,' Zhang adds. 'For example, our technicians have analyzed our existing equipment capabilities and order characteristics and set up a fully automated order handling process and internal color standards, which can also be used for exploring new business opportunities.'

Zhang continues: 'At this stage, Beyond has basically realized a fully digitized production, operations and management environment, which is our direction of travel and the goal we are trying to achieve.'

Accelerating the 'Internet +' track

Internet technology has become the main accelerator for the development of many industries. So how can the label converting industry use this powerful tool to seek new development opportunities?

Beyond is already a long way ahead of its industry peers in making online platforms the main source of new orders.

At present, the company has 120 employees, of which 80 - two-thirds of the total - are dedicated to processing online orders. They are mainly responsible for contacting prospective customers

on different social media platforms, understanding their needs, and communicating their order requirements to internal departments about materials, production, logistics and delivery.

Beyond's online business now accounts for 70-80 percent of total business volume, with tens of thousands of orders processed each month.

'Piecemeal, short run and fast delivery times are the main characteristics of online orders. This requires us to be good communicators and apply our professional knowledge while handling them, not only fully understanding the specific requirements of each order, but also knowing about material properties and printing and finishing processes, so as to give a reasonable quotation and contract delivery time,' Zhang explains.

Beyond implements a standard hierarchical workflow for its online orders, which takes in order quotation, the ordering process, delivery time and other factors. The company classifies orders according to common material and process requirements, allowing Beyond to optimize its whole production chain and improve overall efficiency and service levels.

The outbreak of Covid-19 did not greatly affect Beyond's business.

'The main reason was that we were operating across different markets,' Zhang adds. 'Because we are not dependent on any one sector, this reduced our business risks during the epidemic. And traveling was blocked under the epidemic regulations, which meant customers' demands for online orders were further stimulated. Therefore, Beyond has achieved steady growth even while the rest of the industry is slowing down.'

Looking to the future, Beyond will continue to develop its use of internet technology to build a digital - and digitized - one-stop printing service platform.



Digital printing and workflow systems can be seen at Labelexpo Asia 7-10 December 2022 (www.labelexpo-asia.com)

News in Brief

Bobst strengthens operations in APAC

Cyril Ruiz-Moise was appointed general manager and regional business director for APAC at the Business Unit Printing and Converting. He was previously general manager at Bobst Shanghai, a position he led for five years. In his new role, Ruiz-Moise will lead Bobst for all machine product lines in the APAC region, which includes Southeast Asia, Oceania, Japan, South Korea, India and China.

'The Asia Pacific region is a diverse and exciting one and an extremely important strategic region for Bobst,' said Ruiz-Moise. 'We have bold ambitions to grow and expand our presence in the region, and our deep knowledge and understanding of our customers and their needs will help us to achieve this goal while helping our customers to achieve theirs.'

Chuck Xu joins Michelman's board

Michelman has appointed Dr Chuck Xu to its board of directors. Xu is vice president and general manager for strategy and M&A, electronics, and industrial segment at DuPont de Nemours.

Xu has worked at DuPont in multiple business units, as well as at Honeywell and Telephotonics, an integrated fiber optics startup. According to the company, his fluency in Mandarin and expertise in Chinese business culture will help fuel Michelman's growth in China.

According to Michelman, Xu's broad commercial and technical acumen in both industrial and consumer markets cuts across the advanced printing, automotive, aerospace, electronics, advanced materials, biomaterials, medical and consumer industries.

Commenting on his appointment, Xu said, 'I am honored and excited to join the Michelman board. I look forward to working with a very experienced and diverse board and the executive team to drive Michelman's substantial growth trajectory.'

Xu begins his term on the Michelman Board of Directors in Q4 of 2022.



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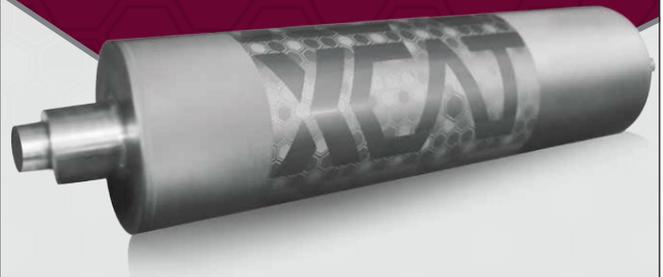
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Japanese group invests in North China converter

When Chinese label converter Weihai Yanfeng (OSPWH) was acquired by Japanese group OSP Holdings in 2020, it was the start of a major transformation for both equipment and working processes. Yolanda Wang reports

Registered in 2002, Weihai Yanfeng (OSPWH) is located in Weihai Economic Development Zone, Shandong Province, China. With a production space of nearly 4,000 sqm, the company has 70 employees and an annual turnover of 20 million RMB (2.79 million USD) in 2021.

In its 20-year journey from private enterprise to the acquisition by Japan-based OSP Holdings, Weihai Yanfeng has transformed its operations by upgrading both its hardware and software.

Entering the China market

OSP Holdings was founded in 1927. Its main business is in food labels. The company's strategy is to provide a one-stop packaging service, and through the years OSP Group has gradually expanded into unsupported film products and folding boxes in addition to its original label business.

As its business developed, OSP Group began to actively explore overseas markets. China was one of the markets where it planned to invest.

In 2006, OSP Group established the OSPSZ company in Suzhou, Jiangsu Province, China.

Fujita Hirokazu, who is in charge of production in OSPSZ, tells Labels & Labeling: 'Before formally investing in the Chinese market, OSP Group carried out very detailed research. This showed that whereas in Japan per capita label consumption is

“The latest digital printing devices on display at Labelexpo Americas 2022 are much faster and more accurate, narrowing the capacity gap between digital printing and flexo printing technology. It certainly makes it difficult for us to choose a new device”

around 11 sqm per year, in China it is only 2-3 sqm per year, so we are very optimistic about the future development potential of the Chinese label market.'

Fujita Hirokazu continues: 'It took us nearly two years to prepare the plant, including site selection, equipment selection, installation, staffing to production. We started production at OSPSZ in 2008. OSP group always adheres to rigorous quality standards, and it has strong obligations not only to brand owners and customers but also to the company and its employees.'

Currently, OSPSZ employs 230 people, and its main business is food labels that are widely used in convenience stores, supermarkets and logistics. The company has also set up branches in Beijing, Qingdao and Shanghai.

'With the development of OSP Group's business in the Chinese market, production volume at the Suzhou plant increasingly could not meet the volume of customer

orders,' says Fujita. 'The acquisition of Weihai Yanfeng was based on the OSPSZ Group's decision to set up a new production base in North China.'

After many field trips and much research, OSP Group acquired Weihai Yanfeng on July 1, 2020, which started a new chapter in the Japan-based group's investment in the Chinese market.

Update and upgrade

Why did they choose Weihai Yanfeng? Hirokazu Fujita, the current general manager of Weihai Yanfeng says, 'We did different comparisons and examined trade-offs between building a new plant and acquisition. Compared with the Suzhou factory, which was built from scratch, we considered that Weihai Yanfeng's production equipment and technical personnel were more mature, and the company had accumulated a strong customer base and reputation, so that could quickly meet the business needs of our company in the



Inline flexo press at OSPWH



Intermittent offset press at OSPWH

“In the future, changing end consumer requirements will require more and more label products. As a label converter, OSPWH will rely on its years of technical strength and business networks to meet these future challenges and opportunities for the label industry”

North China market.’

At the early stage of the acquisition, OSPWH (Weihai Yanfeng) was equipped with an HP Indigo WS4500, in-line flexo printing equipment, intermittent letterpress and offset presses, die-cutting machines and automatic quality inspection equipment.

OSP Group had a clear strategic plan for further development after the acquisition and set a goal of three years to achieve profitability.

During this period, they planned to analyze the existing customer base and the company’s production processes and personnel, followed by investment in new software and hardware.

At the end of 2021, OSPWH retired its WS4500 digital press and purchased an HP Indigo 6K. ‘In addition to recognized excellence of HP digital printing equipment and services, we also took into account the characteristics of the main products ordered by our customers and the experience and skills of the company’s technical staff and operators,’ Fujita adds.

Although this new equipment has been installed for less than a year, digital printing orders are already expected to account for around 30 percent of total business volume this year.

In addition to enhancing the company’s hardware, OSPWH has streamlined the production process, quality monitoring and personnel management. For example, adhering to the quality management system of the wider OSP Group, OSPWH now implements strict quality control within the factory from raw material, production, storage, and delivery.

The company has standardized the production process and set up repair and maintenance processes for each machine to improve production efficiency.

Through regular internal training and assessment, the company has continuously improved the professional knowledge of its staff. The result was the achievement of ISO9001 quality control certification and ISO14001 environmental system certification in 2021.

OSPWH weathered all kinds of issues after the acquisition. Now its internal production and personnel processes have been streamlined and organized, the company has gradually begun to make profits.

Future development

Spearheading the group’s operations in the North China market, OPSWH mainly produces PS labels for marine-based health products, such as fish oil. As one of the first of China’s coastal

regions to open up to the world, Weihai boasts a coastline of 968 kilometers, accounting for 1/18 of the entire length of China’s coast. Annual production of seafood in Weihai exceeded three million tons in 2021.

‘The impact of Covid-19 on our business is not that big,’ Fujita says. ‘On the one hand, at present, the products of OSPWH are mainly for the domestic market, and the export is not much. On the other hand, as people become more aware of their health after the epidemic, the market demand for healthcare products has increased.’

Now OSPWH is ready for the next stage of development. The company plans to invest in new printing equipment by the end of 2022 or early 2023 to boost production capacity, but it is still considering whether to choose conventional or digital printing equipment.

‘Overall, there are advantages and markets for both printing technologies,’ Fujita explains, ‘But the cost of digital printing technology is still relatively high. In addition to the cost of the equipment itself - as well as ongoing operational costs - digital printing is a closed ecosystem, and you are closely tied to a supplier. In the future, we do believe, however, that with the development of digital printing technology, its operating cost will be greatly reduced.’

‘Another point of interest is that the latest digital printing devices on display at Labelexpo Americas 2022 are much faster and more accurate, narrowing the productivity gap between digital and flexo printing technologies. It certainly makes it difficult for us to choose a new device.’

In addition, the company is looking at the development of smart tag technology.

‘At present, the high cost of smart labels restricts its application in the field of the food market,’ says Fujita. ‘We do anticipate breakthroughs in the development of chip technology which will bring down the unit cost.’

Fujita concludes, ‘In the future, changing end consumer requirements will require more and more of label products. As a label converter, OSPWH will rely on its years of technical strength and business networks to meet these future challenges and opportunities for the label industry.’



To read more on the Chinese label market, visit www.labelsandlabeling.com/contributors/yolanda-wang

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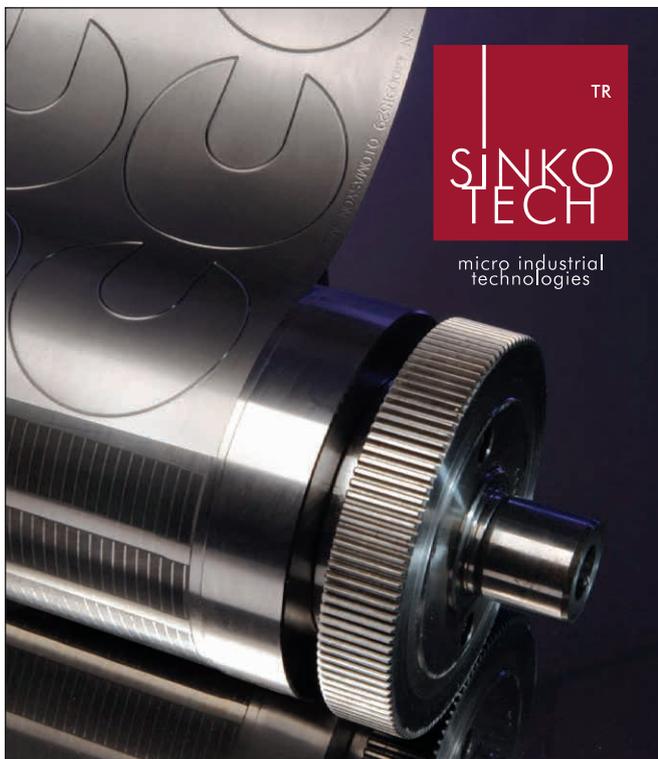
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Andy Thomas-Emans, Chelsea McDougall, Luis Rodriguez, James Quirk and Crystal Lindell report from Labelexpo Americas 2022. Piotr Wnuk and Akanksha Meena report remotely.

LABELLEXPO AMERICAS **2022 REVIEW**

After four years without a global label event, Labelexpo Americas 2022 triumphantly returned to the Donald E. Stephens Convention Center in Rosemont, Illinois. Chelsea McDougall reports

It was a landmark moment. After three years of pandemic setbacks, Labelexpo Global Series returned with its Americas show, hosted from September 13-15 at the Donald E Stephens Convention Center in Rosemont, Illinois.

The buzz was palpable. Labelexpo Americas event organizers reported that more than 13,500 attendees, representing 77 countries turned up to see what innovations have been launched since the last Labelexpo event in Brussels in 2019. The bi-annual Americas event welcomed large numbers of first-time attendees, particularly from Latin American countries.

This edition of Labelexpo Americas was notable for its digital transformation. With no flexo presses on the show floor, digital press manufacturers essentially had the show to themselves, and the focus was squarely on the latest developments in digital printing and digital embellishment.

There were many global digital press debuts at the show, including HP Indigo's V12 digital press, the Durst 20in Tau RSCi, Domino N730i and Dantex Pico 1200s.

On the converting side, automation and digital replacement of analog processes were key themes, as label converters across the globe face a critical labor shortage and are looking for ways to do more with less. A Digital Embellishment Trail allowed visitors to assess printed examples of tactile finishes and digital metallization.

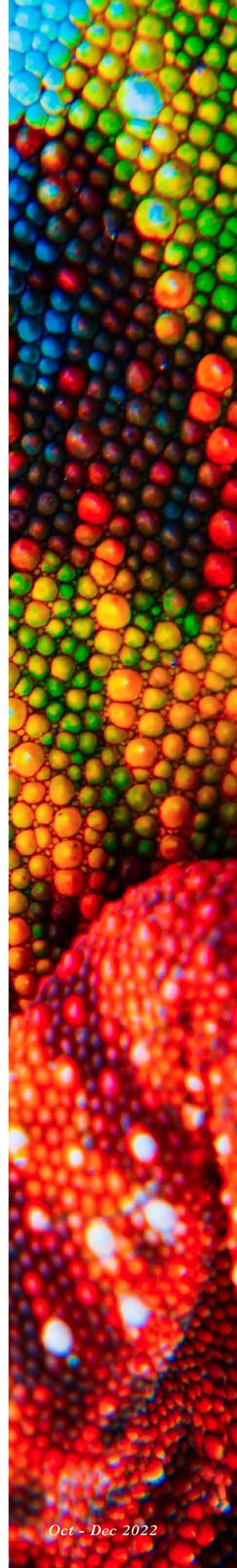
Sustainability also was demonstrated across the show floor, with TLMI hosting a series of presentations on its Eco Stage and arranging the recycling of printed rolls into fuel pellets. Material and ink suppliers looked to spark innovation in sustainability, as a paper shortage and chaos in the supply chain looms.

In addition to cutting-edge technology and innovations launched at the show, Labelexpo Americas 2022 featured a packed education program including conference sessions on topics such as mergers and acquisitions, opportunities in flexible packaging and navigating an unpredictable supply chain. A well-attended global market overview session discussed industry trends at the highest level.

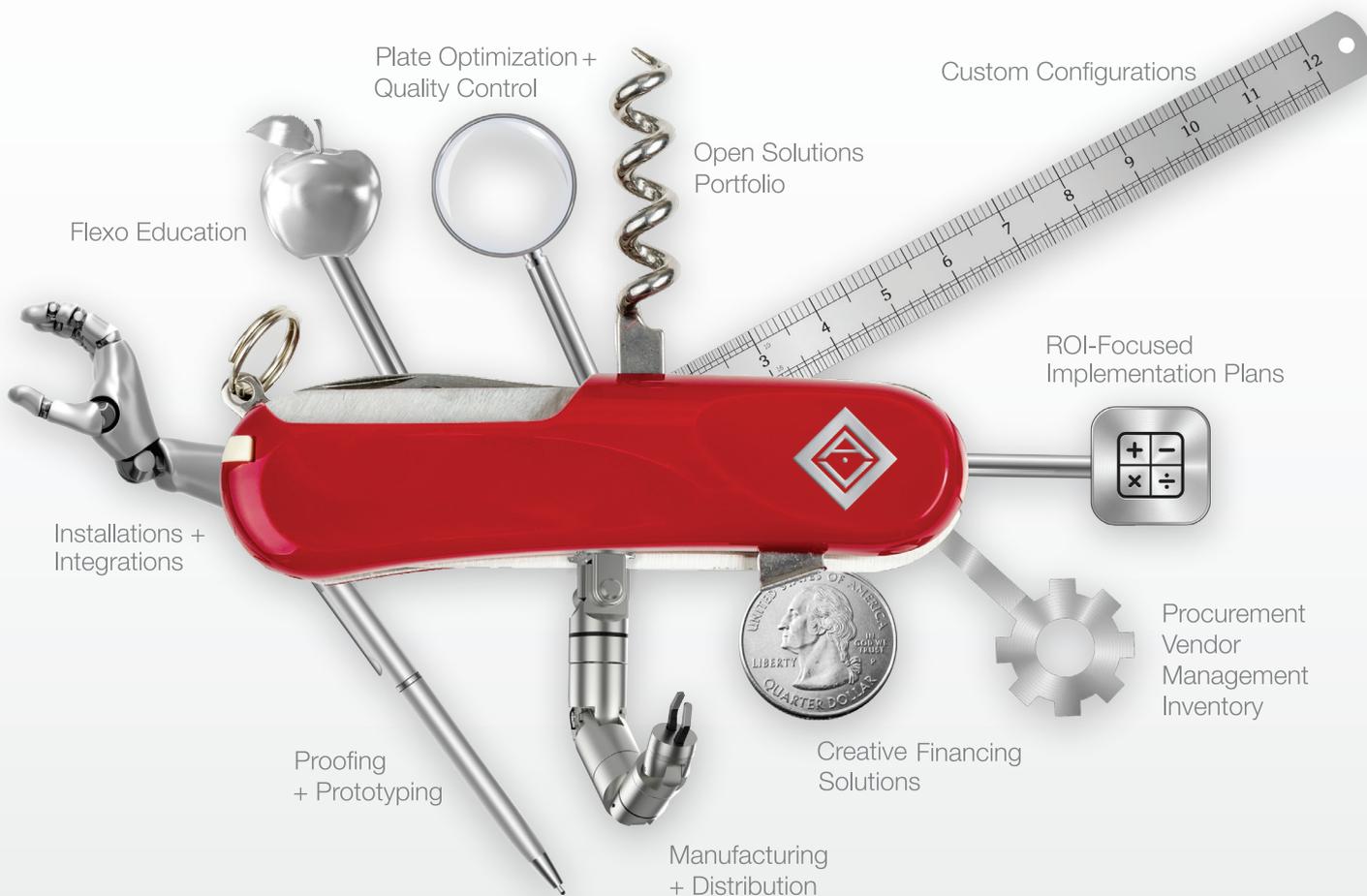
Two expert-led Label Academy Master Classes covered digital embellishment and self-adhesive label materials.

