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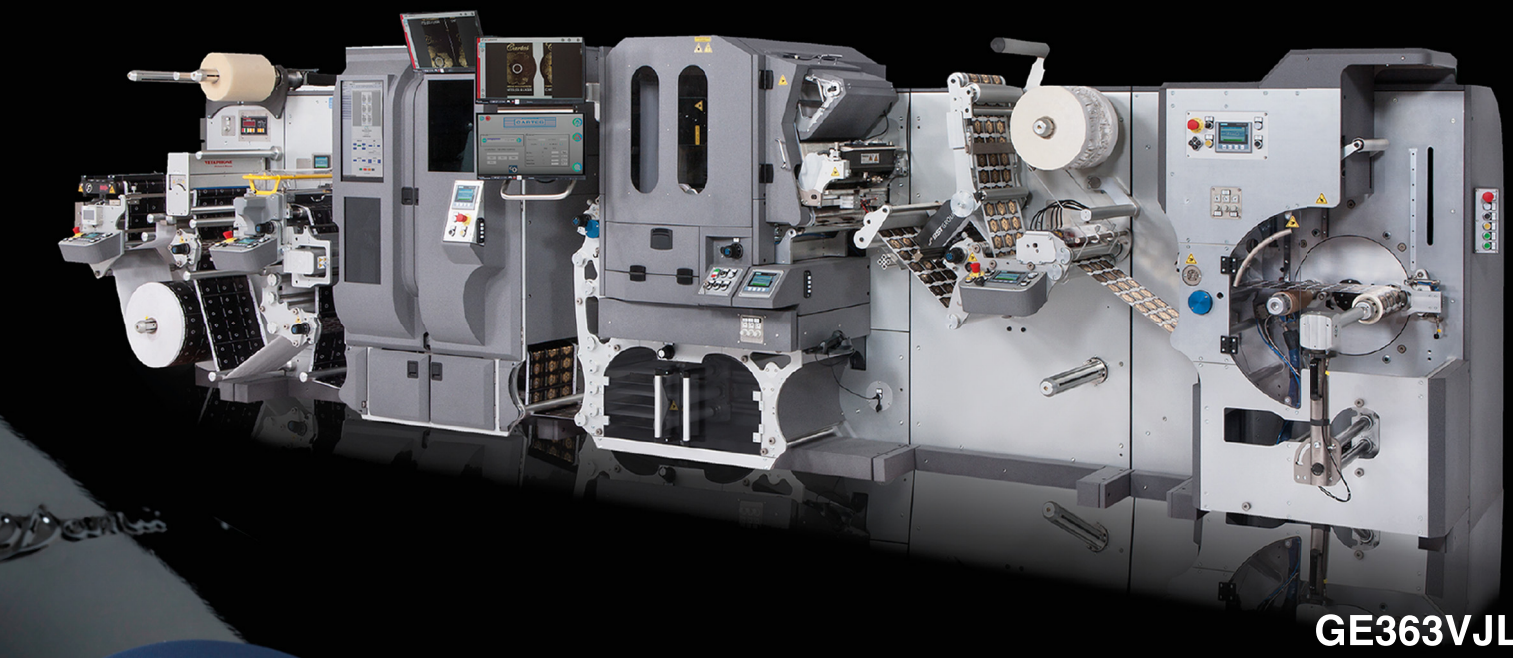

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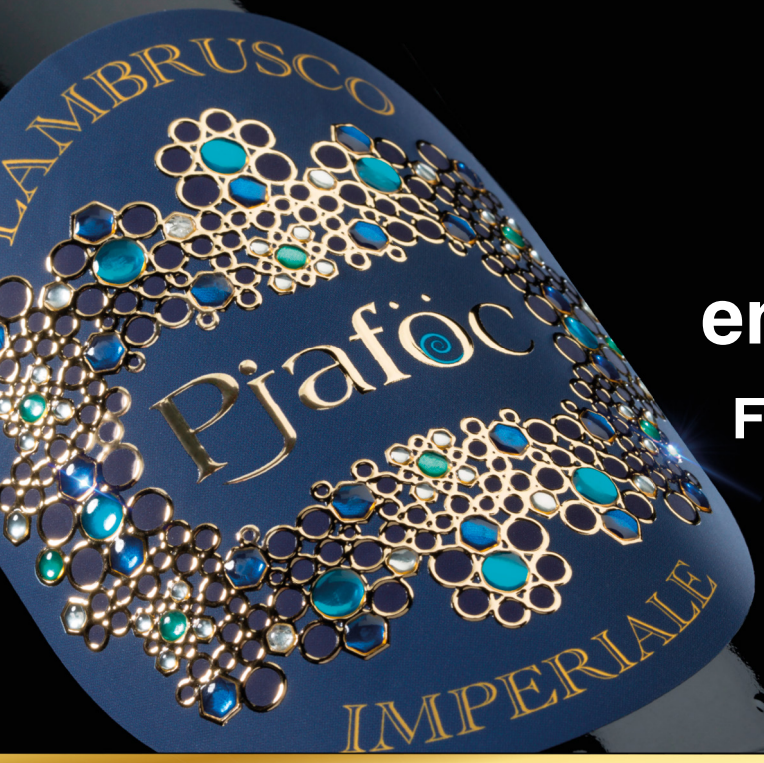

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Labels & Labeling is the leading global information source for the label and package print converting industries with an editorial team and network of correspondents spread throughout the world



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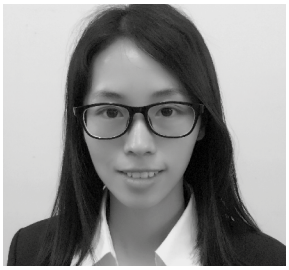

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Akanksha Meena speaks with Khaled Joundi of Bobst Middle East



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Linerless is more (feature)
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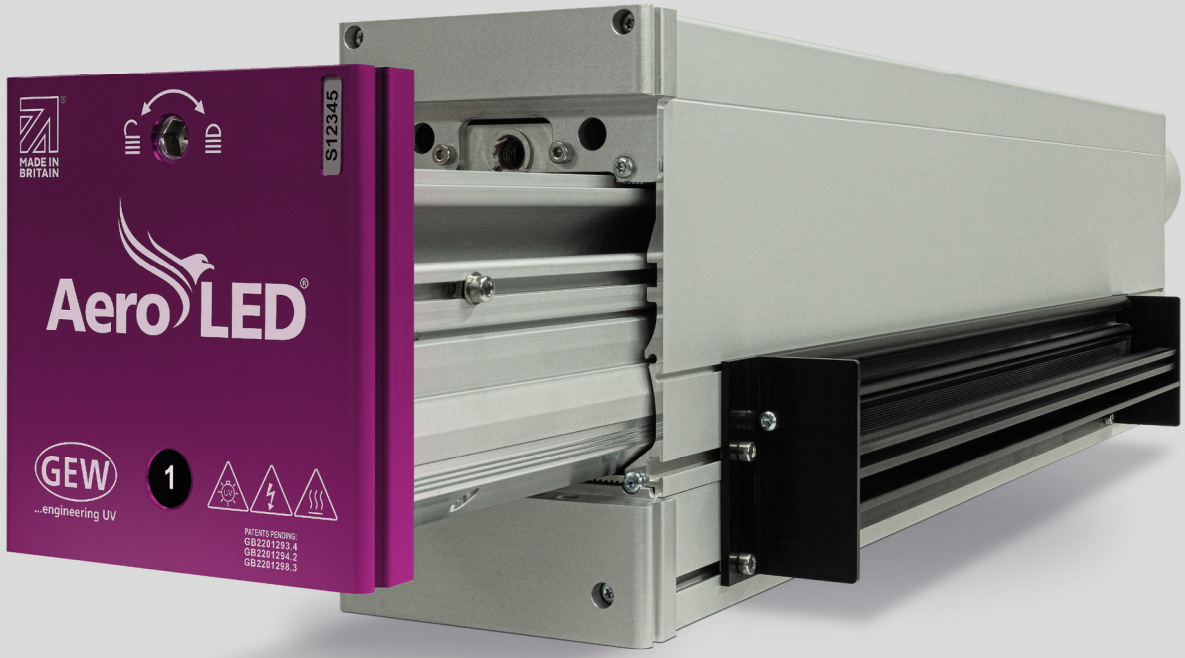