Linnea Keen, president of TLMI, comments: 'Labelexpo Americas 2022 was a fantastic event for our association and our members. The energy was infectious. Visitors were eager to learn, reconnect, engage, and conduct business. After three long years of conducting business virtually, it's clear that exhibitions like Labelexpo are vital to the health of our dynamic industry. TLMI couldn't be prouder to partner with Tarsus Group and Labelexpo on its much anticipated, and successful return. It was the reunion we all needed!'

Labelexpo's flagship European event returns to Brussels on September 11-14. Other 2023 events include Labelexpo Southeast Asia on Feb 9-11 and Labelexpo Mexico on April 26-28. Labelexpo Americas returns to Chicago in September 2024.



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SHOW FLOOR SALES

Labelexpo exhibitions have a reputation for a significant number of equipment orders being signed and initiated on the show floor. The Americas edition was no exception. Piotr Wnuk reports

HP Indigo's label production portfolio allows converters to capitalize on the growing advantages of digital printing. And it was clear from the event that an increasing number of industry professionals were looking to do just that. In fact, throughout the show, 16 letters of intent for the HP Indigo V12 digital press were signed by 11 customers in North America and five in Europe.

'Labelexpo is a selling show, and this year's event did not disappoint,' says Bryan Topham, marketing manager for labels and packaging at HP. 'It was the first big label event in a couple of years. It was evident by the energy and excitement within our booth that this community was ready to get back to business and HP was there to deliver. HP does not share sales information; however, I can say we have signed multiple letters of intent for our new HP Indigo V12 digital press. We have been selling label presses to commercial printers entering the label market and are working with several existing customers to add additional presses to meet their growth demands.'

In line with 'digital transformation' the **Mark Andy's** stand was dominated by digital and hybrid technologies. According to the company, label converters commented on its continued strong profile in the label market, saying that it would be influential in their future investment plans. Under discussion were the first pilot installations of the new Digital Pro Max press as well as many other sales leads for hybrid inkjet-based presses.

'This year was one of the most successful Labelexpo Americas we've participated in,' says Tom Cavalco, executive vice president of Mark Andy. 'It was the first global event devoted to label market since Brussels in 2019. We felt the enthusiasm of visitors who appreciated the opportunity to meet in the real world.'

Xeikon America, a division of Flint Group, returned to Labelexpo Americas to introduce Titan technology, a new toner formulation.

'Labelexpo was truly encouraging and rewarding. For the first time, in some many Labelexpo editions, you felt a positive vibe from label converters across the Americas,' says Filip Weymans, VP of marketing for Flint Group Digital. 'We are already looking forward to Labelexpo Europe.'

Danish finishing equipment manufacturer, **Grafisk Maskinfabrik (GM)** showcased six machines, highlighting the company's latest innovations for converters in the narrow and mid-web segment. GM's lines on show were featuring Industry 4.0 compatibility and

cloud connectivity for future-proofing investments.

GM set a new record for sales at Labelexpo Americas this year. The sales included Canadian Cambridge Label and Altura Packaging, which invested in a GM DC330Mini compact finisher and finalized the deal during the show.

'We are extremely grateful to our new and repeat clients who like the high quality and latest innovations in our products,' says Uffe Nielsen, CEO of GM. 'This year we also had the pleasure of speaking at the master classes on digital embellishment and automation. We spoke about strong trends that help drive the label world towards less waste and meet the environmental expectations of modern print facilities. We are proud to see our finishing solutions displayed at four major manufacturers of digital presses - the label world is all about good relations and partnerships. We are looking forward to doing it all again in Brussels next year.'

UV curing specialist **GEW** reported that the company's return to Labelexpo Americas was also triumphant. GEW's new air-cooled UV LED curing system, AeroLED, was of particular interest to many visitors and contributed to GEW's stand being a hub of activity.

'With energy costs soaring globally and showing no signs of easing, we have found a dramatic increase in the level of inquiries about our LED systems and the energy savings they bring when compared to conventional UV,' notes Robert Rae, managing director of sales at GEW.

The company also reported that many of its UV curing systems were operating at the show, with GEW lampheads running on most of the leading manufacturers' presses.

'Bearing in mind the lower-than-usual number of working presses at this year's event, we were delighted to see an impressive range of GEW lampheads at work. We had 19 full UV systems in operation across nine different press manufacturers. This represents by far the highest number of UV systems on show by any supplier and is a testament to the quality and dependability of our equipment,' comments Marcus Greenbrook, director of international sales at GEW. 'It was great to be back meeting customers and industry friends again after four years. We didn't know what to expect with this being the first Labelexpo for some time, but for us, this was a great show, and our new AeroLED product launch was warmly received with great interest.'

Hybrid Software Group enjoyed brisk business at Labelexpo Americas 2022. It was, in fact, the first major industry event where



Sixteen letters of intent for the new HP Indigo V12 Digital Press were signed during Labelexpo Americas



Canadian Cambridge Label invested in a GM DC330Mini compact finisher during the show

“THERE WAS A REAL BUZZ ON THE SHOW FLOOR AND A NEWFOUND CONFIDENCE THAT THINGS ARE BACK ON A FIRMER FOOTING AFTER THE DISRUPTION CAUSED BY THE PANDEMIC”

all the companies in the group exhibited together to demonstrate new products that they had announced before the show, generating a record level of interest in the booth.

‘There was a real buzz on the show floor and a newfound confidence that things are back on a firmer footing after the disruption caused by the pandemic,’ says Mike Rottenborn, CEO of Hybrid Software Group. ‘Our booth was busy throughout with back-to-back demos. We often rang the “closing bell,” booking more than 690,000 USD in business from label printers in Latin America and the US. Interest from OEMs in our SmartDFE solution for industrial inkjet printing was very high, and we expect orders from our OEM partners in the next six to nine months as new digital presses begin shipping in volume.’

Sporting a newly refreshed branding, **ABG** wasted no time re-connecting with customers, partners and friends and showcasing innovations and technological updates to its extensive portfolio.

Of particular interest was ABG’s flagship machine, the Digicon Series 3, displayed for beverage specification, including Big Foot and Flat Bed Screen. With the Digicon and a DigiJet running the same samples during the show, visitors could see the differences in finishing capabilities between the two machines. The SRI3, showcased with new functionalities, was also highly popular, as was ABG’s DigiLase for roll-to-roll, individual pieces and A4 sheets, complete with its new decal option.

‘This really was the best Labelexpo Americas ever for ABG,’ commented ABG’s global sales director, Matt Burton. ‘Not only did we re-connect with so many friends across the industry, but we also had a bumper show in terms of sales and deals. It was particularly satisfying to see the extent of our hard work and enterprise since our last Labelexpo back in 2019 really paying off.’

Many visitors flocked to the **Dantex Group’s** stand to witness the launch of its next-generation Pico UV inkjet digital press series. Developed over the last two years, the range includes the PicoColour HD 1200, PicoJet 1200, PicoJet 1200i, and the flagship high-speed model with Dantex’s SuperWhite and DecoTactile technologies included as standard.

‘Labelexpo, in terms of digital press leads and sales, was our best ever,’ comments Ben Danon, CEO of Dantex Group. ‘Our sales drive has never been so strong, and we are ramping up the production capacity to meet the industry requirements.’

South Korean manufacturer **Anytron** presented an integration of digital printing and laser die-cutting with its 13in in-line label press Any-Jet III for the first time since its launch in 2022.

‘Customers interested in our new press were looking for a compact, easy-to-use machine, which would bring them a high



GEW’s new air-cooled UV LED curing system, AeroLED, was of particular interest to many visitors

return on investment. Most commercial printers were looking for opportunities to diversify their production and enter the label industry. Our customers can expect time, labor and resource savings and they can deliver labels to end users faster than any other label converters,’ states Amy Choi, marketing manager at Anytron.

Mexico-based converting machinery **Dimatra** presented a new model of its label inspection and slitter rewinder machine for 100 percent inspection and high-speed slitting as well as the range of its sleeve seamers and cutters.

Eduardo Flores, sales manager at Dimatra, is pleased with the outcome of Labelexpo Americas show. ‘It has been a great experience to bring our machines to the exhibition for the first time, and we will certainly do it again at Labelexpo Americas 2024. We sold two of the three machines that we presented during the show. We also generated multiple potential sales to companies in different countries that we hope will be confirmed in the next two to three weeks.’

Epson showcased a wide range of products, including the new SurePress digital label presses, ColorWorks on-demand label printers, and SureColor wide-format printers.

‘Our North American sales team and their Latin America colleagues were busy on the Epson show floor from open to close all three days. On the last day, we even had one customer still talking SurePress business as the booth was being dismantled. To me, that said it all,’ says Victor Gomez, director of industrial labels at Epson America. ‘The conversations on the show floor revolved around the real business issues that converters are grappling with today. They weren’t there to hear the usual feeds and speeds. For example, given industry-wide shortages, they wanted to know how the Epson SurePress design could help them minimize media waste. Or, with the trouble everyone’s having with recruiting and retaining talent, how will Epson automation lessen claims on scarce labor resources in their shops. These were substantive conversations beyond the smokescreen of specs and brochures. That’s hard to do



Hybrid Software Group booked more than USD 690,000 in business



Sales drive for Dantex has never been so strong. The company is ramping up the production capacity to meet the industry requirements

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unless you're in front of the press, demonstrating the points they care about as you go along.'

Cartes has reported the success of the tradeshow, as the company collected a wide range of leads for its Italian and New Jersey locations.

'Our stand was always full of visitors from all over the American continent, confirming this as one of the most interesting territories in new developments,' explains Enrica Lodi, sales and marketing specialist at Cartes. 'There is a clear market trend to opt for automated and user-friendly equipment to ease operations and reduce make-ready timing, as well as material waste. Altogether, we create the best match for real, fully automated label finishing.'

Konica Minolta unveiled the new AccurioLabel 400 5-color label press for the first time in the United States. The new device garnered tremendous interest from attendees, with a considerable amount of on-site sales and many more leads expected to convert to sales. The press, built off the company's flagship toner product, incorporates its IQ-520 technology along with an optional fifth color station with white toner, adding a whole layer of capability Konica Minolta hasn't had on the label side of the business until now.

Spanish manufacturer **Lemu Group** exhibited its new off-line digital finishing and embellishment system MA-350, incorporating robotic roll packaging and complemented with a GTU glueless turret rewinder.

'I can confirm that we sold the glueless turret rewinder with automatic slitting knives setting capability and the end-of-line automatic packaging line to Data Label in the US. This equipment was at the show,' notes Jokin Iruretagoiena, sales director for labels at Lemu Group. 'Besides that, we started serious conversations



ABG wasted no time re-connecting with customers, partners, and friends in showcasing innovations and technological updates



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with different customers to sell the MIDA embellishment we were showing at the show. We hope we will close the deal in a couple of weeks.'

Tectuprint, a Spanish engineering company with more than three decades of experience in the narrow web graphic sector, exhibited at Labelexpo Americas show for the first time.

It showcased its Semi-Tec 350 hybrid modular, semi and full rotary machine for conventional or digital finishing with flexo module and the option of inkjet printing.

'We were quite cautious with our participation in the show as we did not have any previous experience. We found many attendees who spoke Spanish were visiting our stand. Hopefully, we will be able to confirm a sale soon. Still, with our experience in mind, we have already reserved a prominent space and are looking forward to the next edition in two years,' comments César Barajas, CEO of Tectuprint.

Labelexpo Americas was also very fruitful for **DPR Labeling**, an Italian manufacturer, which debuted two new roll-to-roll digital converting machines for mid to high-volume label production.

'This edition of Labelexpo Americas in Chicago for our US company DPR Labeling has been just great, we have been able to close sales with customers we were already in contact with and wanted to see our equipment in action, and close sales with new customers met for the first time during the show. We also have extremely hot leads where we are confident of closing in the next few weeks,' comments Michael Panzeri, vice president of DPR Labeling.

'We were excited to finally attend Labelexpo after some very uncertain years,' says Mark Hopkins, president of **iSys Label**, a developer and manufacturer of short- and mid-run digital label

printers. We talked to integrators, converters, and brand owners and have verbal sales for a half dozen Horizon presses. We also re-established some legacy partnerships with our resellers, who are all waiting on our demo release.'

For many businesses, Labelexpo shows are a fantastic networking opportunity, with great conversations and leads that will keep turning into sales long after the show.

'We were blown away by the sheer number of visitors to our booth and the international makeup of our leads,' says Nick Knezic, president and general manager of **KOR Engineering**. 'We revived the tradition of meeting our partners and left the show with significant deals and potential prospects. There is no doubt that label printers should return to this show. We are already looking forward to the next Labelexpo Americas in 2024.'

Swiss die-cutting machinery specialist **Berhalter** could not share any information about potential sales initiated or finalized during the show since its customer journey is an average of five years. However, Angela Büchel, marketing assistant at Berhalter, told L&L it was refreshing to use this platform to meet personally with the company's existing customers and generate new contacts.

'We had a lot of great conversations with customers who showed interest in increasing production throughput with their new and existing lines, which are benefits of the equipment we manufacture. There are a lot of ongoing discussions, and we feel confident the results from the show will be well received,' concludes Derek Wheeler, vice president of sales at **Quantum Design**.



See the Installations section of labelsandlabeling.com for more sales announced during Labelexpo Americas 2022

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GLOBAL LABEL AWARDS

Guests from all over the world attended the Global Label Awards at Labelexpo Americas 2022. Luis Rodriguez reports

Labelexpo hosted the Global Label Awards and Reunion Party on the opening night of Labelexpo Americas 2022, bringing guests together to honor the innovations from across the label and packaging industry.

Actega, S-One Labels & Packaging and Flint Group Narrow Web all took home innovation awards, while Stijn Billiet, global sustainability director at MCC Label, was honored with the Rising Star Award. Harveer Sahni, chairman at Weldon Celloplast was honored with the R Stanton Avery Global Achievement Award.

Sahni began his career in 1971 at Weldon Sales Corporation, his father's stationary company. From here, he used the Weldon laboratory to research the develop new products including inks, adhesives, and coatings, leveraging his degree in chemistry. In 1978, seeing a growing demand for self-adhesive stickers in India, Sahni invested in a siliconizing line, developing and producing poly-coated release liners and later a barrier coating for uncoated woodfree or brown sack kraft papers that could accept silicone release coating.

'There was a profound wish in myself to share my knowledge, so I started writing about labels. I wrote extensively to share with the label industry. If anybody would I ask anything, I would share,' Sahni says in an interview with L&L's India editor, Akanksha Meena. 'I would not really treat them as competitors because they would eventually gain the knowledge in one way or another. Since I gave them the answers properly and correctly, today they respect all that.'

Sahni continues his work on his blog, sharing his knowledge to the labels and packaging world, and sits on the board of directors of the Label Manufacturers Association of India.

SUSTAINABLE INNOVATIONS

At the Global Label Awards, four other awards were given out, all of which in one way or another, had a sustainable push behind them. One of which was the Environmental Sustainability Award taken home by Flint Group Narrow Web for its Evolution line of products, which are designed to enable more sustainable packaging.

'All the work that we've been doing, our innovations, are all based around sustainability and how we can help in the circular economy from a packaging standpoint,' says Paulo Viera, research and development – packaging and narrow web for Flint Group Narrow Web.

The award was specifically given for two products, the first being its Evolution Deinking Primer. This product, when used with a crystallizable shrink sleeve label and Flint Group EkoCure XS inks, enables the deinking of shrink sleeve materials and as a result the clean sleeve label material can be recycled into PET packaging. The second is an overprint varnish that's resistant to the caustic solutions and protects the ink in the case of a floatable pressure-sensitive label.

Receiving the Rising Star award, Billiet started his career at MCC Label in 2020, bringing sustainability into nearly aspect of the



“THERE WAS A PROFOUND WISH IN MYSELF TO SHARE MY KNOWLEDGE, SO I STARTED WRITING ABOUT LABELS. I WROTE EXTENSIVELY TO SHARE WITH THE LABEL INDUSTRY. IF ANYBODY WOULD I ASK ANYTHING, I WOULD SHARE”



“ALL THE WORK THAT WE'VE BEEN DOING, OUR INNOVATIONS, ARE ALL BASED AROUND SUSTAINABILITY AND HOW WE CAN HELP IN THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY FROM A PACKAGING STANDPOINT”



RECOGNIZE INNOVATION

“AS OPPOSED TO AN END-OF-LIFE PACKAGE THAT CAN END UP IN A LANDFILL OR THE OCEAN, IT’S ACTUALLY ENDING UP IN YOUR GARDEN AND YOU’RE GROWING TOMATOES OR CORN, SO IT’S A PRETTY FUN INNOVATION”

business. And by early 2021, Billiet was said to have presented a roadmap for all global production sites of MCC Label to reduce its carbon footprint, guiding the Belgian facility to achieve a carbon neutral production.