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L&L looks back (L&L issue 2, 2014)


Olympus powers on

LEADING UK CONVERTER Olympus Labels has significantly reduced its power consumption following installation of GEW's E2C curing systems on three Nilpeter FA-4 presses. Andy Thomas reports

Over the last three years, Olympus Labels – one of the UK's leading privately held label converters – has embarked on a significant level of investment in high-end Nilpeter combination presses.

The company now has three highly specified 8- and 9-color FA-4 presses running at speeds of 200m/min, and is considerably in front of the press technology curve. One of the FA-4's is fitted with Nilpeter's PP-C label in-line flatbed die-cutting system, while another is the new-look and more robust Nilpeter Mark-Andy-in-Sixteen unit.

Olympus' recent success reflects a growing confidence in the UK economy, with the company reporting an unusual surge of buying activity around Christmas. The company's key markets are in the food, beverage, personal care, pharmaceutical, wine and craft beer labels. Although primarily supplying UK-based brands, Olympus' output is exported to over 30 countries around the Chinese mainland, and across continental Europe.

In common with an increasing number of UK label converters, Olympus has found itself close to the limits of its electrical power requirements, hampering the potential for further growth.

"This situation has now been alleviated by the adoption of GEW's E2C UV lamp technology.

"We have achieved around a 70 percent power saving, allowing us to put in another Nilpeter FA-5 press and move our business to the next level," says joint-managing director Richard Brown. "We have also specified a new Nilpeter FA-5 press to the GEW E2C UV system and specifying the new FA-6 with E2C. We put our faith in GEW to deliver what they said they would and they have not let us down."

Brown is in a good position to identify the impact of the GEW system, having run the old Ultra Violet Concentration System (UVS) for the company. The Press 500 allows management to keep track of each operator's shift pattern, and how long the lamps are running, when they need to, and when down due to faults.

"After some software updates we have had virtually 100 percent UV efficiency and no downtime because of the lamps in the nine months they have been installed - and that's running 24/7 five days a week," says Brown.

The greater energy efficiency of the E2C lamps' reflector design, and the GEW system's ability to run at maximum multi-process jobs of around half full press speed, means the lamps are operating at only 40 percent of full power and last in excess of 5,000 hours. The lamps are turned up a little but difficult to scan where and when.

The company is 60-90 percent power settings for the previous UV lamps, which in turn generated more lamp burnouts and shutter issues.

"We have also been run the presses a little faster than before because the operators are confident they will not have a problem with the GEW UV system," says Brown.

Prior to the curing, inserts were set after an empirical process of trial and error.

"Right from the beginning we educated our people to turn the power levels down. The GEW systems are designed to run on low power, so that has to be the mentality," says Brown.

"Traditionally, converters set their systems up using a fixed 'it's never been a problem before' mentality. We have now installed much electrical power goes into the lamp, not how much UV is coming out how well the ink is curing," the company's UK sales manager, Paul Terry, explains. "With our new generation UV curing systems, these traditional power settings can typically be halved to minimize power consumption, whilst still enabling increased press output."


Traceability drives inkjet investment

THERMOFORMER COOL PAK has integrated a Domino K600i inkjet unit on a Mark Andy press to produce track and trace labels, Andy Thomas reports.

Cool Pak is a family-owned business with a 100-year history of farming in the Ventura county area in California. The family had been growing tomatoes, lettuce and strawberries, and making baskets for tomatoes and strawberries and boxes to market. Around the year 2000, the family decided to get directly involved with them-farming, as that was the hand where berry packaging was going.

Cool Pak has experienced strong growth, with up to USD $90 million in sales over the next decade, with a manufacturing base now includes facilities in Guadalajara, Bakersfield, Oxnard and Salinas.

Today, Cool Pak's expertise lies in providing clamshell packaging for produce growers in sectors including tomatoes, strawberries, blueberries, raspberries, blackberries, blueberries, grapes and gourmet products with the entire product designed in house, including mold prototypes.

Around three years ago Cool Pak brought its label printing in house, having already launched a track & trace business. Cool Pak's customers, Driscoll's and Naturipe, were also in the starting to buy hundreds of millions of track and trace labels, utilizing three or four label partners. For control reasons, Cool Pak's track and trace system required every label to have a unique identifier on it.

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Labelexpo Asia review

LABELEXPO Asia's tenth anniversary in China brought record numbers of visitors and exhibitors and highlighted the huge potential of this fast changing market. L&L China editor Kevin Liu reports

Labelexpo Asia 2013, held at the Shanghai New International Expo Centre (SNIEC) over four days in September, was the biggest ever, with 20,000 visitors from 87 countries – an increase of 18.8 percent over 2011's show.

Show director John Davy commented: "We had fantastic footfall with exhibitors reporting strong sales leads while the exhibition floor and conference sessions were packed for the duration of the show. We are delighted that the show has seen robust with 52 percent of visitors already confirmed for 2015, which is highly unusual for Asian exhibitions. This is a testament to the faith that exhibitors have in China's economy in showing other regions of recovery.

An exhibition is a barometer for the economic health of a country and the show's success is a reflection of China's growth is increasingly driven by domestic demand, said Hagopian. As example was last year's Labelexpo Asia, which saw a number of companies showing solutions. Though label sales in excess of 25 billion RMB ($4.7bn). Individual purchasing power is now driving the economy.

Hagopian pointed out that while the high-end brands consumed in China mainly come from abroad, local brands are now entering and obtaining the high-end market, indicating that high-end PS adhesive labels with better shelf life and quality will be in high demand.

Other trends identified by Hagopian included screening as pollution, which is pushing the Chinese government to take more stringent measures to clean up the country. As Chinese labor costs, meaning the whole supply chain has to improve efficiency. The labels industry must reflect the requirements for environmental protection and sustainable development and pay more attention to improving efficiency. These trends will become more and more important.


Investing in India

WITH A MANUFACTURING PLANT SPREAD ACROSS 29 ACRES IN PUNE, Avery Dennison has huge plans to invest and expand in India. Manufacturing locations in Pune and Gurgaon and distribution center in Bengaluru put Avery Dennison in a strong position to service customers across the country, Anil Sharma, managing director, South Asia and Sub Saharan Africa, Materials group at Avery Dennison talks to L&L's India editor Aakriti Agarwal about market trends, future plans and investments at Avery Dennison India

LABELS & LABELING (L&L): TELL US ABOUT AVERY DENNISON'S EXPANSION PLANS IN INDIA.

Anil Sharma (AS): The label market is starting to get traction in India and we have been present in India for a while. With our view of making it expand and grow. We continue to install sophisticated equipment in our plants in India with the dual aim of being able to service customers in India as well as to help make more innovative solutions for their clients.

Our Pune factory is a key manufacturing plant. We are investing into a new emulsion cluster that will be installed in the second quarter of 2014.

L&L: WHAT IS THE CURRENT IMPORT SIZE AT AVERY DENNISON INDIA?

AS: We import sizable portion of our portfolio in emulsion adhesives and films. We are in the process of localizing this portion of materials we manufactured locally and with the local emulsion coaters getting installed next year, we aim to take this further to significantly more than what is available. Besides this, in 2013, we added a coating unit in Pune.

As we continue to expand, we will invest in more warehouses and install and upgrade our slitters.

At Avery Dennison India, we have also been making efforts to set up a dedicated Innovation Center at our Global Innovation Knowledge Center in Bengaluru to ensure such initiatives. We have built a marketing team which is one of a kind in the industry. We have also established a dedicated application lab in Pune to make pressure sensitive a preferred technology amongst the brand owners, thus growing this area. This positions us well as a label solution provider with the brand owners.

L&L: WHAT MADE THE COMPANY DECIDE TO INSTALL THE EMULSION CLUSTER IN INDIA?

AS: Had wish is the preferred technology in this market. However, an emulsion cluster would essentially allow us to bring value added products to the market, largely in the films domain, which I believe in the area where we will have to focus more as the Indian consumers' needs rise. Besides, we have customers who have a presence in India and with their fans ideals, after our customers the advantage to us is better discussion while getting more operational efficiency and also a very beneficial technology and while it has its inherent advantages, the market has to move up the learning curve to really start making use of it.

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P41 Andy Thomas visited one of the leading UK converters Olympus Labels, which has found itself close to the limits of its electrical power requirements, hampering the potential for further growth. The company managed to significantly reduce its power consumption following installation of GEW's E2C curing systems on three Nilpeter FA-4 presses.

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P61 L&L China editor Kevin Liu reported directly from Labelexpo Asia 2013 held at the Shanghai New International Expo Centre. It was the exhibition's 10th anniversary in China, which brought 20,000 visitors from 87 countries. It highlighted the huge potential of this market and the economic health of the Chinese economy showing growth rates of 15 percent.

P72 L&L's India editor Aakriti Agarwal spoke to Avery Dennison executives about market trends, future plans and investments as the company opened a manufacturing site spread across 29 acres in Pune on top of the existing plant in Gurgaon and distribution center in Bengaluru, which put Avery Dennison in a strong position to service customers across the country.

Labelexpo Americas and Printing United present scheduling conflicts for wider industry

Editor's note

In the print industry market in North America, two major events are fixtures on the calendar of printers, converters and their supplier vendors: Labelexpo Americas and Printing United. But let's be honest, there is really only one for the label and packaging industry.

This year Labelexpo Americas and Printing United event dates fall on the exact same dates, and 1,700 miles apart, causing a dilemma for both attendees and exhibitors, forcing them to divide resources or choose one event over the other.

Labelexpo, a show with a 40-year history of events is always in September, and has a widely publicized event calendar, organizers say. Full disclosure: Labelexpo and Labels & Labeling are both owned by the parent company Informa PLC.

"The clash in dates presents a serious scheduling conflict that not only divides the audience, but creates an unnecessary competition for resources and attention"

Printing United is typically held in October and has been marketed as a event for the entire printing industry in one place – including label and packaging vendors.

Printing United's president has said in interviews that he was unaware of Labelexpo dates.

Labelexpo maintains Printing United event organizers never contacted them, which is a customary courtesy in the wider industry.

The strength of Labelexpo, event organizers say, is its dedicated audience. Historically, Labelexpo began out of the same notion that Printing United is betting on. Label and package printing suppliers were getting lost in the larger general print shows. A dedicated and focused show for the label and packaging industry, is exactly what has made Labelexpo successful for more than 40 years.

The clash in dates presents a serious scheduling conflict that not only divides the audience, but creates an unnecessary competition for resources and attention, and ultimately a disservice to the industry. Printing United has said it was a scheduling conflict with the venue that forced its hand, but whatever the case – for many it's a frustrating oversight.

For us journalists, Labelexpo Americas is an excellent barometer of the state of the market, with trends to be found in exhibitor and visitor numbers, the technology being shown and the deals being done on the show floor. For Labels & Labeling, there is no other show. Our choice is simple.

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Chelsea McDougall
Group managing editor



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Installations



HP Indigo V12

Nordvalls, Sweden

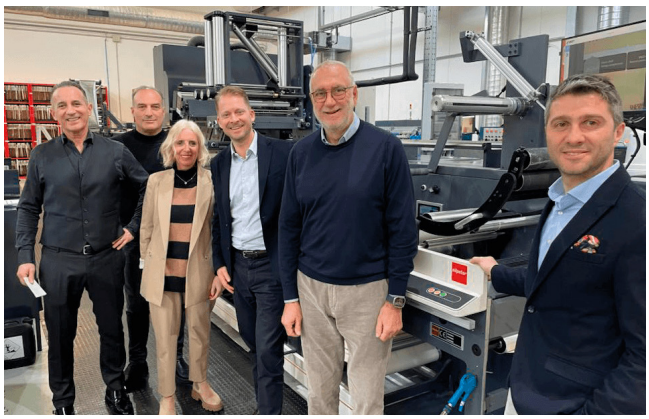
Swedish label converter Nordvalls Etikett has invested in the latest HP Indigo V12 Digital Press, becoming the first printer in Scandinavia to offer the most modern digital label production. 'This printing press is revolutionary and a bit of a game changer. It offers high speed and high precision and we can print labels in a sustainable way,' said Patrik Jenemark, CEO. 'Our offer becomes even more beneficial with 12 colors that allow our customers even more complex designs,' added Liselott Widerström, senior key account manager at Norvalls Etikett. 'You can truly see the speed and see the precision in results. It is absolutely phenomenal.'

Four new presses

RRD, United States

RR Donnelley & Sons Company (RRD) has expanded its label production capacity with four new presses that will deliver faster total throughput, enhancing efficiency and flexibility to support clients' diverse needs. The company invested in two ETI flexo presses outfitted to vertically integrate face and liner paper to create pressure-sensitive label stock, one Mark Andy P9 flexo press to produce variable image labels, and one Mark Andy digital hybrid press. All four presses are expected to be fully operational by midyear and will allow RRD to provide end-to-end solutions to a range of clients of many sizes and locations.