‘Sustainability is something that comes in every corner of what we do, and at MCC, we actually wanted to make sure that we had different opportunities in [sustainability],’ Billiet says. ‘First of all, we wanted to focus on our people, making sure they have sustainable jobs and can work for a longer time. Next, is what we do in our operations. As an industry leader, we want to give the example of how to do this and give all kinds of projects, which can be reducing our carbon emission, making sure we have projects in waste, and all of this needs to lead into having products for our customers that are sustainable.’

Awarded the Innovation Award for companies over 300 employees was Actega for its Signite low waste decoration technology.

‘We were a bit shocked really, to be honest,’ says Grant Schutte, vice president of Actega North America Technologies. ‘We were competing with another Actega startup for the award ... so [we] kind of feel a bit bad about the fact that our colleagues, we have to walk past them and be like “I’m sorry, but at the same time, we’re not so sorry.”’

Actega acquired the Signite technology in 2017, it utilizes UV-curable chemistry to create decorations entirely on press, eliminating the need for laminated constructions used in traditional pressure-sensitive label production.

For the Innovation Award for companies under 300 employees, S-One Labels & Packaging took the win for its ReEarth commercially-compostable flexible film.

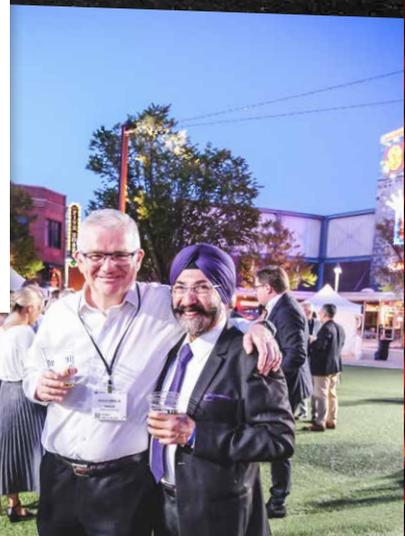
The films have passed the ASTM D6400 commercial compostability standards, and are BPI and USDA Biopreferred certified. The ReEarth material has achieved 100 percent disintegration, successfully composted in 47 days in real-world testing at a Compost Manufacturers Association facility during an 84-day industrial exposure independent lab test.

‘As opposed to an end-of-life package that can end up in a landfill or the ocean, it’s actually ending up in your garden and you’re growing tomatoes or corn, so it’s a pretty fun innovation,’ said Tom Hauenstein, vice president of sales at S-One Labels and Packaging, adding that, while he spoke on behalf of the company, there was a large team behind this innovation and they deserve the honor just as much.

The judging panel for the awards was Lori Campbell, chairman of TLMI; Linnea Keen, president of TLMI; Philippe Voet, president of FINAT; Greg Hrinia, editor of Label & Narrow Web; James Quirk, the former content director at Labels & Labeling; and Jean Poncet, editor-in-chief at Etiq+Pack. The chair of the judging panel was Andy Thomas-Emans, strategic director Tarsus Labels & Packaging Group.



To watch a video from the Global Label Awards, visit: <https://bit.ly/3V7XNd0>





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Plus, a 3rd system was featured in Domino NA's booth (6523), a **Delta Spectrum**[®] finishing machine with an integrated Domino K600i.

DIGITAL PRESSES TAKE CENTER STAGE

There were no flexo presses on display at Labelexpo Americas 2022, so the show was dominated by the impressive advances made in digital printing and embellishment technology. Andy Thomas-Emans reports

It has been three years since the last Labelexpo show so there was much to catch up on, and a clutch of world firsts greeted the 13,500 Americas 2022 show attendees.

This Labelexpo in many ways represented a turning point in the relationship between flexo and digital printing. Up to now, digital has been seen mainly as a way for converters to offload their short-run work, allowing the flexo press to handle the medium-to-long runs. But a new generation of digital presses developed over the pandemic years is now challenging that assumption, matching the speeds commonly reached by flexographic presses in real-world production environments.

Expectations were sky-high after **HP Indigo** announced that it would be showing its new V12 press at Labelexpo Americas, and after a hair-raising journey to Chicago from the New York docks that involved lost cargo and multiple teams setting it up in time for its debut, the V12 arrived safely at the show – the first time this press has been seen outside of HP's demo and production building in Israel. It was certainly worth the wait, printing at 394ft/min (120m/min) in six colors at 1,600 DPI, fully matching the productivity and quality of flexography.

The V12 makes use of HP Indigo's new LEPx technology, which replaces the intermittent digital plate cylinder found in all previous HP Indigo label presses with a continuous rotary blanket, building up the colors sequentially and then depositing the finished image onto the substrate. There are a total of 12 color stations, any six of which can be engaged for full-speed printing. If more than six colors are required two rotations of the blanket are required, halving the print speed. It is expected that most standard jobs will be covered by six colors.

Both near-line and in-line finishing systems are under development by HP Indigo's long-term converting equipment partner ABG.

Also present on the HP Indigo stand was Maximilliano Martino, chief technology officer of the global All4Labels group, which is the first beta site for the new press at its Hamburg, Germany plant.

Inkjet technology is also closing in on flexo productivity. **Durst Group** gave the global tradeshow premier to its 20in wide Tau RSCI, printing four colors at 100m/min (328ft/min).

The RSCI was shown in a roll-to-roll configuration incorporating two UV flexo units, one before and after the digital print engine – allowing, for example, a first down white and varnish to be applied.

The press was demonstrated with Durst's own workflow and

“THIS LABELEXPO REPRESENTED A TURNING POINT IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FLEXO AND DIGITAL PRINTING. A NEW GENERATION OF DIGITAL PRESSES DEVELOPED OVER THE PANDEMIC YEARS IS NOW MATCHING THE SPEEDS COMMONLY REACHED BY FLEXOGRAPHIC PRESSES IN REAL-WORLD PRODUCTION ENVIRONMENTS”

analytics software allowing real-time machine monitoring. Optional is Durst's Smart Shop software, which enables web-to-print operation.

Dantex Group launched the next generation of its Pico UV inkjet digital press series. Four different modular print platforms will be available from entry-level to full hybrid, 8-color and high-speed models.

Developed over the last two years, the range includes the PicoColour HD 1200, PicoJet 1200, PicoJet 1200i, and the flagship high-speed PicoJet 1200s which was on the Dantex stand. The presses use Ricoh's latest inkjet print heads.

Each press in the series is based on a modular design incorporating in-line finishing and a wide format touch screen which takes up two panels of the press side frame and allows easy access to all press parameters. The PicoJet 1200s launched at the show was configured with one flexo unit after the digital engine, a lamination unit and a slide-in/slide-out rotary die-cutting station.

The press is designed to register against the die station, allowing rapid end-to-end job setup with minimal waste.

Dantex's SuperWhite and DecoTactile technologies are included as standard. SuperWhite ink delivers up to 92 percent opacity in a single pass, while DecoTactile can create a wide range of textured embellishments. Additional OGV color options are now offered, extending the color gamut to a claimed 96 percent of Pantone colors at a Delta E of 3 and below.

The Pico press software has been strengthened through partnerships with leading workflow suppliers, including Esko.

Domino showed for the first time its N730i UV inkjet press, the first Domino label press to use the 1,200 DPI Bitstar print heads developed by parent company Brother Group.

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Labelexpo Americas 2022 is seen as a 'digital transformation'

Digital in brief

- **Dilli** showed its Neo Picasso UV inkjet press with an upgraded web control system for more precise registration. With CMYK plus two spot colors (orange and violet) and double white as options, maximum print width of 330mm, it covers a wide range of labels and flexible packaging applications. The latest version of Neo Picasso is equipped with a corona treater, chiller, pin-curing system and full-color variable data printing capability.
- **Epson** showcased its SurePress L-6534VW UV press available with digital varnish or orange ink. The digital varnish offers spot varnish, simulated foiling, and embossing, all in-line with label production. Orange ink has a 92 percent Pantone coverage certification within Delta E of 1.5. An in-line spectrophotometer is included. Epson also promoted its ColorWorks color inkjet desktop label printers, fitted with the same Precision Core printheads as the company's production presses.
- **INX** showed its established NW350 UV inkjet press, printing on a 350mm (13.78in) web at 160ft/min.
- **Screen** showcased the Truepress Jet L350UV SAI, the latest model from the L350UV series with a resolution of 600x600 DPI and speeds up to 60m/min. The Truepress Jet L350UV SAI series prints in CMYK plus white with blue and orange options.
- Chinese manufacturer **HanGlobal** showed its LabStar330S UV inkjet press printing at 50m/min printing at 600 DPI resolution. The company claims 90 percent of the Pantone color gamut can be achieved using only CMYK, while the single white achieves 75 percent opacity. The press is configured as a hybrid machine with added flexo and converting modules.

The N730i is configurable with up to seven colors (CMYK+OV+W), which covers up to 92 percent of the Pantone color range. Roll lifts at the unwind and rewind support media rolls up to one meter in diameter.

Flexo stations can be retrofitted before and after the digital print engine. The first station could be applying a primer for more difficult media types and the post-digital unit applying varnish, a brand spot color, or flood white for shrink sleeve applications.

The established N610i continues to be sold, and was present on the Domino stand, alongside the K600i dual bar digital UV inkjet printer. The K600i allows variable data printing at speeds of 492 ft/min.

JetFX launched a ground-breaking 30in-wide print bar at the show, printing at 100m/min using both eBeam and UV inks. JetFX was showing examples of embellishments on pouches and shrink sleeves as well as PS labels.

Also launched was the JetFX Visualizer software, which allows users to preview the effects of the embellishment in detailed full relief. The system holds a pre-loaded library of embellishment effects, including both foiling and varnishing.

The digital foil is of exceptionally high-quality due to a two-step process with a pre- and post-cure using a cocktail of different photoinitiators at different wavelengths. This results in excellent edge cure, avoiding the edge lift, which often characterizes digital cold foil applications. Varnish can be applied in multiple thicknesses in a single pass.

Xeikon also had a major inkjet announcement at the show. Xeikon/Flint Group is claiming a first for its LED-UV inks, which can be used on any Panther inkjet press installed since 2017 after an LED lamp retrofit. Xeikon says this reduces energy consumption by 20 percent during printing and more during standby when the lamp is switched off.

WATER-BASED INKJET

There are enormous potential benefits in using water-based inkjet in migration-

“WITH SO MUCH FOCUS ON INKJET, IT IS EASY TO OVERLOOK THE ADVANCES BEING MADE IN DRY TONER TECHNOLOGY. XEIKON LAUNCHED A SWATHE OF NEW PRODUCTS WHICH WILL REVOLUTIONIZE WHAT CAN BE ACHIEVED WITH ITS CHEETAH-SERIES TONER PRESSES”

sensitive applications such as pharma labels and food packaging, and this has become more practical with the development of pigment-based ink systems.

Labelexpo Americas 2022 saw a number of new water-based systems launched using these inks.

Arrow Systems launched a new digital press using Memjet's established Duraflex pigmented water-based ink technology. The ArrowJet Aqua 330 is designed to print labels, flexible packaging, blister foils and shrink sleeves at 1,600x1,600 DPI resolution and speeds of 150ft/min. For print-and-cut applications, the company showed its ArrowJet Nova 330R, which can use either blade or laser-cutting technology.

Anytron launched its Any-Jet III, a 13in (330mm) press also using Memjet aqueous inkjet technology, which is configured inline with laser die-cutting and an optional thermal lamination unit. Print speed is 45m/min at 1,600 x 1,600 DPI resolution.

Colordyne Technologies specializes in retrofit inkjet modules for flexo presses, and its major introduction at this show was the 3800 Series water-based inkjet module, targeted at food and pharmaceutical packaging applications and using Kyocera printhead technology.

Expanding its strategic partnership with Kao Collins, the 3800WB module leverages Colordyne's proven 3800 Series UV engine design and Kao Collins' Lunajet inks to create a system capable of printing on labels, plastic flexible film packaging and other non-porous substrates.

Colordyne was also promoting its new LED-UV inkjet integration module and announced a tie-up with Fiery to use its Fiery Impress server to drive both UV-LED and water-based retrofit modules.

Epson showed its SurePress L-4733AW water-based resin inkjet press, the successor to the highly successful L-4533AW.

Konica Minolta had a technology preview of its PKG-1300 digital corrugated/carton box printer, targeted mainly at the e-commerce packaging market. The press prints at 27m/min at 1,200 x 1,200 DPI with pigmented

water-based inks on uncoated cartonboard and corrugated stock up to 51 x 63in (1,300 x 1,600mm). The PKG-1300 can be supplied as a fully automated line including an auto feeder and stacker. The launch date is Q1 2023.

TONER DEVELOPMENTS

With so much focus on inkjet, it is easy to overlook the advances being made in dry toner technology. **Xeikon** launched a swathe of new products which will revolutionize what can be achieved with its Cheetah-series toner presses.

First up is a new dry toner technology the company calls Titon. Like Xeikon's ICE toner, Titon is qualified for direct and indirect food contact, but in addition incorporates protective layers, which provide heat, sunlight, water, scratch and scuff resistance.

As well as durable food-safe labels, a key market Xeikon sees for Titon is paper-based flexible packaging - stand-up pouches in particular - now being specified by many brands as an alternative to plastics-based constructions. This would allow paper to be used as a mono-material without a plastic or aluminum barrier. Its high level of mechanical resistance would mean no requirement for a protective varnish or laminate, and chemical resistance would make it ideal for products like wet wipes. Titon can be readily removed from paper products during the recycling process.

Titon toner will not run on the current generation of Cheetah presses, so we will need to wait for the next generation of Titon-enabled press technology.

Xeikon also unveiled new metallic silver and gold toners to run on the fifth print station of its Cheetah presses, allowing converters to add metallic embellishments without the need for adding conventional processes like cold/hot foil on the converting line.

For adding tactile effects on labels for beer, beverage, food, and health & beauty markets, Xeikon introduced its haptic printing process, which helps converters make significant time savings by avoiding any modifications to the pre-press files.

Konica Minolta continued a successful strategy of repurposing its commercial-market toner engine to the narrow web label sector, allowing Konica to take advantage of economies of scale in manufacturing, distribution and support.

The 13in-wide AccurioLabel 400 is the latest in this press series, adding a highly opaque white toner to the previous CMYK and upping press speed to 139ft/min (40m/min) in 4-colors at a print resolution equivalent to 3,600x1,200 DPI. Running with the white station drops the speed to 20m/min. The toner reservoir allows for 3,000 meters of continuous printing, and the unwind can take rolls up to 800mm. The Intelligent Quality Optimizer (IQ-520) software enables real-time control of white toner opacity and color using an inline spectrophotometer developed by Konica Minolta.

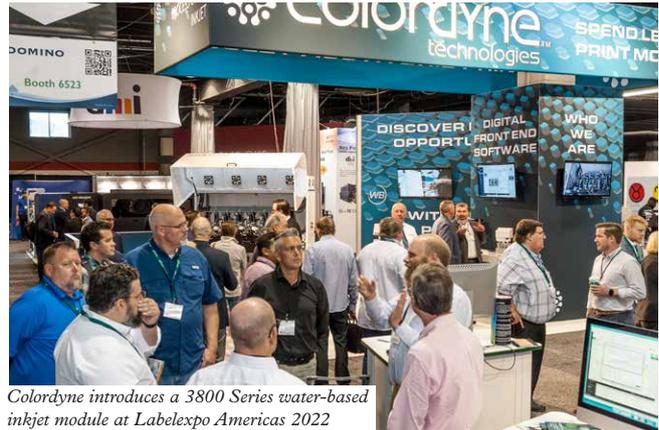
The AccurioLabel 400 is supplied with the AccurioPro Flux software package for the imposition and ganging of labels, which includes pre-flight and color management modules. A Kodak (Creo) controller for high-volume VDP is also available.

The press also includes as standard a sensor kit for registration to pre-printed media. A partnership with GM makes available the DC330 Mini all-in-one compact label finishing machine for either in-line or near line operation.

Also on the stand was the AccurioLabel 230 which put Konica Minolta on the narrow web map, along with a GM DC330Mini finishing unit with hot foil, screen embellishment and optional turret rewind. Konica says there have been more than 1,000 global AL230 installations since the company entered the narrow web market in 2016.

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

While there were no flexo presses at Labelexpo Americas 2022, there was still a lot of interest from visitors in finding out about new flexo developments, and flexo presses were actually sold at



Colordyne introduces a 3800 Series water-based inkjet module at Labelexpo Americas 2022

“WHILE THERE WERE NO FLEXO PRESSES AT LABELEXPO AMERICAS 2022, THERE WAS STILL A LOT OF INTEREST FROM VISITORS IN FINDING OUT ABOUT NEW FLEXO DEVELOPMENTS, AND FLEXO PRESSES WERE ACTUALLY SOLD AT THE EVENT”

the event.

Mark Andy, one of the founders of the narrow web flexographic industry, was promoting the theme of digital transformation, presenting three narrow web hybrid presses for label production.

The show was the world premiere of the Mark Andy Digital Pro Max press. Compared to previous Digital Pro models, the press is faster, has a lower cost to print, includes toner white, and can be upgraded with flexo and converting modules. The DPro Max press is based around the latest Konica Minolta AL400 print engine and offers a maximum speed with CMYK of up to 160 ft/min (49m/min). The press can be configured with up to three flexo stations before or after the digital engine. Cold foil and lamination stations can be added at any time.

For printing on the back of the liner, the press can be equipped with a turn bar and upgraded with Mark Andy's semi-rotary vertical die-cut unit. The toner white adds transparent and metalized substrate capability without the need for a flexo station.