Nilpeter FA-17

etic.a, Italy

Italian converter has installed Nilpeter's FA-17 flexo press as part of its commitment to innovation and efficiency. The press, an automated one, facilitates swift job setups and rapid changeovers, ensuring the delivery of products within minimal time frames. Additionally, the integration of Nilpeter's digital varnish bar offers quality enhancement to labels without extensive preparation and tooling. Vito Di Martino, etic.a's operations director, articulated the strategic acquisition of the FA-17 flexo press as a move toward optimizing product delivery speed and efficiency. 'We aim to consistently surpass our customers' expectations through a modernized production flow, enhancing our agility and competitive edge in the market,' Di Martino stated.

Konica Minolta AccurioLabel 230

Arc Labels, UK

The investment delivers considerable digital print technology benefits of flexibility and cost-efficiency for short-run and variable data printing. Traditionally a flexo printer, Arc Labels now processes 80 percent of its four-color jobs using the new digital press. Allan Ford, director at Arc Labels, commented: 'We were looking for a digital solution that would do away with the need to produce expensive plates and allow us to expand our product range with the production of small runs in the region of 5,000 labels, without the cost per label rising too high.' With its ability to cater to both paper and synthetic substrates, the Konica Minolta AccurioLabel 230 is suitable for a wide range of Arc Label's jobs.



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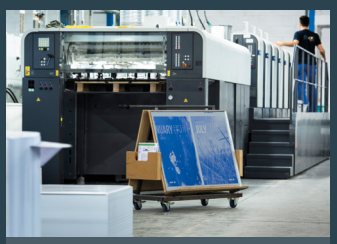

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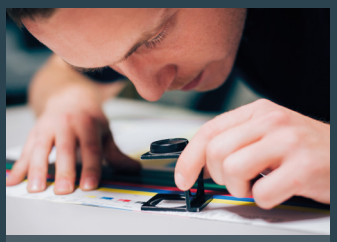

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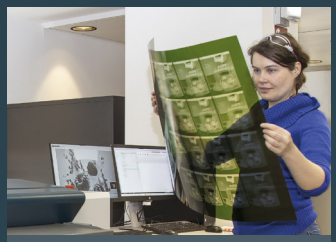

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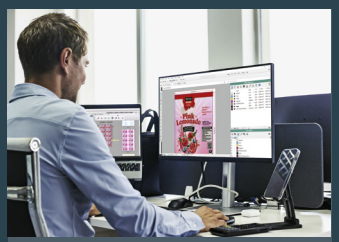

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Installations



Mark Andy Digital Pro 3

Kingfisher Labels, UK

Bristol-based printer has installed a Mark Andy Digital Pro 3 press at its production facility in Yate, South Gloucestershire. With a need to streamline production, Kingfisher determined a hybrid offering in-line finishing would best suit its requirements with its toner-based CMYK engine and the option of flexo print stations before and after, along with die-cutting, stripping the waste and slitting for single-pass production. 'What we especially like is the color quality that matches our flexo and allows us to switch jobs from one to the other as needed. And for one of our major customers, it's perfect for producing 80 different designs of 100m each,' said Andy Watts, sales director at Kingfisher Labels.

Durst Tau RSCi

Mold-Tek Packaging Limited, India

As one of the major players in the Indian packaging sector, the company has invested in a Durst RSCi 510mm press with priming and varnishing stations, aiming to revolutionize digital printing for in-mold labels. The company was looking for just-in-time/ print-on-demand technology, suitable for short and medium runs and capable of producing variable data print jobs. Mold-Tek was also interested in equipment that can be versatile, agile, and reduce waste and energy consumption. In response, Durst Group provided the RSCi 510mm with priming and varnishing stations. The first flexo unit was equipped with UV and hot air dryers, offering versatility in coatings based on the end application.





Epson SurePress L-6534VW

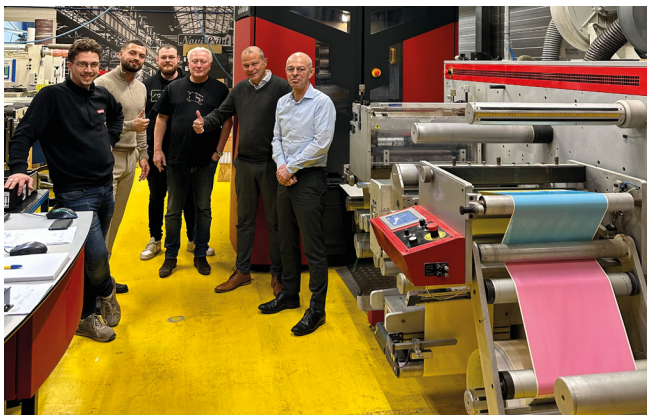
Diversified Labels, United States

Arizona-based Diversified Labels has installed the Epson SurePress L-6534VW UV digital label press to bring high-quality, cost-effective labels to its local, small business customers in the Chandler area. 'We spent so much money on printing and came to the conclusion that maybe we should start doing it ourselves,' said Alec Faber, partner at Diversified Labels. 'We started by doing all our own printing, and after a few years, we decided our team had acquired the knowledge necessary to get into the label printing business.' When looking to purchase a new label press, white ink was one of the important requirements for the company because white ink is used to produce anti-theft window warning stickers.

Xeikon press

NoviPrint, The Netherlands

Dutch label converter has invested in a Xeikon press to streamline its digital label printing and increase its capacity to accommodate the recent surge in volume and shorter print runs. After carefully considering available options, NoviPrint chose to go with a Xeikon press for its outstanding application versatility in both food and non-food sectors and its advanced workflow capabilities. The newly installed Xeikon press is equipped with ICE dry toner, which uses a different core resin to enable fusing at significantly lower temperatures, making it suitable for printing on heat-sensitive substrates, such as PE and direct thermal paper labels, which is a requirement for NoviPrint for its activities in the label market.



Installations



Screen Truepress Label 350UV SAI-S

Impronta Digitale, Italy

Italian label company has expanded its digital inkjet capacity with the installation of a Screen Truepress Label 350UV SAI-S 5-color press. It is the third Screen machine for the company. 'What drove us to invest in digital presses is their ability to start production at any moment and produce labels of consistent quality and brilliance on every print run, while remaining competitive in the market,' said Linda Picello, co-owner of Impronta Digitale. 'Our SAI machines operate 10 hours a day, in two shifts, five days a week, with an average production length of 1,000 meters per job – handling print runs from 30 to 10,000 meters.'

Bobst gravure press

QuaLabels Manufacturers, Ethiopia

Ethiopian converter QuaLabels has acquired a Bobst shaftless gravure printing press to expand its business and deliver world-class labels and packaging to local and global brand owners in the beer, soft drinks, snacks, personal care and home care markets. With the new gravure printing press in place, QuaLabels is equipped to ramp up production to capture a larger share of the market. 'Putting the Bobst gravure press into operation means we are in the perfect position to accelerate our output with new high quality solutions that meet our customers' needs and comply with all legal requirements,' said Brook Worku, chairman and CEO of QuaLabels.





ABG Digicon Series 3

Sturdy Print, UK

UK-based label printer Sturdy Print has installed an AB Graphic (ABG) Digicon Series 3 finishing press to increase its capabilities and satisfy the current and future demands of its customers. Some of the deciding factors for this investment were the equipment's customization options and modular design. It is designed to immediately fulfill the needs of its customers, while also providing adaptability to adjust and enhance capabilities in anticipation of future market developments. The machine is fully equipped, and includes an auto-slitting module, unwind station, dual flexo heads, in-register lamination and cold foil, high-speed flatbed screen printer, die-cutting, dual turret rewind and a de-lamination and re-lamination module.

Martin Automatic unwind/splicer

Moniko, Macedonia

One of the leading label converters in Macedonia has fitted a Martin Automatic MBS non-stop unwind/splicer to its newly installed Edale flexo press to improve productivity and reduce waste. Capable of matching the Edale's top production speed of 200m/min, the unit can handle rolls at web widths up to 660mm, 1,270mm in diameter and 590kg in weight. According to Moniko, using the Martin Automatic equipment saves around 60 meters of material per roll change by allowing the press to run continuously. Production at Moniko is expected to double with the Edale/Martin combination. The unwind/splicer is fitted with Martin's Enhanced Operator Productivity Package, which includes a festoon dancer brake system.



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Label & packaging showcase

01



02



03



04



05



06



2024 Flexible Packaging Achievement Award winners

01 WD-40 Specialist EZ-Pods Pouch Family

Awards: Highest Achievement Award, Gold Award - Expanding the Use of Flexible Packaging, Gold Award - Packaging Excellence, Gold Award - Sustainability, Gold Award - Technical Innovation

Manufacturer: Brook + Whittle

End User/customer: WD-40 Company

Plant: Northbrook, Illinois, US

Designer/design firm: Jam Your Brand

02 Dual Function Frozen Yogurt Package

Awards: Gold Award - Technical Innovation, Silver Award - Expanding the Use of Flexible Packaging, Silver Award - Packaging Excellence

Manufacturer: Amcor Flexibles

End User/customer: Danone

Plant: Londrina, PR, Brazil

Key Suppliers: Gualapack

03 Gulf Coast Sawyer Fitment Pouch

Award: Expanding the Use of Flexible Packaging

Manufacturer: PPC Flex

End User/customer: Sawyer

Plant: Pewaukee, Wisconsin, US

04 Hunter's Gourmet Smoky Tandoori, 125g

Award: Gold Award - Shelf Impact

Manufacturer: Emirates Printing Press

End User/customer: Hunter Foods

Plant: Dubai, UAE

05 Earth to Malibu Sachet

Award: Silver Award - Shelf Impact

Manufacturer: Nosco

End User/customer: Earth to Malibu

Plant: Pleasant Prairie, Wisconsin, US

Key Suppliers: ACW (film supplier); Nobelus (laminate supplier); HP Indigo ElectroInks (ink supplier); HP Indigo 20000 Digital Press (printing press); and Karlville Pack Ready Laminator (laminator)

07



08



09



10



06 Hunter's Gourmet Foie Gras, 125g

Award: Silver Award - Printing

Manufacturer: Emirates Printing Press

End User/customer: Hunter Foods

Plant: Dubai, UAE

07 KitKat Mini Moments

Award: Silver Award - Shelf Impact

Manufacturer: Emirates Printing Press

End User/customer: Nestlé

Plant: Dubai, UAE

08 Koochikoo Lovely Yellow Lemon, Lolly Pop Rainbow, and Cool Mint Treat, 60g

Award: Silver Award - Printing

Manufacturer: Paharpur 3P

End User/customer: Glamy Candy

Plant: Sahibabad, Uttar Pradesh, India

Designer/design firm: Glamy Candy Private Limited and Paharpur 3P

Key suppliers: Ester Industries; Henkel Adhesives Technologies India; and Sakata Inx (India)

09 US Waffle Jus-Rol Poffitz Club Pack with Sealstrip's SealAcross Reseal

Awards: Silver Award - Expanding the Use of Flexible Packaging, Silver Award - Packaging Excellence

Manufacturer: Sealstrip Corporation

End User/customer: US Waffle Company

Plant: Gilbertsville, Pennsylvania, US

Designer/design firm: Matrix Four

Key supplier: Atlantic Packaging

10 Omega-3 Deluxe Mix Recyclable Bag, 737g

Award: Silver Award – Technical Innovation

Manufacturer: Emirates Printing Press

End User/customer: Cibo Vita USA

Plant: Dubai, UAE



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The Andy Thomas-Emans column

Labelexpo transforming into a package printing showcase

In the last decade, Labelexpo has transformed into a showcase for short-run flexpack as well as label technology. How has this come about – and are folding cartons next?

A decade ago, Labelexpo was still mainly a dedicated self-adhesive label show, albeit with shrink sleeves a growing force. But then we at Labelexpo started seeing an interesting trend in how visitors filled in their show registration cards, with more and more converters expressing an interest in flexible packaging.

At first, it was difficult to see how this could be. Flexible packaging was primarily about wide-web CI and gravure presses, and there seemed little crossover with the kinds of presses label converters were buying – mainly 330mm/13in and 430mm/17in with some 520mm/20in machines.

A new market

HP Indigo, however, seemed to have spotted a potential new market in flexible packaging for label converters when it announced the HP 20000 press in 2012. It was Labelexpo that primarily drove global sales of this press, with HP demonstrating a complete ecosystem of a laminator and pouch-making machine that could feasibly fit into a narrow web converter's production plant.

What HP Indigo's Alon Bar-Shany had picked up on at the time, was a quiet revolution in packaging formats. More brands were moving their premium products into high-value, small-format laminated stand-up pouches as an alternative to labeled containers.

There were many reasons for this, including the drive toward differentiation, easier placement on shelves using POS display units, and convenient resealable closing systems.

Because these were mostly premium products - or new marketing concepts - the run lengths were short, quality requirements high and brands wanted a fast turnaround.

Label converters already operated in this demanding environment, so they were perfectly placed to take advantage. Up to that point, brand owners had simply not been able to order short-run, multi-SKU lots of stand-up pouches because wide web CI and gravure presses are tuned for high volume, hyper-efficient production with relatively high minimum order requirements and months-long lead times. This in turn reflected on the flexible packaging supply chain, geared to delivery of multiple container-loads of raw materials to converters who often manufactured their own bespoke laminates.

"This is a fascinating story of a new sector developing rapidly around the entrepreneurship of label and flex pack converters supported by a development drive from industry suppliers"

Just in time

Very quickly, a new 'just in time' flexible packaging supply chain began to emerge for the growing number of label converters dipping their toes into the short-run, high-value, fast-turnaround flex pack market.