This was also the first trade show outing for Mark Andy's Digital Series iQ press. The press is built around a Domino N610i UV inkjet module integrated with Mark Andy's Evolution Series press platform. The Digital Series iQ can be configured with up to seven UV inkjet colors - CMYKOV+WW. Hybrid converting components include flexo print stations, semi-rotary die cutting, a rail system for web turn bars or cold-foiling unit, and inline slitting, as required. The press offers 600 x 600 DPI resolution at up to 70m/min (230ft/min). Live demos included VDP printing on white gloss BOPP foil and a Kombucha label printed on chrome metalized PP foil.

The established Digital Series HD press was also on show configured with four flexo units, in-line varnish and die-cutting.

An important highlight was the launch of Mark Andy's sMArt link software, a real-time on-press data collection and press monitoring system. sMArt link ties shop floor equipment together in one analytical tool that is accessible from anywhere with an internet hookup. It can be accessed through a cloud-based platform and is suitable for new and existing Mark Andy presses, both flexo and digital/hybrids. Mark Andy says other manufacturers' equipment can also be tied into the system. sMArt link can also be integrated into wider factory management systems.



For in-depth information on the technology mentioned here, visit www.labelsandlabeling.com

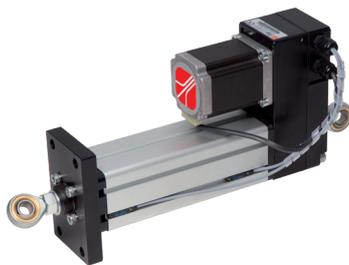


A SOLUTION FOR ANY PROBLEM

NOT TOO MANY
PROPOSALS
ARE NEEDED
JUST **THE RIGHT ONE**



LINE SENSOR



LINEAR ACTUATORS



WEB GUIDING SYSTEMS

WORKFLOW AND SOFTWARE

Automation, collaboration and consolidation were the key workflow trends on display at Labelexpo Americas 2022. James Quirk reports

As consolidation continues apace in the label sector, it was no surprise that major announcements from workflow software suppliers at Labelexpo Americas 2022 were centered on mergers and acquisitions.

The show also saw advancements in other key workflow trends: increased automation, the move toward cloud-based operations, and increasingly open systems that allow data collaboration and integration across multiple technology vendors.

NEW ACQUISITIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS

Labelexpo Americas 2022 was the first public showing for **AMP**, a recently founded new member of the **Baldwin Technology** family of companies. Described by chief IoT office Steve Metcalf as 'a health data app for the converting process,' AMP is a cloud-based data aggregation and analytics platform designed for printing companies to create new Industry 4.0 advantages with their production data. The vendor-neutral platform can connect to and collect data from any physical pressroom asset in addition to MIS, ERP and other workflow software.

Esco was joined at its booth by newly-acquired AI software developer **Tilia Labs**, whose range of intelligent algorithms for sheet layout, estimation and planning will be integrated into Esco's existing software suite.

Esco also announced a new partnership with **GMG**, which will see GMG's profiling and color prediction technology GMG OpenColor connected to Esco's native pre-press editing software, ArtPro+. The connector will be launched in November.

The new ArtPro+ GMG OpenColor Connector enhances the connectivity and data exchange between the two technologies, creating a smoother and more efficient color conversion process. This integration ensures uninterrupted file processing and color conversion, without losing mission-critical metadata between systems – allowing both technologies to operate at their best.

Geert de Proost, director of product management at Esco, says: 'The manual reseparation of images and artwork to match brands' color accuracy demands can be a laborious and error-prone process. But by automating the reseparation using GMG OpenColor technology, via the unique integration with Esco ArtPro+, pre-press professionals can now accurately visualize color in before-and-after states and assess color deviations on-screen with precise Delta E readouts.'

The new connector will deliver wide-ranging benefits for converters using ArtPro+ and GMG OpenColor, including the creation of a standardized and automated process for color matching and reseparation of multi-color image and vector data, eliminating manual work, reducing the risk of errors and saving up to 60 minutes of operator time per job.

Hybrid Software Group showcased its recent acquisition of iC3D by demonstrating 3D visualization throughout the entire pre-press process. iC3D joined its Hybrid Software Group sister companies – Hybrid Software, Global Graphics Software, ColorLogic, Xitron and Meteor Inkjet – at the show. The latest acquisition brings the group's employees to around 300 and adds 3D visualization technology to Hybrid's extensive software and hardware offering.

The company's business is split evenly between supplying OEMs and direct selling to customers. 'You'd struggle to find a digital press at the show which didn't have a solution from one of our group companies,' says CEO Mike Rottenborn.

Label Traxx announced a merger with its two key partners, **Siteline** and **Batched**, to create a fully integrated, end-to-end production technology designed specifically for the label and flexible packaging market.

For the last six years, Label Traxx has collaborated with Siteline to develop and deploy a web-to-print technology that enables label customers to reorder, approve the artwork, pay invoices and manage their label product catalogs online.

Label Traxx has been collaborating with Batched for the last three years. Both companies developed production optimization technologies specifically targeting the unique needs of label printing, including automated scheduling, capacity planning and operational dashboards. This integration allows production operations to schedule and manage complex, multi-step production environments more efficiently.

'We are approaching our 30th year in business. Over the last six years, we have cultivated partners to accelerate our innovation. Now it's time to consolidate the portfolio and the teams to bring a well-coordinated and seamless solution to the industry,' says Ken Meinhardt, co-founder of Label Traxx.

For the last year, Label Traxx, Batched and Siteline have consolidated operations across sales, support, professional services and product development. This consolidation results in a unified approach to support existing customers and build a team with complementary skill sets. The unified system includes the Label Traxx system of record using a data model. Siteline provides the front-end web application for optimizing the front office, and Batched provides the web application for optimizing the production floor.

The ownership/leadership group will consist of Ken Meinhardt (Label Traxx), Jennifer Matt (Siteline), and Matt Murphy (Batched), with no outside investors. Rob Mayerson will lead day-to-day activities and the consolidation of operations as president. 'Label customers of all sizes are participating in rapid consolidation,' says Mayerson. 'We are investing in the ability to service growing organizations with the upcoming release of Label Traxx Enterprise, which will support multi-site operations. Siteline and Batched are tightly integrated into Label Traxx while being "loosely coupled" to Label Traxx, which means that in mixed ERP environments, Siteline and Batched will be able to work across the Enterprise. The new REST API from Label Traxx will extend the ability to connect Label Traxx to external systems.'

TECHNOLOGY

Artwork Flow presented its flexible workflow management system for multi-stage approval and artwork collaboration. Additionally, the company featured AI-enabled Smart Proofing for FDA compliance, helping brands go to market faster.

Axicon showed its 15000 series 1D/2D barcode verifier, designed to read both linear and two-dimensional matrix barcodes



Esko was joined at its booth by newly-acquired AI software developer Tilia Labs

“WE ARE DEMONSTRATING THE IMPORTANCE OF LINKING WITH EQUIPMENT SUPPLIERS IT HAS BECOME A KEY FACTOR WHEN CONVERTERS CHOOSE OUR SYSTEM”

simultaneously. All the symbols seen in their field of view are verified individually in accordance with the appropriate ISO/IEC standards. The verifiers are designed to be used in three different positions, so even barcodes on awkwardly shaped objects can be easily read. The 15200 barcode verifier has a 60mm x 45mm field of view, for use with retail point-of-sale linear barcodes as well as those used on small healthcare trade items. The 15500 version is claimed to have the world’s largest field of view – 95mm x 70mm – on a handheld linear and 2D barcode verifier.

Baldwin Technology launched the Guardian PQV 100 percent print inspection version 4.0, designed to help converters achieve print quality and reduce material waste. These state-of-the-art camera systems can provide single or dual-sided 100 percent print quality inspection for any application, ranging from high-volume label production with variable data to inspecting the challenging security print applications with features such as UV fluorescent, fiber inspection, IR covert, optically variable devices and inks, and magnetic inks.

Baldwin also showed products from its Vision Systems segment, comprising advanced color management and inspection technology.

BST launched its new ProView video web monitoring system. The plug-and-play print image monitoring system is suitable for both narrow and wide web applications and can handle web speeds of up to 1,000m/min. The company also showed web guiding equipment with newly upgraded camera technology and its updated Tubescan 100 percent inspection system. It ran a CEI rewinder equipped with BST inspection technology on its booth, and its web guiding and inspection systems were also featured on technology shown at the stands of CEI, Epson, GM and Kor Engineering.

CC1 showed its RapidVision high-resolution digital viewing technology, which it describes as an off-the-shelf, ready-to-ship system. It features a full complement of web scanning tools, including sequencing, multiscreen, tracking, master image, lateral direction full scan and running direction full scan. High-speed traversing allows for full repeat viewing and positioning. Also on show was the new DRC 6000-L automatic register control for flexo presses, which claimed to significantly reduce make-ready and run waste. A new mark pattern design corrects large register errors on set-up.

Cerm featured an ‘Integration Arena’ on its stand, which demonstrated the 30-odd manufacturing partners with which the company’s MIS can be linked – a figure that is ‘rising all the

time,’ according to managing director Geert Van Damme. ‘We are demonstrating the importance of linking with equipment suppliers,’ he says. ‘It has become a key factor when converters choose our system.’

New for the company’s label MIS is a shift to a cloud-based engine. It is currently available only for scheduling but will be rolled out in other areas soon. The company also was showing its new software for packaging companies, which is being targeted both at wider-web converters and also label converters who have moved into the production of flexible packaging or folding cartons – allowing them to expand their existing label MIS to handle packaging production requirements.

Cerm is growing its presence in the US market, with a dedicated office now housing five staff. Around 40 of its 400 customers worldwide are based in the United States.

Cognex showed its range of handheld barcode verification scanners, including the latest version, the DataMan 8700 series. Aimed at manufacturing environments in automotive, medical device, electronics and aerospace, the DataMan 8700 series decodes the toughest direct part mark (DPM) and label-based codes while withstanding harsh oils, dirt and water.

Also on display was the Cognex Mobile Barcode Software Development Kit (SDK), which allows simple, enterprise-grade barcode scanning for mobile devices.

Colorware USA promoted its MeasureColor branded products and services, including MeasureColor Reports, MeasureColor Mobile and MeasureColor software. New MeasureColor Reports 22.1 sees the release of several reports and dashboards specifically targeted at brand owners. These new views complement the library of more than 50 existing templates for print suppliers and pre-media agencies.

GMG Color showcased predictive multi-channel profiling and ink-saving tools. Its ColorServer bundle products are complementary software designed to drive ink and time savings through smarter color management automation. GMG OpenColor is a platform for accurate predictive simulation of the overprinting effects of spot colors.

Marc Levine, director of business development, says: ‘It’s no secret that label printers are under pressure from rising ink costs, labor shortages and complex color and substrate combinations compounded by shorter product cycles. One of the greatest challenges they face today is to create more with less. More



Software and workflow exhibitors show advancements in technology

throughput and color accuracy, in less time or with fewer resources. That's where the GMG solution range, powered by automation, truly shines.'

Esko demonstrated how its portfolio of hardware and software enables businesses to better digitize, automate and connect to accelerate the go-to-market process of packaged goods.

Melissa Plemen, senior director of inside sales and marketing at Esko, says: 'Thanks to cloud-based workflow automation, complete integration with MIS is possible throughout the entire pre-press workflow. So now all processes are connected – from design, editing and color accuracy through to customer feedback and approvals with WebCenter.'

The company showcased innovations in ArtPro+ including printing unit support and repeat layout creation, as well as folding carton improvements, a new usage dashboard, and enhanced WebCenter usability features improving ease of use and maximizing productivity and efficiency.

Esko also demonstrated its AVT Helios line, an automatic 100 percent inspection system designed for labels and other narrow web printing applications. 'A market-proven, automatic 100 percent inspection solution designed for labels and other narrow web printing applications, the Helios system automatically inspects the printed web for defects and imperfections, delivering exceptional quality results and eliminating customer rejections,' adds Plemen. 'With over 3,000 installations worldwide, Helios instantly identifies defects on labels as soon as they occur, reducing waste, boosting performance, and delivering 100 percent quality assurance.'

'Esko has developed full end-to-end workflow solutions for the digital printing of labels, from ideation through to inspection. Adopting these integrated hardware and software solutions serves to digitize, automate and connect workflows, systems and processes in label businesses, delivering the clearest benefit in meeting the challenges of today and tomorrow,' concludes Plemen.

EyeC featured a wide range of systems, including live demos of ProofRunner 100 percent print inspection technology, available for presses and rewinders with up to 68in (1.70m) web width. The system features new options to improve inspection performance on challenging raw materials and complex services. On display were also two EyeC Profiler print sample inspection systems for sample sizes up to 50 x 36in (1,270 x 915mm).

The company demonstrated its cloud-based artwork proofreading software EyeC ProofText and the EyeC Profiler Graphic, which automatically matches the entire content of print-ready files or step-and-repeat files to the approved artwork when integrated into a workflow system.

Hybrid Software Group showed version 8 of PackZ, its native PDF editor. Enhancements include complex layered artwork that can now be viewed in color and wired modes simultaneously, and object-based screenings can be inspected per separation. The Smart Flattener guarantees artwork quality and consistency, professionally managing spot color and transparency interactions as well as press

“LABEL CONVERTERS KNOW THEY NEED TO HAVE AN ONLINE PRESENCE TO PROFIT FROM THIS GROWTH BUT WE’VE HEARD THAT OFTEN THEY DON’T KNOW WHERE TO START”

gamut conversions. Pactions is a programmed toolset with action lists, responding to customer needs for advanced automation. It reduces the amount of operator time needed to edit, approve and print a new package design.

Also on display was StepZ 8, an interactive software package based on the award-winning technology of PackZ, which allows for the preparation and execution of step-and-repeat and variable data tasks for high-speed digital printing of labels. Hybrid Software also presented Cloudflow, SmartDFE and variable data printing technology. According to CEO Mike Rottenborn, cloud-based workflow will be 'a big push' for the company over the next year.

Infigo showed how its web-to-print systems can help with launching an e-commerce brand and building an online presence in as little as 90 days. Through the fictional ice cream brand Scoops, Douglas Gibson, CEO of Infigo, and Greg Young, head of customer success, dissected everything required for print e-commerce success – from the integrations that provide a seamless customer experience and printing workflow, to the strategies that improve conversions and enable scale.

The Infigo platform allows the creation of both B2B and B2C storefronts, supports artwork upload including pre-flighting by using Enfocus Pitstop technology, provides pre-designed templates and shows how to handle full variable data personalization.

Infigo also demonstrated the Infigo Connect open API, which syncs orders directly into workflow and MIS systems such as Hybrid, Esko, Print IQ, Tharstern, Cerm and Label Traxx.

Young says that often web-to-print is sold as a silver bullet for label manufacturers. However not every vendor has the integration capabilities or professional services experience to help their users 'hit the sweet spot' with web-to-print.

The company demonstrated how to create a storefront, how customers can upload and edit their own artwork, how the storefront integrates with their MIS and other platforms and the strategies that are required to push and scale the brand.

Label Traxx launched Version 9.0 of its workflow software at the show. In response to ongoing industry consolidation, the Enterprise Edition offers a set of capabilities designed to serve the requirements of multi-site organizations for the first time. The company demonstrated new CRM features with the Customer Service suite, including Rapid Quoting. The recently-added Inventory Forecast Tool provides the operations team insights and alternatives to respond to supply chain challenges in real-time from its Automated Planning & Scheduling Suite. Also announced were new subscription plans and cloud-hosting alternatives.

Meteor Inkjet, part of Hybrid Software Group, showed its portfolio of industrial products for labels and packaging, including a range of drive electronics for all major industrial inkjet printheads; ready-to-use digital front ends and workflow systems; software development kits allowing custom printers to be built from the ground up; and a complete suite of tools and services to support machine builders in the design and optimization of print systems.

OneVision showed its Label Automation Suite, which combines production planning with print file optimization. The intuitive user interface allows label printers to control and monitor their production. All production steps are mapped as a 'digital job ticket' in the software. Incoming print files are automatically checked by more than 130 criteria. Detected errors are automatically corrected and the files are optimized for the individual requirements of the label production. Among other things, the software performs the following corrections: creation of bleed and white/varnish masks,

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“WE’VE CREATED THARSTERN CLOUD TO BE SO INTUITIVE AND EASY TO USE THAT WE’VE REMOVED ANY COST ASSOCIATED WITH THE ONBOARDING AND TRAINING PROCESS”

correction of cut lines, and trimming to cutting dies.

In addition, the software places the labels on the web in an AI-based, efficient and material-saving manner. This can be done collected by job or customer, or across different jobs. Finished print files are transferred to the press. Files for embellishment and finishing are sent to the production machines. From order entry to printing, embellishment and finishing, the software offers maximum transparency and reliability for all production steps.

OneVision offers connections to common software systems or hardware components. Additional connections can be extended at any time.

Print IQ showed its end-to-end estimating, ordering and production system, eliminating the need for workarounds and offering time-saving and cost benefits. The Australia-headquartered company, with offices in the US, UK and New Zealand, has a background in commercial print and began its focus on the label market two years ago. At a press conference during the show, representatives from US-based Abbott Label spoke about the converter’s role in developing the software alongside Print IQ.

Synkrato announced the incorporation of Cloud Label Service enterprise label management into its platform. The addition enhances Synkrato as a single system to manage end-to-end logistics processes by adding label template management capabilities.

‘We are committed to offering a comprehensive solution to make supply chains reliable, resilient and scalable. Labeling keeps all supply chain parts moving by tracking, locating and identifying products throughout the supply chain. It made perfect sense to incorporate enterprise label management into the Synkrato logistics platform,’ says Amin Sikander, Synkrato president.

The addition of labeling empowers companies to manage label templates — without needing to write any code — from a single platform. Synkrato lets supply chain professionals make label template changes without IT assistance. Companies will be able to create and validate labels, reducing response time to label requirements and changes.

Jason Mancuso, Synkrato product director, says: ‘Our intent is always to simplify complex tasks. Label template owners can log in and make changes without relying on the IT department and share templates with suppliers in just a few clicks. This feature is advantageous for companies with different label versions, long label-revision processes, or short delivery timelines.’

Cloud Label Service incorporation also supports the current mobile application, one of Synkrato’s core functionalities, opening new possibilities for small and mid-sized companies without robust warehouse management systems. Synkrato’s mobile app removes the need to log into a system, access a label template, and enter the information to print it. The mobile app can be used to scan an item and choose a label template — for example, item, PO or LPN labels — add the corresponding data, and print it.

Techkon USA demonstrated the latest innovations in its SpectroVision in-line color measurement system and its newest handheld, all-in-one spectrodensitometer, SpectroDens 4. On display was a version of the SpectroVision system designed specifically for retrofitting Mark Andy, Nilpeter, Bobst, Omet, Domino, MPS and Gallus flexo and digital presses for automated color measurement and control.

SpectroVision is an in-line system that improves the color measurement and barcode reading process to keep presses moving at high speeds and to help flexo printers reduce waste. Each system



Automation, collaboration and consolidation were the key software and workflow trends

includes a color spectrophotometer, a 2D camera (for web viewing), a dedicated press-side PC/command console, and two seats of Techkon’s ChromaQA color management software suite.

Tharstern was offering Labelexpo Americas attendees free, three-month trials of its new MIS for the label and flexible packaging sector. Following the launch of its cloud-native software in 2021, Tharstern has spent the last year working with a group of beta customers to create a product that ‘will transform and modernize the MIS market for label and flexible packaging converters,’ according to CEO Keith McMurtrie. ‘We’ve created Tharstern Cloud to be so intuitive and easy to use that we’ve removed any cost associated with the onboarding and training process,’ he says.

Tharstern also demonstrated the connectivity that has been built into the MIS product. ‘We’ve created Tharstern Cloud using an API First approach, which means that any data within the MIS can be written and read by any external application at any level. Client details, order statuses, shipment information, ink colors – every data object. In today’s technologically connected world, that is pivotal,’ adds McMurtrie.

The software initially will support the label and flexible packaging sectors. Over the coming months, support will be added for manufacturing methods used in other sectors, such as carton packaging, wide format and commercial printing. This is down to the ‘sector agnostic’ approach the software developer has taken when creating the product. It can work with any type of manufacturing process, in any type of sector, to support the growing trend for diversification into other areas of print.

Theurer.com showed its C3 MIS aimed at the printing and packaging industry. The modular system can be adapted to the user’s requirements and expanded step-by-step. It covers every area of business, from estimating to manufacturing through to accounting and reporting.

Trinity Graphic promoted its shrink sleeve distortion services. As a shrink sleeve label shrinks around a bottle or packaging, all the graphics and embellishments on the label become distorted in proportion to the bottle or packaging dimensions. To compensate, all the graphics must be pre-distorted during the pre-press stage to ensure that the final label appears as the designer intended. The technology developed by Trinity Graphic uses the latest software, scanners and distortion measurement techniques to overcome these challenges.

Unilux showed its recently launched UniPrint web monitoring system, which can identify registration and color defects. It is available in a standard software package or a version with upgraded inspection features.



Continue reading our Labelexpo Americas 2022 review for details on material innovations and finishing equipment launches

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PLATES AND PLATEMAKING

Automation and water processing were key trends seen in the plates and platemaking sector. Andy Thomas-Emans reports

Labelexpo Americas 2022 demonstrated how automation and water processing can drive efficiencies and make sustainability gains in the printed label production process.

Asahi Photoproducts launched its AWP-CleanPrint line of water-washable flexographic plates, designed as a more sustainable alternative to traditional solvent-washable plates and to deliver improved quality on press with reduced cycle time. The water-wash plates have low surface energy resulting in fewer press stops for plate cleaning.

Asahi also promoted a new water recycling unit for use with its larger plate processing systems. The filtering system recycles approximately 85 percent of the water used in plate processing, leaving the remaining waste as a slurry or sludge to be disposed of. A portion of the additive used in the water wash remains in the filtered water, reducing the amount of additive required for processing subsequent plates. Using this recycling unit results in a cleaner processor, extending the time between cleaning and reducing maintenance costs.

Fujifilm showcased its established Flenex water-wash plates and processors. The plates are 100 percent solvent-free and are claimed to have a lower cost-in-use than thermal or solvent technology. Fujifilm's ColorPath Sync cloud-based color management software was demonstrated, providing one location to manage color for multiple workflows, devices and media.

DuPont demonstrated its Cyrel Lightning plate family, optimized for UV-LED exposure units. Previously, exposure settings on LED units often had to be adjusted for either higher quality or shorter access time.

Cyrel Lightning plates were formulated from the ground up with UV-LED exposure characteristics in mind. Plate chemistry is designed to produce UV profiles tailored to achieve tunability between surface- and through-cures. This enables a balanced cure that can be tailored to the unique dynamics of a scanned LED exposure sequence. At the same time, it provides sufficient through-cure using a finely tuned UV absorption profile.

Cyrel LSH is the first of the new range of Lightning photopolymer plates and will be available in 045 and 067 gauges. It is solvent processable and comes with certified exposure recipes in the latest software of the Esko XPS Crystal units. Cyrel LSH is a hard durometer plate with a smooth surface, suited for advanced surface screenings and optimized for a broad range of substrates across flexible packaging, tag and label and paper printing applications.

The company also showcased its established Cyrel Fast thermal platemaking system, consisting of a thermal processor and a variety of photopolymer printing plates for flexible packaging and labels.

Esko, meanwhile, focused on demonstrating its CDI Crystal 4260 XPS in combination with the company's new Flexo Engine module, demonstrating digitization of the flexo production process.

Screening advancements also were demonstrated at the show. **XSYS** showed a new version of its ThermoFlexX Woodpecker surface microstructure technology. Woodpecker Nevis enables higher imaging speeds for flat top dot flexographic plates used for standard white inks. This potentially allows flexible packaging converters to save on white ink costs while providing more contrast



Advancements in plates and platemaking were on display at Labelexpo Americas 2022

“THE FILTERING SYSTEM RECYCLES APPROXIMATELY 85 PERCENT OF THE WATER USED IN PLATE PROCESSING, LEAVING THE REMAINING WASTE AS A SLURRY OR SLUDGE TO BE DISPOSED OF. A PORTION OF THE ADDITIVE USED IN THE WATER WASH REMAINS IN THE FILTERED WATER, REDUCING THE AMOUNT OF ADDITIVE REQUIRED FOR PROCESSING SUBSEQUENT PLATES”

and improved color strength.

Woodpecker surface screening works by controlling the ink more accurately as it is transferred from the anilox to the plate and onto the substrate. The result is a smoother, higher opacity ink laydown, sharper line work, and cleaner screens, without the common printing defects often found in flexo printing, such as pin holing, trail edge voids and halo effects, at full press speed.

Woodpecker surface microstructures are applied at the imaging stage and will work with common open RIPs.

Nevis is the latest addition to the Woodpecker portfolio, which also includes the Sharp, Nano and Replay options for ThermoFlexX TFxX plate imagers.

XSYS also demonstrated its nyloflex Xpress Thermal Processing System, capable of producing press-ready plates in less than one hour.

Automation in plate mounting was demonstrated by **JM Heaford** with its AutoMounter, which eliminates operator judgment from the mounting process. Options include pre-register compatibility, plate and tape cutters and a sleeve exchange unit. The company also showed a semi-automatic FTS model plate mounter. The Heaford ELS model completed the trio of plate mounters on the booth.

AV Flexologic showcased its Automatic SAMM 2.0 800 automatic mounting machine for the flexo narrow-web industry, capable of mounting a flexo plate in less than one minute.



Continue reading to learn more about developments from material suppliers

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MATERIALS

Sustainable innovations in materials and a resurgence of RFID technology were key trends for substrate and adhesive suppliers, while inks and coatings manufacturers focused on more opaque whites, dual-cure technologies and low migration inks. Chelsea McDougall reports

Material suppliers at Labelexpo Americas 2022 faced a unique challenge. One that tasked them with showcasing the innovations that they've been working on in the three-year absence without a global label and packaging exhibition, all while balancing difficult conversations about lead times, supply backlogs and price increases.

In short, materials suppliers had to remain both innovative and prudent, pragmatic while groundbreaking at the same time.

If judging by anecdotal evidence and foot traffic at their booths, it appears as if they succeeded.

Material innovations on display at Labelexpo Americas 2022 were showcasing an industry-wide push toward a circular economy, while RFID and intelligent labels are making inroads. And while many challenges remain, the market volatility that has plagued the industry in recent years appears to be on the verge of stabilizing.

ADDRESSING SUPPLY CHAIN WOES

Aside from a few exceptions, most end-use segments in the label industry had witnessed rapid growth during the Covid years. However, as prosperous as the good times have been for label converters, they've also been met with a chaotic global supply chain, heavy inflation, historically high lead times, persistent price increases and aggravating backlogs.

While no one has a crystal ball, many material suppliers believe the hardest times are nearly behind us. Industry experts predict that the label and packaging market may soon begin to see some stabilization, at least in terms of cost, as raw materials become more readily available, driving down the price of goods.

And yet, paper shortages remain a top concern both for facestocks and liners, as industry-wide demand outpaces availability.

'The fact is, there's not enough paper capacity allocated to the label market, and it's not going to end anytime soon. Paper mills are closing or they're not building enough new mills,' says UPM Raflatac Americas senior vice president Tim Kirchen. 'There's been unprecedented growth in the label industry, but there's not enough

"MATERIALS SUPPLIERS HAD TO REMAIN BOTH INNOVATIVE AND PRUDENT, PRAGMATIC WHILE GROUNDBREAKING AT THE SAME TIME"

paper supply in North America. We have to make sure our suppliers know the label market is an attractive, long-term, healthy business.'

'We're not out of the woods, but we're seeing gradual improvement and stabilization,' he continues. 'Over the next six months I think the supply chain will become more predictable, and the lead times will be less extensive.'

However, the Russian invasion of Ukraine and an energy crisis in Europe may further complicate market recovery efforts and the efforts are stabilizing the market, experts warn.

SUSTAINABILITY

Though it was made more difficult by the market conditions, the innovation in sustainable materials hadn't slowed down in the years without a Labelexpo.

As the conversation around sustainability advances, material suppliers are moving beyond simply offering sustainable products, to focusing on the impact of label materials in the waste stream.

Adhesives that remove cleanly in the wash process, or that don't interfere with or contaminate the recycling process were a key trend among material suppliers. Removing the label material from glass or plastic containers enables their greater recycling, which in turn meets the growing demands of brand owners and consumers for products that are more sustainable.

Avery Dennison, pioneers of its CleanFlake wash-off adhesive, showcased at Labelexpo Americas 2022 the 'next generation' CleanFlake portfolio. This technology enables the recycling of rigid plastic packaging by either removing cleanly from or staying with the package, which results in good quality flakes, conserves virgin resources, and creates less landfill waste. Avery Dennison says this product has the potential to divert over 200 billion rigid plastic bottles and containers from landfills.



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Materials suppliers showcased their latest innovations

Fedrigoni showcased WOff, a wash-off adhesive that is expected to be certified by the Association of Plastic Recyclers (APR). This water-based formula provides debonding of nonrecyclable label materials from PET and glass containers – making them recoverable. Fedrigoni also displayed dissolvable facestocks and coupons.

Flexcon brought to the show its V-52RE wash-off adhesive for BOPP films. V-52RE separates from PET flake in the reclaim process, increasing the amount of rPET available for future use. Flexcon's PE films with V-127RE adhesive ensure the performance and recyclability of HDPE containers.

Also on the sustainability front, **Nastar** promoted its TwoFer Twin Signage portfolio, which includes the latest fully-recyclable TwoFer Linerless Label. It is made up of two recyclable face sheets temporarily secured with adhesive sides together until ready to be applied. TwoFer Linerless Label can be used for in-store signage for an end cap, wall, or aisle graphics. Both sides can be printed in one pass flexographically or digitally in rolls and sheets.

Also on display was Nastar's temporarily permanent and permanently removable T1055 adhesive, linerless pressure sensitive including direct thermal stocked in DT printer ready rolls, laser paper and film products, and pattern coated products.

Avery Dennison launched at the show a direct thermal (DT) linerless label platform for variable information labels used in e-commerce, food delivery and pickup, quick-serve restaurants, weigh scale, and transportation and logistics applications. Avery Dennison says its DT linerless product can eliminate liner waste associated with direct thermal label printing. The new platform uses emulsion adhesives to support semi-permanent and removable

applications and ensures consistent adhesive and silicone coating. According to the company, it's 32 percent thinner than lined labels and features up to 50 percent more labels per roll. Available through a flexible service model with roll widths from four to 60 inches, the platform reduces the number of SKUs converters must stock and eliminates die cuts by offering one roll for every label length. With more labels per roll, converters also benefit from fewer changeovers and higher productivity.

UPM Raflatac's latest innovation is Ocean Action Label, a label material made from ocean-bound plastic waste. UPM Raflatac also showcased its sustainable films, including UPM Raflatac Forest Film, PP PCR and PET PCR materials, and RAFNXT+, a product verified by the Carbon Trust and certified as Carbon Neutral, and Renewal Hemp material made with alternative fibers. Further, the label

material supplier exhibited its Carbon Neutral OptiCut and its print-on-demand and digital labeling solutions for digital printing systems.

Klear Plastic Ventures (Klear) presented its sustainable PET heat shrinkable film, Crystallizable TopGreen, a film that is recognized by the APR. Klear says these films pass through the PET bottle recycling process without clumping or negatively impacting the material flow. Sleeve labels made with crystallizable PET film allow the recyclability of post-consumer PET bottles.

Klear also showcased its films made with 30 percent post-consumer recycled content.

S-One Labels & Packaging won the Global Award for Innovation for ReEarth, a commercially compostable flexible packaging film. The company also showcased its recyclable ReTrevE EVOH high-barrier flexible packaging films, as well as laminating technologies, coatings and varnishes, finishing equipment, slitters and rewinders, cast and cure products for eBeam holograms, ink control and dispensing equipment, overlamine films and prelaminated metalized films.

Wausau Coated Products showcased its sustainable labeling options, including FSC-certified materials and products manufactured with up to 100 percent post-consumer waste and up to 90 percent recycled polyester (rPET) liner. Wausau offers products that use tree-alternative raw materials, like sugar cane paper and cotton.

Polyart Group launched r-Polyart, which is claimed to be the first synthetic paper made of 30 percent post-consumer recycled material. It looks and prints like 100 percent virgin material and has virtually the same mechanical properties, but, according to the company, has a lower carbon footprint.

Breit Technologies brought its



Industry suppliers showcase flexible packaging materials

eco-friendly cast and cure films, in which a decorative, clear holographic pattern or matte finish is applied to a printed substrate. Unlike laminated holography or cold and hot foils, the cast-and-cure film can be re-used up to a dozen times. Additionally, the cast-and-cure process does not use any adhesives or metals, so it doesn't affect labels' recyclability.

Ink and coating manufacturers also were launching developments in this area. Winner of the Environmental Award, at the Global Label Awards, **Flint Group Narrow Web** showcased its Evolution primer and varnish that boosts the recyclability of shrink sleeves and pressure-sensitive labels. The Evolution portfolio from Flint Group includes a de-inking primer for shrink sleeves and an overprint varnish for pressure-sensitive labels – both to prevent ink contamination during recycling so that the PET quality remains clear in the waste stream. Applied in a single pass on a press, these products are said to require no changes to the converter's existing ink system or curing processes.

INX International launched its INXFlex Contour a UV and LED dual-cure flexographic ink system for shrink sleeve labels. When used with INX's Genesis UV primer, INXFlex Contour is washable from shrinkable cPET and meets APR guidelines for recycling PET bottles with shrink sleeves.

Sun Chemical introduced bio-renewable, compostable and recyclable products under Sun Chemical's SunEco portfolio, including SolarFlex CRCL for shrink and non-shrink applications, SolarFlex High Adhesion Technology, SunCure mono-web coatings, SunVisto AquaGreen renewable ink series, MX12 ink dispensing technology and SolarWave UV-LED inks.

RFID IN THE MAINSTREAM

If material suppliers weren't talking about sustainability, they were talking about RFID.

Avery Dennison demonstrated its RFID/intelligent labeling capabilities through Avery Dennison Smartrac and atma.io harnessing the power of unique digital identification, improving origin tracing and inventory tracking while enabling consumers to interact with products directly. The company was running

“THE FACT IS, THERE'S NOT ENOUGH PAPER CAPACITY ALLOCATED TO THE LABEL MARKET, AND IT'S NOT GOING TO END ANYTIME SOON. PAPER MILLS ARE CLOSING OR THEY'RE NOT BUILDING ENOUGH NEW MILLS. THERE'S BEEN UNPRECEDENTED GROWTH IN THE LABEL INDUSTRY, BUT NOT ENOUGH PAPER SUPPLY IN NORTH AMERICA”

interactive demonstrations showcasing how converters can verify a food item's journey across the entire supply chain, providing transparency from the source to its final destination. It can also manage healthcare inventory, increase efficiencies, and ensure the wellbeing of patients; gain complete quality control and improved visibility throughout the automotive production process.

Just ahead of Labelexpo Americas 2022, **Beontag** announced the acquisition of **Technicote** as part of its global expansion and internationalization strategy initiated in 2020. Beontag has become a global RFID player in recent years, with rapid growth coming from acquisitions. The companies exhibited together in the Technicote booth.

Fedrigoni also was highlighting RFID with Tageos, a portfolio of high-performance, premium-quality RFID inlays and tags in UHF (RAIN RFID) and HF (NFC) frequency bands, as well as battery-free RAIN RFID sensor inlays and tags.

INK INNOVATIONS

Ink manufacturers were launching innovations for inks that cure in both UV and LED curing systems that allow label converters to embrace the environmental and productivity advantages of UV-LED curing while managing the financial risk as they integrate LED lamps into their production processes.