Companies like Synthogra and S-OneLP were set up to supply ready-made pouching materials for surface printing on a JIT base, while Karlville and others perfected their small-footprint thermal laminating technology for label converters with limited floor space.

HP Indigo was soon joined by a growing number of flexo press manufacturers producing mid-web (670mm/26in) presses with combinations of UV and hot-air drying units for applying water-based coatings.

The challenges of UV printing on flexible films were tackled by the UVFoodSafe group, which ran extensive tests using new GEW technology which measures UV dose at the web surface to produce guidelines for best practice. These guidelines will be unveiled at Labelexpo Americas 2024.

Then something else interesting began to happen. Wide web converters started visiting Labelexpo – particularly in the US. The growing demand for short-run flexible packaging had put the show on their radar. They were faced with a dilemma. Their machines and supply chain ecosystems were not set up for short-run work, yet the demand was increasing. So Labelexpo offered a chance to look at the new shorter-run machinery, meet with co-suppliers and assess strategy. Start up a dedicated short-run division? Find a label converter to partner with? Or acquire?

Converters like Glenroy started selling pre-made pouch material to label converters. Emerald Packaging became an initial investor in digital-only flexpack specialist ePac – which in 2022 attracted major investment from Amcor.

So, this is a fascinating story of a completely new sector developing rapidly around the entrepreneurship of label and innovative flex pack converters supported by a major development drive from industry suppliers, all in the space of just over 10 years.

And now a question. Could folding cartons follow the same model?

HP Indigo did bring a complete folding carton line (the 30000) plus finishing partners Kama and Scodix but never repeated the experiment. Are folding cartons simply a step too far for label converters? Is this end-user industry and its requirements simply too different?

As with flexible packaging, if folding cartons were to move into Labelexpo, it would need to be as a disruptive technology based around in-line and digital technology familiar to label converters.

Labelexpo did not proactively push flexible packaging into the show – it developed as a natural result of the market forces we have examined.

So we will wait and see if folding carton developments push the show in the same direction.

Labelexpo Americas will host a Flex Pack Factory at the event in September. Scan the QR code to learn more

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Sales motivation and sales enablement tips to drive growth - Part two



Sales enablement means getting the entire company to support the sales process, and celebrate wins by the entire company, not just the sales team, writes sales and marketing columnist, Lois Ritarossi

Building trust is the foundational step to creating a plan for sales team motivation to maximize revenue.

In the last issue of Labels & Labeling, I shared ideas on changes in B2B selling and how sales leaders must understand individual motivations to successfully coach salespeople. With rapport and trust, sales leaders can motivate salespeople and improve sales results.

Beyond the effectiveness of your sales team, what else can leaders do to positively impact sales? Sales enablement is about how the entire company supports the sales process to cultivate more prospects, win new business, and deliver increased revenue. Leaders can acknowledge that sales revenues are the result of the combined efforts of every department in your company, not just the individual salesperson.

We are all in sales

How many people in your companies have said: 'Well I'm not in sales. I never want to be in sales.'?

Common associations of a 'salesperson' remind us of pushy door-to-door salespeople or untrustworthy used-car salesmen.

In his bestselling book To Sell is Human, Daniel Pink reframes the definition of sales. Pink's expanded definition includes any position where individuals spend a significant portion of time attempting to influence, sway or persuade others to take action. By this definition, we are all in sales.

Consider the daily tasks of your department and production managers. Your managers spent a good part of their days influencing, persuading and getting others to take action. Your estimators persuade sales and client service. Client service teams attempt to sway and influence customers. And production managers spend time getting others to act. One step towards creating a culture of sales enablement is gaining alignment that everyone needs effective skills in persuading and influencing others to do their job well. Everyone is in sales.

> **"Employees in every department need reassurance that their work matters, and that they enable the company to grow and evolve"**

Create one team

Sales dumps and runs. Estimating doesn't understand what the client wants. Production didn't get the job done on time. Customer service didn't write the order correctly. The invoice went out wrong. Do any of these comments sound like snippets of ongoing conversations in your plant?

Team alignment may be the hardest part of a leader's job. Culture only lives in our conversations. Creating alignment will require more conversations and more communication so every department sees the value of the entire company, and every person sees the importance of their individual role. With a clarity of each individual's responsibility, everyone can acknowledge their impact on other departments. Sales must be comfortable explaining new capabilities and translating capabilities into client value. Customer service needs to be able to articulate changes from the customers' perspective. Estimating and production must see the sales and customer service teams as their internal clients.

Alignment means each department understands that the company wins when more products leave the building finished accurately, and on time. Alignment means each person does their job correctly so every other department can do their job correctly.

The ongoing commitment to communication and alignment supports a collective understanding of how each individual impacts company goals and lives your organization's core values. Employees in every department need reassurance that their work matters, and that they enable the company to grow and evolve. When wins are celebrated by the company, not just the sales team, the company acknowledges the contributions of the entire team.

The possibility collaboration

As companies manage change to create a culture of sales enablement there are added benefits. If teams are experiencing blaming, miscommunication and frustration – it leads to a lack of cooperation. With alignment, internal departments experience cooperation, collaboration, mutual goal achievement and fewer nasty emails.

Because we are human, we will forget, and we will revert to old habits. Leaders must share their vision that the future looks bright and that it will be different than the recent past. Leaders impact results when every manager understands why your company is great, and how your company produces results for your customers.

When challenges arise, sales enablement in action is when multiple teams work together with trust to create the best impact for the customer and the company.



Lois Ritarossi is a certified management consultant, and president of High Rock Strategies, an independent management consulting firm focused on sales and marketing strategies, and business growth for firms in the print, mail, communications and B2B sectors. You can read more about sales strategies at www.highrockstrategies.com. Email Lois at Lritarossi@highrockstrategies.com.