Flint Group showcased an expanded range of dual cure UV-flexo inks that are curable under LED lamps as well as mercury lamps. Dual Cure Ultra Clear is a UV-flexo clear over-printed coating that



Avery Dennison welcomed visitors to Labelexpo Americas 2022

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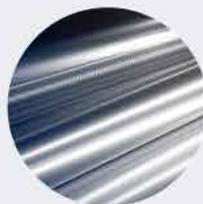
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“WE HAVE TO HAVE MAKE SURE OUR SUPPLIERS KNOW THE LABEL MARKET IS AN ATTRACTIVE, LONG-TERM, HEALTHY BUSINESS”

does not yellow over time.

Hubergroup Print Solutions introduced its I-Ray UV flexographic ink system available for conventional mercury bulb UV curing and I-Ray Max dual-cure for both UV LED and mercury bulb UV curing. I-Ray and I-Ray Dual Cure UV ink systems utilize the latest advancements in energy-curable technology, including high strength, low viscosity and compatibility with most substrates, including labels, flexible packaging and shrink films.

Hubergroup also was showing UV and LED curable coatings. The Hydro-X line of water-based inks, optimized for label, folding carton, bag and flexible packaging printing applications. The inks are imprintable, scuff-, rub-, scratch- and fade-resistant.

Ink manufacturers were also showcasing development for brighter, vibrant colors and opaque whites.

Zeller+Gmelin was a prime example with its newest development for UV/LED label opaque white inks that were launched at the show. The new ink formula was developed to provide advanced opacity, brighter hues, and smoother lay downs for dual-cure opaque white flood coat applications. The new ink chemistry developed by Zeller+Gmelin allows converters to achieve more opaque white laydowns in a single pass.

Natural Ink was promoting its 'ultra opaque' whites to 'ultra transparent' colors for wine labels and special effects for premium labels. Also on display were its latest developments for food contact inks and high-performance overprint varnishes.

Actega was also showcasing food safety at its booth and introduced a new ActExact SafeShield UV and LED flexo ink products for labels with stringent low migration requirements, including indirect food contact packaging, cosmetics and nutraceutical applications.

Nazdar Ink Technologies highlighted its latest LED curing Nestlé compliant inks, coatings, and adhesives. Additionally, the company will promote its new water-based flexible packaging inks.

MIXED BAG

Michelman offered a selection of water-based in-line and off-line primers and overprint varnishes for HP Indigo and inkjet-based printing platforms. The company's range of products for digital presses includes DigiPrime primers for HP Indigo, JetPrime primers for inkjet, and DigiGuard OPVs.

Michelman's DigiGuard Plus strengtheners enhance HP-validated UV OPVs' performance when combined with DigiPrime priming technologies for HP Indigo high-performance labels.

Complementing its product line-up, **Sun Chemical** also presented a range of SunInspire specialty inks and coatings for label applications.

Stouse presented the new silver BOPP roll labels for a high-end metallic finish for product packaging.

Over at the **3M** booth, the company was showcasing durable label products for automotive, medical and general industrial markets, a new print topcoat and a variety of solvent and solventless adhesives.

Channeled Resources Group presented its Frost AT technology that features a service temperature range from -65° F to 147° F and a minimum application temperature of -8° F.

Cyngient and **Imageworx** unveiled security labeling and brand protection innovations the companies have jointly developed. Showcasing the advancements of high-speed microscopic flexo security printing – utilizing high-definition inks from Cyngient and enhanced resolution printing plates from Imageworx.

Durico offered a new phenol-free film with increased heat



Fedrigoni launched a wash-off adhesive

stability and showed highly-resistant materials that are suitable for harsh environments such as solvent, alcohol, hot water and meat blood.

International Media Products showcased its most recent thermal transfer ribbon addition, the Z200+ wax/resin, offering image durability, abrasion resistance and high-speed printing capability.

K Laser Technology showcased its multi-application cold foil substrate, Koldfoil One which is said to be the industry's only multi-application substrate covering three different printing applications (flexo, digital, and offset). According to K Laser, the metalized substrate can reduce inventory costs, increase uptime and product consistency, and improve purchasing logistics for label and packaging manufacturers.

Luminescence Sun Chemical Security promoted its HeliMark inks for brand authentication, including a comprehensive range of security inks and product authentication tools.

Strata-Tac Advanced Coating Technologies launched coupon films for IRC labels and showcased new and existing inkjet and laser printable durable films, lay flat products, and security products.

UVitec Printing Ink presented its UV/LED curable flexographic and rotary screen inks, coatings and adhesives uniquely formulated for shrink label applications. The range includes overprintable or controlled COF high opacity white inks, gloss clears, scuff-resistant mattes, high build gloss and matte tactile effects, soft touch and sandy textures, cold foil adhesives, glitters, pearlescence and additional specialties.

Nobelus, a supplier of thermal laminate for general commercial print, introduced a portfolio of specialty unsupported films, designed for the prime label industry.

The portfolio featured a range of materials, textures, and visual effects, like rainbow holographic, high-efficiency soft touch and ultra-durable scuff-proof films.

Qspac presented its soft touch overlamine for digital printers and its holographic overlamine, offering more decorative options to converters.

Univacco released its Univacco 724 Series hot-stamping foil, specifically developed for hot stamping on a wide variety of wine label stocks providing excellent transfer at high-speed stamping on rotary and vertical presses.



Continue reading for more from Labelexpo Americas 2022 innovations in dies, tooling and converting equipment

The perfect soft touch solutions for high-end labels by Arconvert-Ritrama

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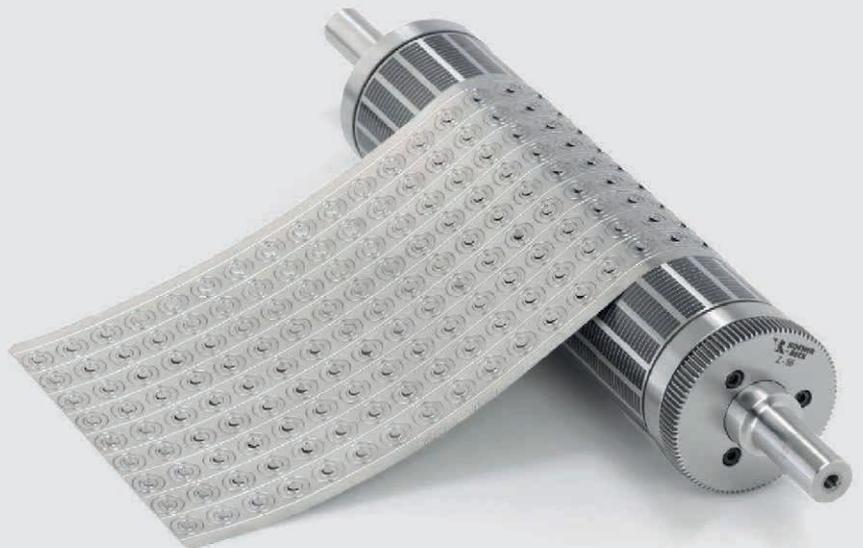
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DIES AND TOOLING

Dies and tooling suppliers look to simplify job changeover. Luis Rodriguez reports

Companies at Labelexpo Americas 2022 showcasing dies and tooling brought a range of equipment looking to push the efficiencies of traditional printing further.

Once an operator completes set up on a flexographic press, for example, it can run for as long as it's needed. The problems arise at changeover when that press needs to be set up for a new job.

Vendors brought a range of dies and other tooling that aim to change the way converters look at changeover. From lightweight tooling to sleeves that last longer than before, these products are designed to shorten what can be a lengthy process.

TECHNOLOGY

Bottcher Systems showcased a wide range of its products from print rollers to press blankets and plates, promoting its range of elastomer-covered sleeves for lightweight design and easy changeover.

Bottcher Systems highlighted the latest in its conventional printing blanket line, the BottcherTop Impresa. Converters can use the blanket on coated and uncoated stock, which Bottcher says makes it great for stochastic, FM or XM screened separations.

The company also showcased Bottchertop 4800, a printing blanket designed to perform using any energy-curable ink systems. According to the company, it's resistant to swelling that may occur when using polar solvents found in UV inks and washes.

Efficiency was the theme at the **Carey Color** booth. Looking to provide converters with maximum efficiencies, the company promoted its ITR Elastomer sleeve, which is said to last longer than polymer plates or sleeves by up to two-to-four times, and can be set up within registration in minutes.

Also at Carey Color's booth was the Kodak Flexcel NX system, which according to the company, can allow the pre-press department to compete for business that has been traditionally beyond what flexo has been capable of, because of the products image reproduction, high densities, and print contrast.

Bringing versions of its slitting machines to the show, **Dienes** featured the shear slitting machines saying that it can minimize the amount of downtime converters face having to check the knives and change them. The intelligent control systems can alert operators when a knife is ready to be replaced.

Impact Converting & Systems Solutions highlighted its range of flexible dies which are said to be much easier to mount and get within registration. According to the company, it can be used across all cylinder types, magnetic or not, regardless of materials. Also featured at its booth, was its multi-level cutting device which is said to lower the number of tools required on a press, lowering the cost, producing less waste between stations, reducing setup time, and ultimately improving efficiencies.

The company also promoted its die-cutting modules that are designed and machined in-house.

Kocher+Beck showcased three of its die styles: Chrome 24, GlueX Range, 3L Laser Long Life. According to David Morris, president and CEO of Kocher+Beck, the chrome is developed for long runs due to the high performance with minimal wear, specifically designed for thermal transfer and direct thermal products.

Also at the company's booth was the GapMaster EM unit, which was released less than a year ago. The unit is electronically controlled allowing for finer increments of adjustments and can also store jobs for a quicker changeover.



Experts in dies and tooling showcased new equipment at Labelexpo Americas 2022

'We still provide the other GapMaster units, but with the electronic version, we've given more control to the operator,' Morris says. 'It's a well-proven system, and the electronic system gives more visibility to the system and helps guide efficiency.'

Highlighting its Load-n-Lok elastomer sleeves, **Luminite Products Corporation** touted the simple changeover process, saying that the sleeves can be mounted on any mandrel at a converter's plant and can decrease setup time.

The company also brought a range of its other elastomer print cylinders and sleeves.

The company spoke about its push for sustainability with the elastomer sleeves and covered cylinders, saying that it decreases wasted materials and, due to its long-lasting nature, reduces the amount of time sleeves need to change out.

Rotometal brought print cylinder for both narrow and wide web systems, highlighting its MCA Magnetic Cylinders which are significantly lighter due to the aluminum body.

The company, however, wanted to ensure that the cylinder still maintains the strength and hardness of its other products.

'We've developed these magnetic cylinders to be upwards of 40 percent lighter,' said Stephen Bailey, UK and Ireland sales manager at Rotometal. 'It can be manually handled for easier changeover, and it's better for the machine itself because it takes less power to drive it.'

The company also highlighted its newly-launched online shop, which allows customers to purchase equipment directly from the company.

According to Rotometal, it is also looking to expand the shop to include equipment and machines from partners.

Schobertechnologies showcased its RSM410MX-Digi-VariCut, which, the company says, has a make-ready time of minutes and reduces waste due to its efficient, high-speed programmable robotic-automated stacking and counting system, known as the spider.

According to the company, the system can work at a continuous web speed of up to 164 ft/min due to the acceleration, velocity, and precision of the machine.

Wilson Manufacturing highlighted its Pin Eject Die, a newly released die part of the company's waste technologies portfolio, that looks to help converters with slug removal without needing an air source.'



Continue reading our Labelexpo Americas 2022 for details on finishing equipment launches

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FINISHING AND CONVERTING EQUIPMENT

At Labelexpo Americas 2022, added speeds and ease of use were trends seen across the converting equipment featured on the show floor, while digital embellishment took the forefront of finishing innovation. Luis Rodriguez reports

The state of the label and packaging industry has changed dramatically over the past few years. Struggles to find skilled operators, the continued difficulties in acquiring raw materials, and a strong push from consumers and brand owners alike for more sustainable options are a few of the obstacles label converters are facing.

When looking at the converting and finishing equipment exhibitors at Labelexpo Americas 2022 featured on the show floor, advancements made on the ease of use of the equipment to a host of digital embellishment technologies now offered by manufacturers look to address and amend these issues.

DIGITAL EMBELLISHMENT TAKES A STAND

Highlighted throughout the show, digital embellishment is a relatively new technology that has seemingly taken the world of labels and packaging by storm with equipment vendors showcasing technology that looks to change the way converters approach finishing. Sponsors of the Digital Embellishment Trail at the show were: Cartes, Epson, Grafotronic, Konica Minolta, Kurz, Mark Andy, Prati and Xeikon.

At the **Cartes** booth, the company showcased its Jet D-Screen digital embellishment system along with the laser die-cutting system. The digital unit can produce many effects including tactile, raised effects along with foil and metallics with little to no material waste and with no tooling required.

'What we are doing here is adding embellishment that can only be achieved by digital silk screen or metallic doming being applied and finished by a laser,' says Viriglio Micale, director of sales at Cartes, adding that these processes require absolutely no tooling.

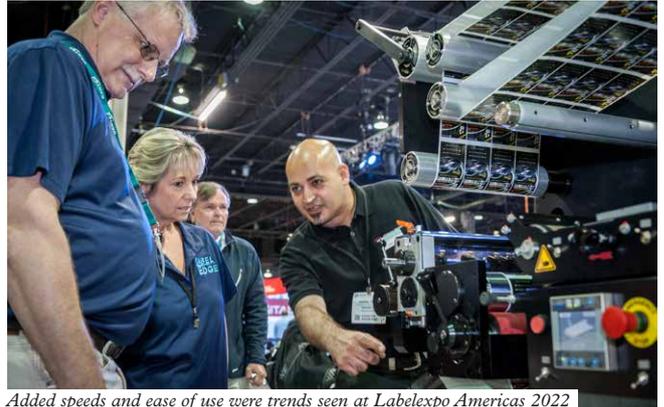
Additionally, the equipment features an automated system that would allow operators to produce, access, and save jobs, making changeover much more simplistic, according to Natalia Tsamorina, export sales manager at Cartes.

'There are smart storage options within the software itself that let the operators save all parameters of a certain job,' says Tsamorina. 'You can access a list of jobs and see the specific temperatures, pressures, and everything that has been changed or adjusted throughout the job. It can help operators save about 40 percent more of their set up time.'

Epson showcased a couple of its presses, mainly the SurePress L-6534VW UV with digital varnish or orange ink.

Epson's digital varnish offers spot varnish, simulated foiling, and embossing all in-line with the label production, which Mike Pruitt, senior product manager of industrial markets at Epson, says are technologies that have generally been regarded as expensive that typically necessitate longer runs, but with Epson's digital finishing, these run times can be relatively short with the capability of having every label look different.

Grafotronic brought its modular DCL2 Haptic digital finishing equipment that, according to the company, is designed to be completely future-safe due to a retrofit design. The machine enables converters to break into the high-end wine and cosmetics markets that were typically reserved for the more conventional



Added speeds and ease of use were trends seen at Labelexpo Americas 2022

“YOU CAN ACCESS A LIST OF YOUR JOBS AND YOU’LL SEE THE SPECIFIC TEMPERATURES, PRESSURES, AND EVERYTHING THAT HAS BEEN CHANGED OR ADJUSTED THROUGHOUT THE JOB. IT CAN HELP OPERATORS SAVE ABOUT 40 PERCENT MORE OF THEIR SET UP TIME”

printing processes.

A silk-screen printing module can be added to the press, giving converters access to flatbed silk-screen to braille applications.

Along with the US unveiling of the AccurioLabel 300 five-color press, **Konica Minolta** showcased its AccurioLabel 230 digital press with **Grafisk Maskinfabrik's** DC330 Mini paired up with it. The DC330 Mini is touted as an 'all-in-one compact label finishing machine' allowing converters to add varnishes, laminated, super-gloss, and cold foiling.

Dino Pagliarello, senior vice president, product management and planning at Konica Minolta, spoke of bringing the knowledge of digital embellishment to converters, hoping to show that the lack of plates, dies, and other tooling, which Pagliarello says, 'adds productivity, versatility, VDP capabilities, and it allows for the owner of the device to do things more efficiently when it comes to short runs.'

The highlight at the **Kurz** booth was the DM-Uniliner 2D. Able to print on various substrates, the DM-Uniliner 2D is a standalone metallization unit that's capable of overprinting metallized designs with a multitude of iridescent colors and effects.

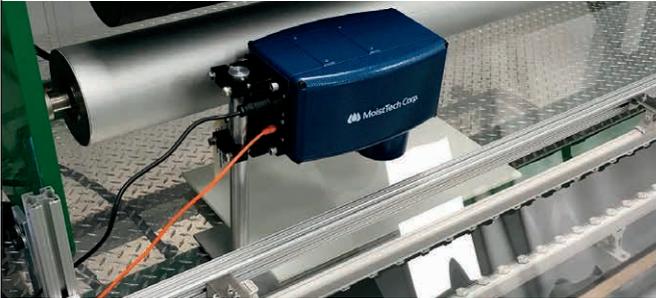
Matthias Mierderer, product manager for digital embellishment solutions business area machines and applications at Kurz, says: 'We print the design we want to be metalized on the backside of the foil before it's in contact with the substrate, so this gives us the chance directly after printing to cure the ink so it's not fluid anymore and more sticky, giving converters the opportunity to apply without having it being pulled away.'

Like the other machines, the DM-Uniliner 2D also is touted as a more flexible option that eliminates the majority of waste



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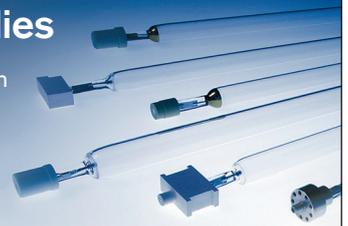
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Labelexpo Americas 2022 featured a Digital Embellishment Trail

that is typically associated with finishing equipment.

'Mark Andy is moving with the times,' according to Phil Baldwin, European sales manager at Mark Andy, highlighting the fact that at Labelexpo Americas 2022, digital seemed to take over the show floor. Bringing its Digital Series HD press to the show, the press featured many in-line embellishment and finishing options like silver metalized foil with textured varnish or clear foil with a matte varnish.