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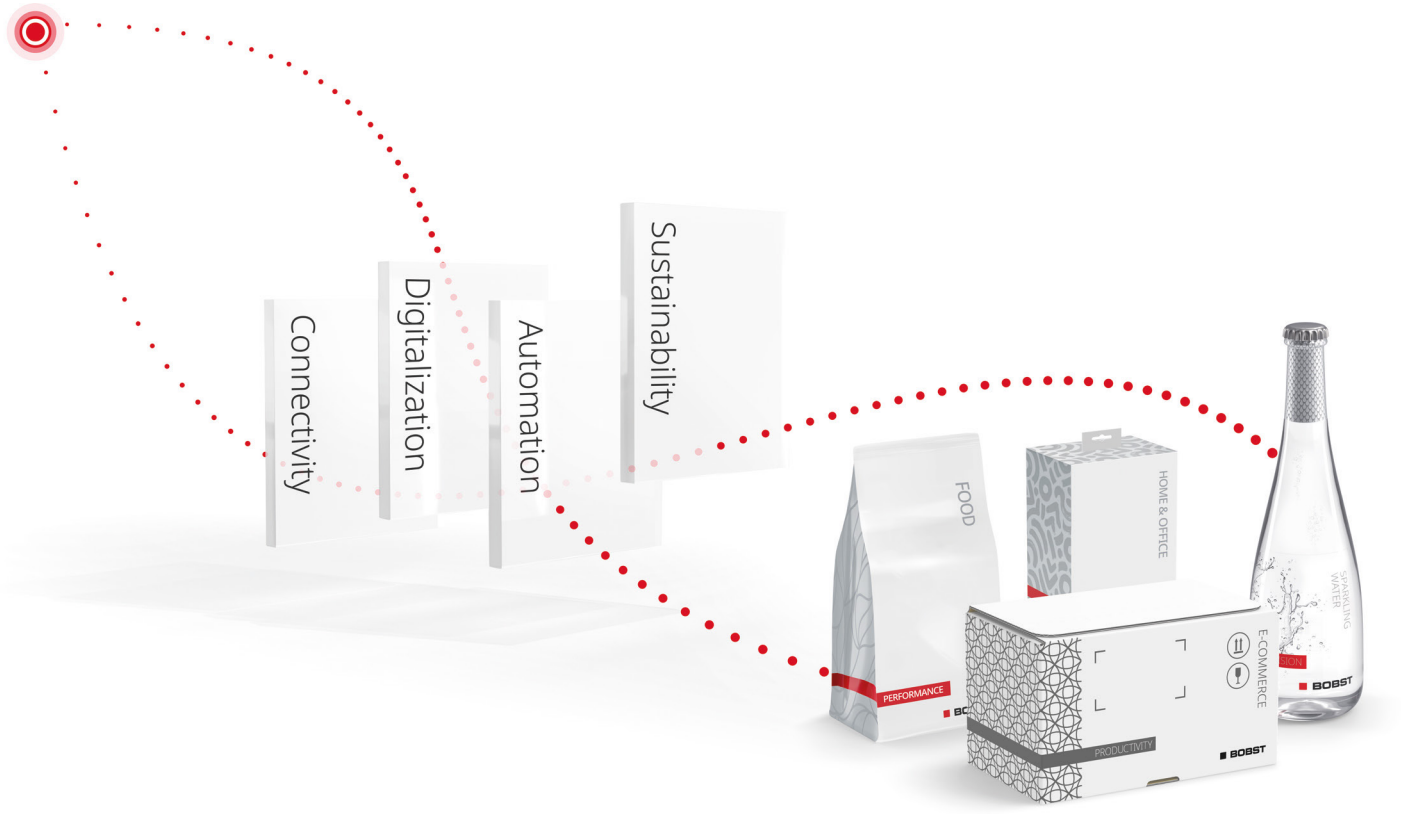

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Building your company's value for the future

After 15 years of writing this column, Bob Cronin of The Open Approach is hanging up his pen. Here he offers four ways to add value to your business

Back in 2009 when my first Labels & Labeling column appeared, our industry looked a lot different. Local and regional entrepreneurs ran the show, technologies such as RFID and QR codes were iffy, and digital printing was a 'specialty.' Mergers and acquisitions (M&A) were on everyone's minds, and we wondered how the huge strategic deals (Multi-Color buying Collotype, Fort Dearborn grabbing Renaissance Mark, and York Label gobbling up a bunch of others) would affect the marketplace. And thus, I was enlisted as your pundit for everything M&A.

Fast forward 15 years, and the momentum hasn't stopped. Although we've had a couple of brief stalls due to lending changes and Covid-19, the energy, excitement, and interest around the Labels and packaging market have only accelerated. Moreover, the billions brought into our industry from private equity (PE) over the last several years have kept us front and center as a target for worldwide investors.

We are now in a different place. The industry has consolidated, transforming what was an extremely fragmented marketplace into a group of larger, specialty-focused leaders. We have a few small, geographically dominating enterprises, but we have more businesses that are soon-to-be national or global players. PE has changed our industry and the way companies need to operate to compete.

In writing my final column for Labels & Labeling, I want to first express what an honor it has been to be here. My agency, The Open Approach, has been introduced to and supported all types of owners through this column. We have been proud to have advised and/or represented many of you in your transactions. And we are happy to provide our expertise to you down the road.

As we look to the future, perhaps our biggest change is in timing. We used to recommend a six-month acquisition and two-year exit plan, but the fast-changing dynamics and increasing regulations across manufacturing have truncated such schedules. When you start considering a move, be prepared to act quickly.

With PE owning many of our larger businesses, we know they will continue to seek acquisitions to grow revenue, as well as ways to exit to benefit investors. Their significant stake in our business means that many of the market's M&A moves (and your company's opportunities) will involve them.

The labels and packaging industry is still an outstanding place to own a business. However, to succeed in today's climate, you must position yourself to build value. Here are the four ways to accomplish this:

1. Understand and adapt your business year to year. Competitive forces, technologies and buying dynamics change rapidly. Work to continually align yourself with positive growth factors, whether through new equipment, employee training, sales techniques, or simply a different mindset. Make sure any adjustment is embraced by staff and promoted to customers and prospects.

"To succeed in today's climate, you must position yourself to build value"

2. Determine your key strengths and weaknesses and constantly work to improve on them. Know where you excel and fall short at all times and empower your people to help you grow stronger. Compare your assessments with outside evaluations (customer surveys, online reviews, consultants, etc.) to make sure your view is realistic.

3. Be constantly aware of your customer mix and their potential issues. Your top (and most valuable) customers will change over time. And sometimes, the change will come fast. Stay abreast of customers' industries and their trends and influences. Find ways to help them address their issues. This will transform your company from a provider to a partner and secure their long-term loyalty so you both thrive. Rebalance your mix if you find heavy concentrations in any specific area(s).

4. Dedicate time to build the skill sets and aptitudes of your employees. One of our biggest near-term issues is finding the next generation of people to run our organization. Building a business always begins with and depends on people. We, as leaders, need to champion a more focused effort on hiring, training and providing a career that causes top talent to join and stay with our operations.

In closing, I want to extend a very special thank you to Labels & Labeling and its outstanding editors who have allowed me to connect with you through this column over the past 15 years. Hopefully, my contributions have helped you better understand how to use M&A to grow your business.

More importantly, thank you to Janice O'Driscoll of Carient Communications for being my associate in making these stories into true communication vehicles. Janice has been more than a support to me; she has been an inspiration.

Though I'm signing off here, I'm still available to discuss any of your questions or opportunities. I remain an advocate and active participant in the great labels and packaging industry. Drop me a note if you'll be attending Labelexpo Americas and would like to meet up.

Thank you for reading my articles. I wish your company continued success.



Bob Cronin is Managing Partner of The Open Approach, an M&A consultancy focused exclusively on the world of print. In addition to spearheading several large label and packaging industry transactions, the firm handles value-enhancement, due diligence, industry trend analyses, and exit planning. It is one of the most tenured agencies in this space. The Open Approach, visit www.theopenapproach.net, email Bob Cronin at bobrcronin@aol.com, or call or text +1 630-542-1758.