Prati's DigifastOne digital finishing line was the highlight of its booth. The DigifastOne looks to compete in the high-end label finishing market like wine and spirits by featuring die-cutting units with a wide range of finishing technologies such as tactile effects and varnishing all directly in-line on a variety of materials between 12 to 350 microns, according to Matteo Bertoni, area manager and Digifast20000 product leader at Prati.

Zeikon brought various presses to the show, highlighting its commitment to its customers in a wide range of industries that are now wanting the shelf appeal that wine and spirits tend to have.

'If you look to the digital printing market, Zeikon has been there as a supplier for more than 25 years,' says Filip Weymans, vice president marketing at Zeikon. 'The full-color digital printing has really taken a large part of the market, but now it's time to expand into other markets. Think about wine and spirits and food labels, those areas want that additional factor that's where digital embellishment will come into play, opening new application capabilities for the customers beyond just full-color printing.'

Other companies exhibiting digital embellishment technology included JetFx that featured its Digijet print bar that allows for digital finishing in just a

“THE FULL-COLOR DIGITAL PRINTING HAS REALLY TAKEN A LARGE PART OF THE MARKET, BUT NOW IT’S TIME TO EXPAND INTO OTHER MARKETS. THINK ABOUT WINE AND SPIRITS AND FOOD LABELS, THOSE AREAS WANT THAT ADDITIONAL FACTOR THAT’S WHERE DIGITAL EMBELLISHMENT WILL COME INTO PLAY, OPENING NEW APPLICATION CAPABILITIES FOR THE CUSTOMERS BEYOND JUST FULL-COLOR PRINTING”

single pass using UV inkjet technology and inkheads firing at 30,000 droplets per second. Next door to JetFx was AB Graphic International's booth which featured the Digicon Series 3 that includes two Digijet inkjet heads to allow for spot varnishing, digital foiling, and tactile finishing on any size of print run in a single pass.

Orthotec spoke about its newly-introduced digital screen varnish of digital embellishment module for the SRFD3030 Screen Printing and Hot-stamp machine.

'The new modular model allows us to apply digital screen varnishing digitally in just a single pass or multiple passes,' says Jason Huang, manager, Orthotec. 'The machine can produce a very high relief varnishing which is typically difficult to achieve with screen printing.'

Huang adds that the machine can create multi-layer screen varnish effect digitally by inkjet head, such as braille printing or silkfoiled or metallic doming in a thick and very high varnish result.

LemuGroup brought its MA-350 digital finishing and embellishment system with an incorporated robotic roll packaging. The system is capable of spot varnishing, hot stamping and screen printing with GTU glueless turret rewinder and robotic boxing system.

EASING AND SPEEDING CONVERTING

The converting process can sometimes be more complex than the printing process, so it can lead to production bottlenecks. Suppliers at Labelexpo Americas 2022 showcased its latest innovations that look to change that.

AB Graphic International (ABG) has said that it brought more equipment than ever to Labelexpo Americas 2022, showcasing various converting systems like its nonstop converting line for the first time



Cartes showcased its Jet D-Screen digital embellishment

featuring the NSU 670mm converter and Vectra turret rewinder, which the company says it can essentially run non-stop.

'Our nonstop converting line is designed to run essentially nonstop when a converter is doing something like a one-to-two color or blank label,' says Jim Kehring, west coast regional sales manager at AB Graphic International, adding that the demonstration shown at the booth was much slower than what the converting system is capable of.

ABG's booth also featured the Ecoleaf unit from **Actega Metal Print**, which ABG manages direct sales, marketing and customer service for the Ecoleaf technology.

Paulo Grasso, sales director for Ecoleaf at Actega, described Ecoleaf as a 'technology to substitute many traditional metalized substrates.' Grasso also added that the Ecoleaf doesn't use plastics to process its foils but rather processes metal flakes on sleeves to be transferred to the substrates, recycling whatever is left over to be used on the next pass.

AzTech Converting Systems showed its 13in semi-rotary press which is capable of 250 ft/min depending on the size of the label being cut. The dual rewind, servo-driven machine is said to be able to control die-cutting to minute degrees. The machine can be controlled through a single HMI, that is designed and programmed in-house.

According to Jared Bochat, technical service, AzTech Converting, changeover on the system is roughly 10 minutes with the capability to change from semi-rotary to full rotary with just a click of a button.

Bar Graphic Machinery demonstrated its BGM elite machines, including its BGM Elite iSR label inspection slitter rewinder, showcasing speeds of up to 984 ft/min. The company also brought the BGM Elite eDSR Easy Load die-cut slitter rewinder and the BGM Elite Comflex digital finishing system, compact, cost-effective systems designed for ease of use and high speeds compared to its market competitors.

The **Berhalter** spoke about its Swiss Die-Cutter B6 at its booth, which is touted as the fastest machine of its kind on the market with the capability to deliver 500 strokes/min.

Berhalter touted the Industrial Internet of Things connected capabilities of its machine as well. Allowing operators or shop managers to quickly check the machine to ensure it's running at full capacity and remotely run diagnostics.

'You can see the running value, blade sharpness, OEE, and even receive alerts for when the machine is due for maintenance,' says Reto Frei, senior sales manager, Berhalter.

Delta Modtech brought its newly updated Crusader Converter featuring Edge Laser technology, which according to Mike Wagner, business development at Delta Modtech 'allows the machine to run very accurately at higher speeds than just about any other laser cutter in the industry.'

Wagner added that the laser can change patterns on the fly, making a roll of labels with multiple patterns much more quickly, with speeds running up to 300 ft/min depending on the pattern of the cut.

Featuring six machines in its booth, **Grafisk Maskinfabrik** highlighted its DC350Flex high-speed label finisher. Fitted onto the machine was a multi-web module that could produce multilayer labels.

Lykke Trusbak, director of labels segment at Grafisk Maskinfabrik, says that many of the machines featured at the show are fully modular, which allows new converting equipment to be fit onto the line depending on what the customer needs. This equipment can also be controlled by a singular HMI with software developed in-house by Grafisk Maskinfabrik, which makes operating easier and, 'makes us stand out because when you look at our competitors, they have extra screens depending on the number of passes, but ours is fully integrated onto one screen no matter how much you



Converters look for ways to add value to labels at Labelexpo Americas 2022

“BECAUSE WE PRINT THE DESIGN WE WANT METALIZED ON THE BACKSIDE OF THE FOIL BEFORE IT'S IN CONTACT WITH THE SUBSTRATE, THIS GIVES US THE CHANCE DIRECTLY AFTER PRINTING TO CURE THE INK SO IT'S NOT FLUID ANYMORE AND MORE STICKY, GIVING CONVERTERS THE OPPORTUNITY TO APPLY WITHOUT HAVING IT BEING PULLED AWAY”

add to it,' says Trusbak.

At the show, the company also announced a strategic partnership with **Cerm** on the integration of the Cerm system with Grafisk Maskinfabrik's machines. On the topic of partnership, CEO of Grafisk Maskinfabrik, Uffe Nielsen, says: 'Interfacing Cerm software with the GM automation platform gives print shop owners instant in-depth production overview. At the same time cost is saved as external "data collection" boxes are no longer needed.'

KTI presented its MTR series of turret rewinders in web widths up to 22in, roll diameters up to 16in and speeds up to 750 ft/min. In addition, the machine has four spindles, an integrated dancer for superior web control and PLC touchscreen controls, which Derek Wheeler, vice president of sales at KTI, says allows for a much more user-friendly experience.

At its booth, **Lemorau** featured the Smart-L digital finishing machine. The press can be fitted with a linerless lamination station, semi-rotary or full rotary die-cutting, six circular knives for slitting, and a rewinder. The company highlighted the software included with the machine that allows operators to easily import and export job and production data, giving more insight into daily operations with the opportunity to improve OEE.

Martin Automatic completed a sale of an LRD rewinder it was showcasing to LMI Packaging on the show floor. CEO of LMI packaging, JP Moran, said the decision to go with the machine was based on the experience it had with another Martin Automatic machine.

The company also showcased its MBS unwind butt splicer which is said to be able to work nonstop on labels, flexible packaging, and shrink sleeves. Based on the sale of its rewinder, the company spoke about the ease of use of its machines, 'Our goal is to always make the operator's job easier, so hearing what JP had to say is just music to our ears. Increasing productivity, improving downtime, and just making people's lives easier is what we're always striving for,' says Gavin Rittmeyer, vice president of sales and marketing at Martin Automatic.



To watch a video from the Digital Embellishment Trail at Labelexpo Americas 2022, visit <https://bit.ly/3CXv5x0>

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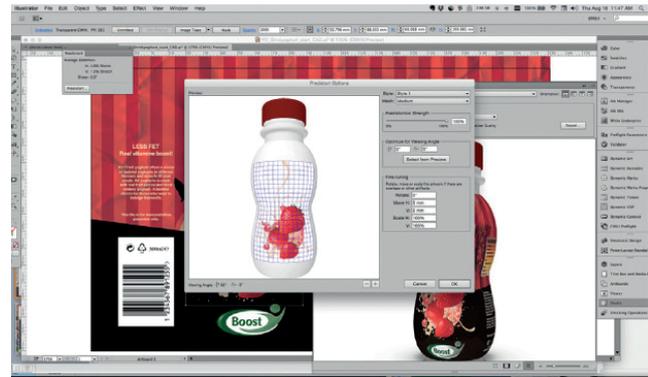


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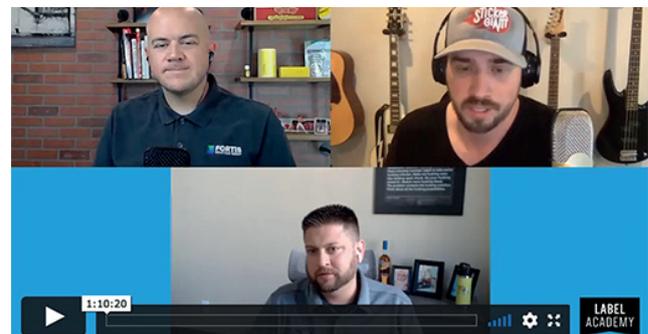
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ANCILLARY PRODUCTS

The ancillary suppliers at Labelexpo Americas 2022 offered an array of innovations for the narrow web printing industry. Crystal Lindell reports

Artificial intelligence (AI) to check for printing errors? Affordable UV LED curing that drastically cuts energy costs? The ancillary suppliers at Labelexpo Americas 2022 responded to the challenges of today with an array of innovations.

From more cost-effective versions of older technology to completely new concepts, read on to learn more about the most exciting inspection, cleaning, LED curing, and anilox innovations featured at Labelexpo Americas 2022.

INSPECTION EQUIPMENT GETS FASTER, SMARTER, MORE ACCURATE

The latest inspection equipment innovations tout higher speeds, artificial intelligence, more accuracy and an improved ability to scan white and clear materials.

Rosas Maschinenbau highlighted its AI inspection technology at the show. The new Infinity 4K line scan camera is designed for rewinders that handle web widths of up to 520mm (20in). It features new AI-based print inspection technology.

'It works like a human with decades of experience,' says Davis Rosas Wolf, owner of Rosas Maschinenbau.

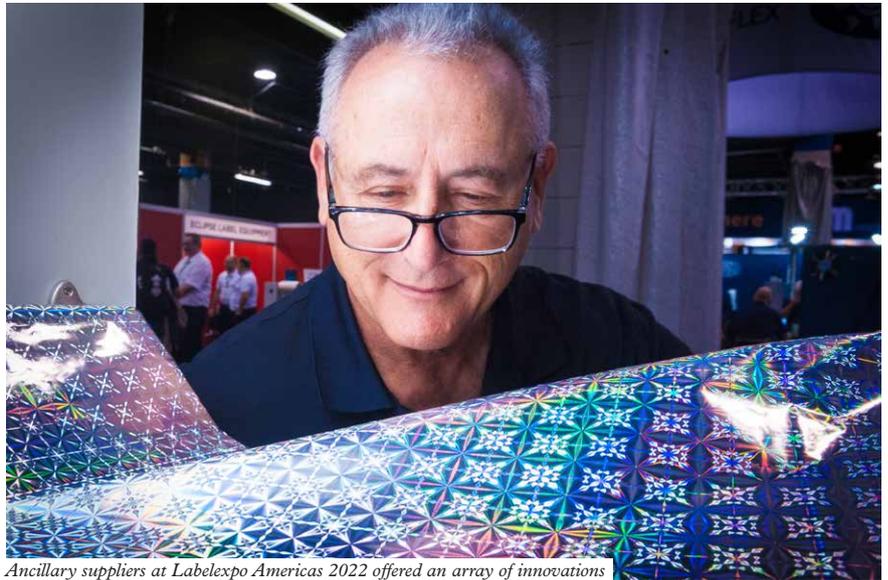
The system works with automatic setup software and capabilities such as PDF master check and roll map with PDF proof report.

It can inspect a wide variety of label types, including labels with variable or holographic backgrounds and reflective surface materials such as gold embossing.

Code reading and logging are also part of the system, which comes complete with reflection-free illumination, screen and CFK encoder roller. Designed for Rosas' Cheetah 500 and Leopard tabletop rewinders, the Infinity 4K line scan camera can also be installed in other industry label converting and printing machines.

Techkon's latest innovation can quickly check the levels of Optical Brightening Agents (OBAs) in paper.

Its new SpectroDens4 spectrodensitometer – the latest in its series of continuously evolving all-in-one (combined densitometer and spectrophotometer) handheld color measurement instruments – features OBA-check. Optical Brightening Agents are frequently used in paper production, and they can affect how paper looks under different light conditions.



Ancillary suppliers at Labelexpo Americas 2022 offered an array of innovations

"IT WORKS LIKE A HUMAN WITH DECADES OF EXPERIENCE"

SpectroDens 4's OBA-check provides precise information about the amount of Optical Brightening Agents used in a particular paper substrate. The company says this is extremely useful in today's print market, when the paper industry faces supply chain issues that often result in companies sourcing from different suppliers. Being able to easily check to make sure all the suppliers are meeting the printer's standards leads to a more uniform output.

An ergonomic design makes for one-handed operation. It also includes visual opacity measurement functions and rolling wheels for scanning.

Erhardt+Leimer's latest inspection equipment can check clear labels and run PDF comparisons to masters. The company's Smartscan 200 percent print inspection system uses UV illumination to detect defects on clear labels and it can scan with speeds of up to 800ft/min.

The company says it's the first 200 percent inspection system in the world dedicated for the label industry. It also uses intelligent classification to detect print defects, missing labels, unremoved matrix, splices and flags.

Applied Rigaku Technologies showcased its NEX LS, an in-line silicone coating analyzer for real-time process control.

NEX LS software provides a clear visual representation of the process. Its analytical head sweeps back and forth across a moving web and displays real-time

data as a graphical cross-direction and machine-direction profile.

The company also offers an at-line benchtop unit for measuring very low silicone coating weights and metal catalysts in silicone coatings.

Both benchtop and process systems feature energy dispersive X-ray fluorescence technology, a standard, nondestructive technique used in the paper and film industry for determining silicone coating thickness and composition.

NEW CLEANING OPTIONS

When it comes to cleaning, the newest innovations offer companies more sustainable options without sacrificing results.

Eaglewood Technologies' new Sitexco Label L10 Anilox Cleaning System has been developed to make laser anilox cleaning technology more accessible for the label industry, according to Peter J. Mulheran, VP and GM of Eaglewood Technologies.

The slimmed-down version of its Sitexco Laser Anilox System 5 was specifically designed for narrow web printers, while also featuring a more accessible price point.

The system offers cleaning times between five to 15 minutes, and it works on any type of ink chemistry, including water-based, energy-curable (UV/LED), solvent-based, adhesives, varnishes, and coatings.

The laser cleaning system offers an



Ancillary equipment helps label converters find efficiencies

“UV LED IS NOT A NICHE TECHNOLOGY ANYMORE. IT’S COMPLETELY MAINSTREAM. THE OPPORTUNITIES ARE HUGE, AND WE ARE CONVINCED THAT LED WILL SOON BECOME THE DOMINANT TECHNOLOGY IN OUR NARROW WEB MARKET”

alternative to liquid cleaning technologies by using lasers to abate the ink off the parts and then collect it with a filter. He claims the process is more sustainable than liquid cleaning as it doesn’t require chemicals, water, and it does not generate any water waste.

Mulheran says it’s also much easier to operate than liquid cleaning systems because there are no pre-cleaning or post-cleaning processes involved. In addition, he claims rolls are 30 percent cleaner compared to liquid systems technologies.

‘Our customers tell us the rolls look brand new every time,’ Mulheran adds.

FlexoWash also showcased laser cleaning equipment at the show.

Its FW 850 series models clean up to two narrow web rolls in one cycle and can be installed without water supply, drain or safety equipment.

Operators are required to place the aniloxes as-is on the traction stations, then a high-frequency laser cleans the anilox with a precise, defined pulse, which ensures an even distribution of energy.

The extraction system then removes all dust and fumes, making sure no nanoparticles enter the room. The program automatically stops when the cleaning and extraction process is finished.

The laser is automatically adjusted to the size of the anilox roll, making the process fast, user-friendly and safe, according to the company. In fact, there’s no need for safety goggles or other safety equipment.

‘The FW 850 series is available in the company’s Laser X Series, which cleans twice as fast as the company’s regular laser anilox cleaners,’ says Patrick Potter, president at FlexoWash.

Alphasonics showcased its Ultrasonic Press Room Cleaning Systems.

According to the company, these devices use high-frequency sound waves transmitted through liquid to clean away any ink residue and contamination to an incredibly low level.

Designed to clean anilox rolls, sleeves, and gravure cylinders, the Ultrasonic Press Room Cleaning Systems can help reduce setup times, minimize downtime, and optimize print quality.

The range of ultrasonic anilox roll cleaning systems can be used for flexography, gravure and offset. They are fully automated and can be tailored to specific cleaning requirements.

Meech’s launched its latest web cleaning equipment

Its Clean-R is a non-contact web cleaner for narrow web machines that does not require adhesive rolls.

‘Eliminating the need for the adhesive rolls, which must be regularly replaced, can help companies save up to 3,200 USD a year, assuming they would have used 28 adhesive rolls annually,’ says Matt Fyffe, VP and general manager of Meech.

To clean without adhesive rolls, the web first passes through a cloud of ionization at the entry point of the CyClean-R head, which neutralizes any static charges on the web. Then, a blast of turbulent air breaks the boundary layer on the web and loosens any contamination. A negative airflow then draws the contamination away from the web, filtering it through the air handling unit. As the web exits the CyClean-R head, it passes through a second cloud of ionization to prevent re-contamination.

‘The non-contact nature of the machine makes it suitable for paper and film,’ says Fyffe.

Available as a single-sided or double-sided cleaning configuration, it delivers consistent removal of dry, unbonded contamination from any web material – even as small as 0.5 microns.

Graymills showed its PrintClean 554/654 ink pump and bid washer, which was specifically designed for HP Indigo digital technology. Designed with assistance from HP Indigo experts, it offers fast, easy cleaning of BIDs and ink pumps with minimal labor and mess.

Twin filters also extend the life of imaging oil and minimize redepositing of pigment on parts after removal.

It also uses HP imaging oil, which means it creates no new waste streams. And an extra-long, stay-put flexible metal flush hose allows for directed, hands-free flushing.

UV LED GAINS POPULARITY AMID RISING ENERGY COSTS

LED was the star of the curing systems on display during Labelexpo. Innovations are making it easier and more cost-effective to install LED UV systems while rising energy costs mean companies are quickly seeing a full return on investment.

GEW showcased its air-cooled UV LED system AeroLED, which is now ArcLED compatible.

‘UV LED is not a niche technology anymore. It’s completely mainstream,’ says Robert Rae, managing director of sales at GEW. He adds that it now accounts for about a third of what GEW manufactures.

‘Dramatic increases in global energy prices have created an unprecedented demand for low-energy, sustainable LED systems,’ Rae explains. In Europe, some of GEW’s customers are paying 900 percent more for energy costs compared to a year ago.

The surge in prices motivates companies to switch to UV LED, which can reduce energy costs by 50-70 percent when compared to a conventional UV arc system. The significant energy price increases have meant companies are seeing a return on investments in less than a year.

‘We’ve even seen ROIs as low as four months after retrofitting,’ Rae adds. ‘The energy savings are huge.’

GEW’s AeroLED is a high-power system for full cure, printing, coating and converting applications up to 60cm wide. During Labelexpo, the company highlighted a design update that also makes AeroLED compatible with GEW’s ArcLED system. Using the same fan and ducting arrangement as the industry standard E2C, customers have the flexibility to switch between arc and LED curing on any station.

‘It’s very, very simple for an operator to use, and it’s very, very simple to maintain,’ Rae says.

Maybe most notable though, customers with GEW’s Rhino/RLT power supply platform can upgrade to LED within a matter of hours. They simply have to change the cassettes and run a software upgrade.

In an AeroLED system, air is extracted by a single centralized fan situated away from the press. There is no need for integrated fans or electronics in the individual lamp heads, which eliminates the

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high-pitched noise and the associated risk of failure. AeroLED features the same LED chassis and core components as GEW's LeoLED lamp head, for proven reliability. As with LeoLED, the lamp head has tough watertight seals to protect the LED modules from moisture ingress and to make cleaning easy and safe. Every aspect of the design has been carefully considered to deliver robust performance and long-term reliability.

According to GEW, two AeroLED systems have a lower electrical supply requirement than just one conventional arc UV system.

'The opportunities are huge, and we are convinced that LED will soon become the dominant technology in the narrow web market,' Rae notes.

Phoseon Technology featured its Nexus One sustainable UV LED curing products for flexographic printing applications.

Nexus One premium UV LED curing lamps deliver maximum power and a dose of UV energy for the flexographic markets where high performance is a key requirement.

The technology increases press uptime, reduces scrap by increasing yields, and features easily replaceable protective glass plate.

Prime UV showed its MiniMax, which minimizes UV cassette size while delivering maximum UV energy. Prime's RadMax Series provides proven reliability coupled with advancements in UV curing technology. The equipment features positive pressure air filtration system (PPAF), a simple-to-use control panel, and easy-to-remove cassettes.

ANILOX UPGRADES INCREASE CONSISTENCY

Updated anilox roll geometries offers more print consistency by reducing variations in ink transfer.

Harper's new Xtreme Channeled Application Technology (X-CAT) was on display, marking the first time label converters had the chance to look at the geometry up close.

'Customers were able to use a microscope to see the new patent-pending engraving geometry on an anilox roll on display. Says Josh Sigmon, Harper's VP of sales, 'The new shape allows for a combination of a consistent pocket structures that creates a channel flow while providing the consistency and performance of a closed cell.'

Developed to combat ink spitting, moiré, trail edge voids (TEV), ghosting, and ink re-solubility at high speeds, it also makes the anilox easier to clean and allows particles to pass through rather than being trapped behind the blade, which reduces or eliminates scoring.



GEW showcased its air-cooled UV LED system AeroLED

“WHAT WE’VE MASTERED IS REDUCING THE NUMBER OF FALSE ALARMS TO AN ABSOLUTE MINIMUM”

X-CAT works with UV, water-based and/or solvent inks and performs well in applications including process printing, the 60-degree hex, UV narrow web, solvent wide-web, UV mid-web, and water-based narrow web.

Anilox specialist **Apex International** showcased its GTT 2.0 enhanced anilox geometry.

The product of nearly 10 years of development, GTT 2.0 anilox, is specifically engineered to reduce liquid turbulence and create a calm liquid surface, the company says.

The improved anilox geometry creates up to a 50 percent reduction in cell wall surface area across the anilox while also decreasing the required channel depth by an average of 25 percent.

The new design saves on ink usage and delivers higher opacity and print quality. The engraving is available in a variety of volume options and can be used in multiple print applications, from fine print to flood coat.

Applied Laser Engineering (ALE) featured its Twin Track laser engraving technology.

The new hardware and software interface for ALE engraving machines is particularly effective when they're used to engrave high-volume cell structures.

NEW WAYS TO SUPPORT CONVERTERS

Enercon is joining those incorporating AI into their machines. The company's CoronaFlex corona treaters, specifically designed for high-speed flexographic presses and digital printing applications, improve the bond between ink and coating.

The machines include Enercon's trademark Compak Pro software, which uses AI to automatically track fault logs, maintenance logs and event logs, capturing a detailed snapshot of operating data.

The company says it's the equivalent of having a service technician monitoring the system with advanced diagnostic tools.

A USB port also allows users to download the data, and share it with Enercon service engineers to quickly resolve any issues. Operators also have the option to connect to real-time remote support and monitoring. The feature makes it easier for Enercon to service machines remotely, which has been even more highly requested since the pandemic.

Flexo Concepts, which is known for its bright orange TruPoint doctor blades, showcased a new gray TruPoint Keon doctor blade during the show.

Julie Saad, senior marketing manager of Flexo Concepts, says: 'It's a safer alternative to steel and it also holds its shape.'

Used for high speed, high temperatures and aggressive chemicals, it's 0.03in thick and has a maximum width of 1.575in. . It can be cut to length and it's food safe.

Yazoo Mills, Inc. showcased its cores during Labelexpo, highlighting the fact that they are made in the United States. According to Chris Evans, Yazoo's North American sales director this has helped the company serve customers despite a tumultuous global supply chain.



Labelexpo returns to Brussels from Sept 11-14, 2023. For information, visit www.labelexpo-europe.com

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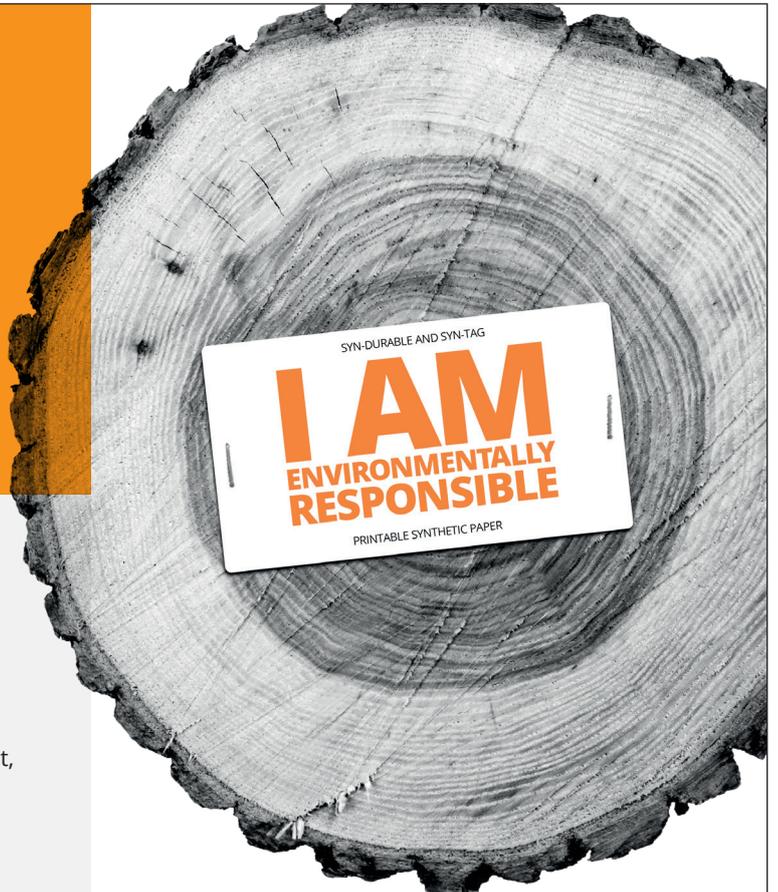
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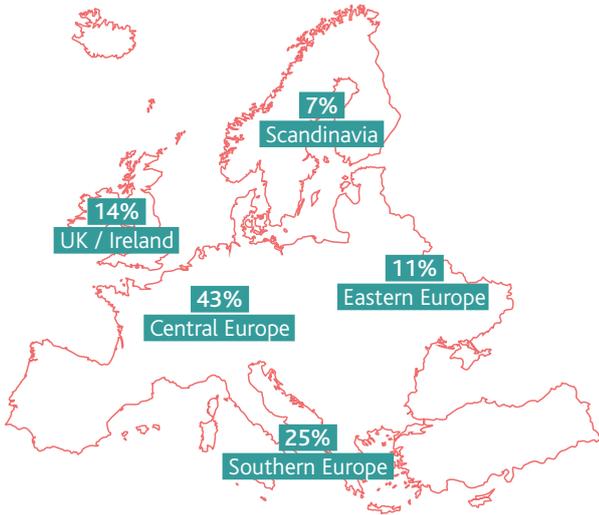
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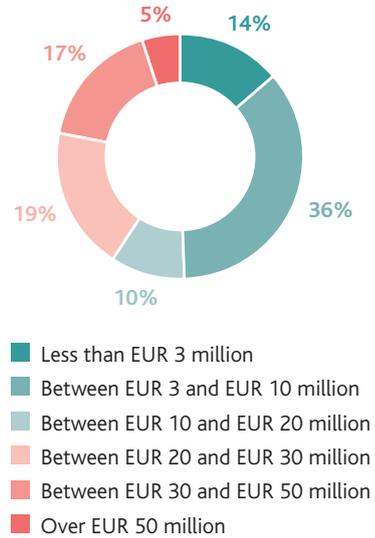
Label trends

Given the ongoing challenges, in the latest Radar market survey, Finat presents data that qualifies and quantifies the impact of the supply chain shortages on the European label and packaging converters

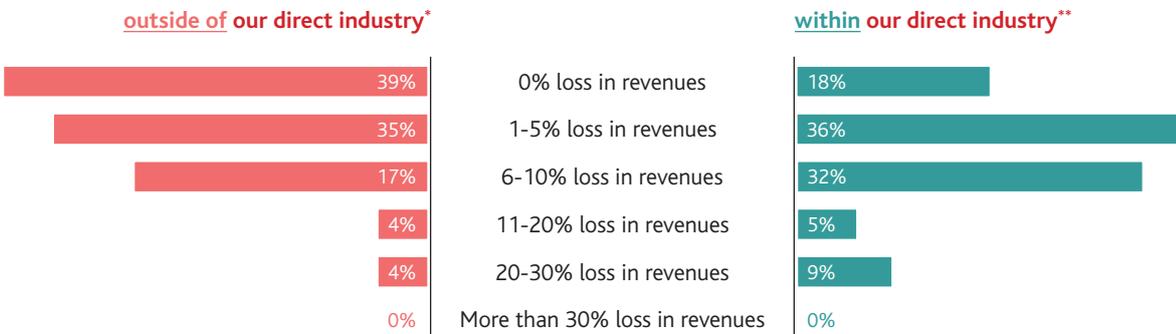
Participating converters by region



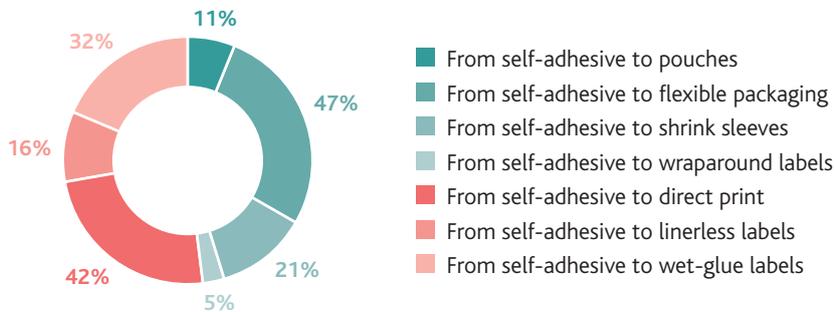
Annual revenues of surveyed converters



Converters' lost revenues due to supply chain issues:



Where are converters seeing their customers' applications move to?



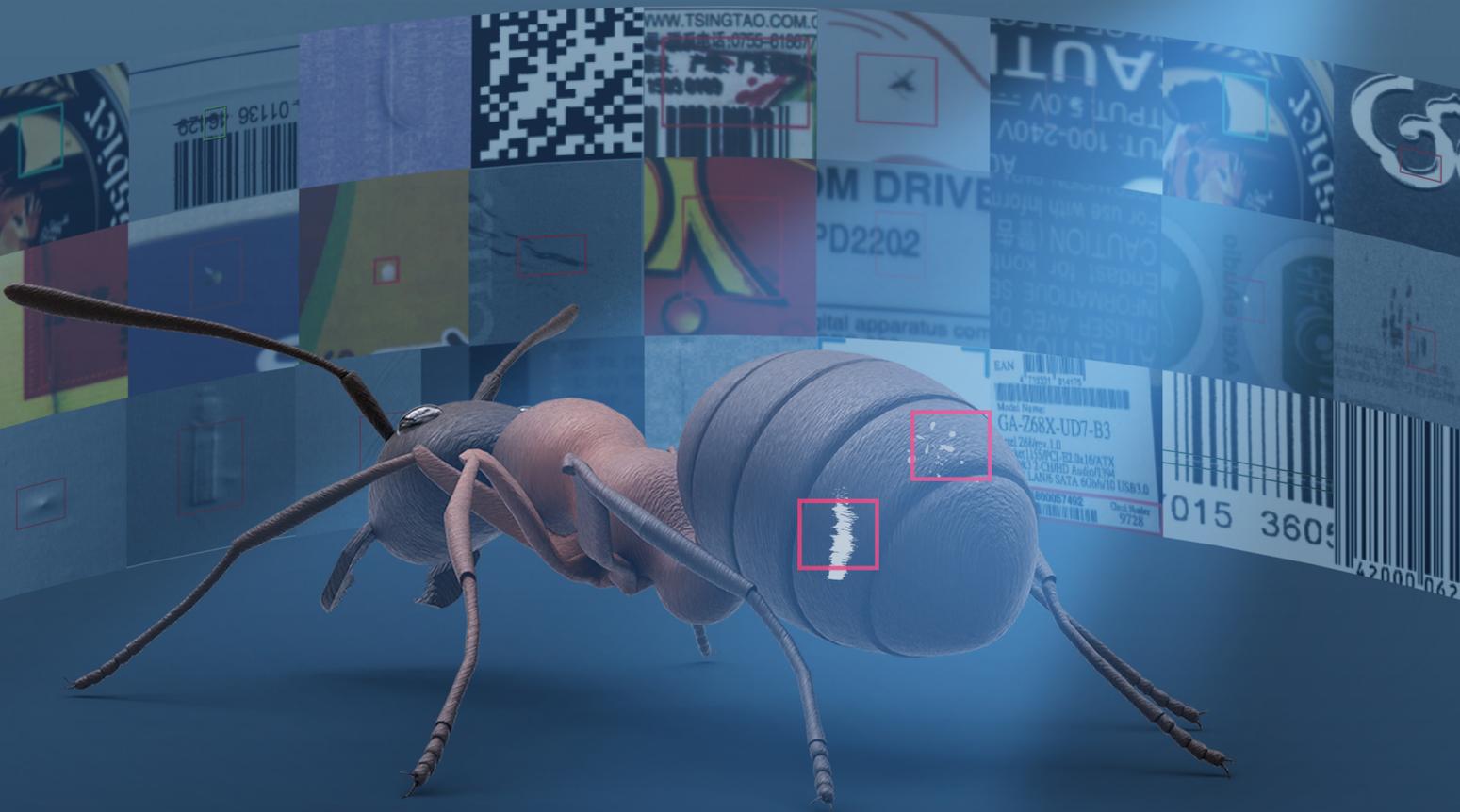
*For example, if a bottling company has been unable to obtain enough plastic resin to manufacture all the products that their customers need, this would result in the purchase of lower volumes of labels which would indirectly impact the label businesses

**Lost revenues due to supply chain issues within our industry such as paper and fil. Materials, inks, plates, adhesives, etc.

Numbers might not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Finat Radar Report 17 – 1st semester 2022, report and analysis of the European narrow web market. For more information, please visit www.finat.com

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