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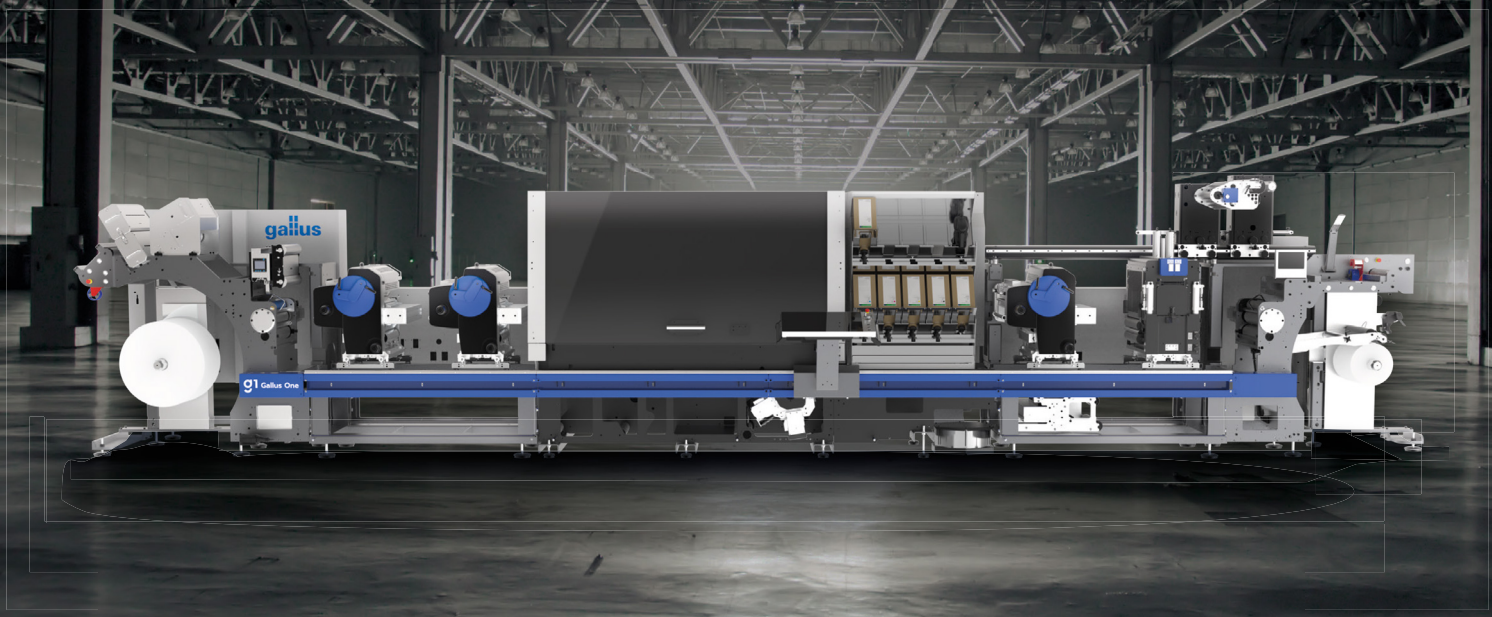

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A guide to understanding PFAS

TLMI's VP of sustainability, Rosalyn Bandy compiled a list of everything a label converter needs to know when it comes to PFAS

TLMI routinely provides educational webinars on topics of interest and concern to its members. Recently, it hosted a panel of experts presenting on the topic of PFAS. The valuable information from that presentation can be found distilled into main take-aways on TLMI's 'PFAS Cheat Sheet' below.

What is PFAS?

PFAS stands for Per-Fluoro-Alkyl-Substances or Poly-Fluoro-Alkyl Substances. There are over 15,000 types of PFAS with varying levels of impact to health and environment.

Why is PFAS a problem?

Some types have a half-life of over 1,000 years (forever chemicals). They are bio-accumulative and can stay in your bloodstream for years. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention say 97 percent of Americans have PFAS in their blood. Health effects include endocrine disruption, reprotoxic, immunotoxic and carcinogenic.

Why is PFAS used?

Provides water and grease barriers to paper products, aesthetic quality and application performance in polymer films, inks and coatings.

Regulations for PFAS

There are 277 introduced policies in 34 states. There are 141 adopted policies in 28 states. Legislation will continue to roll out with states restricting PFAS use, which will likely adjust statutes to provide additional time needed for compliance purposes. Companies with PFAS in supply chain should anticipate reporting requirements and registration. Diligence and record keeping on research are key.

In April 2024 EPA passed rule on PFAS limits in drinking water and reporting requirements.

> "There are over 15,000 types of PFAS with varying levels of impact to health and environment"

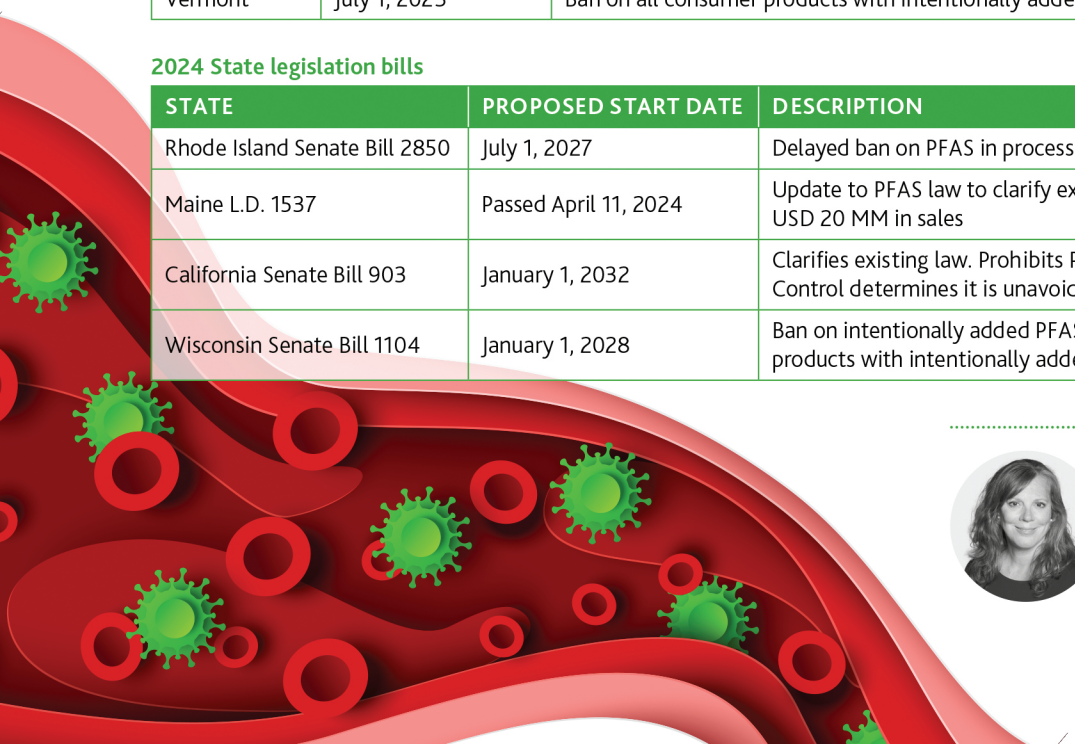
Current PFAS Restrictions

**Denotes the addition of a chemical that serves an intended function in the product component*

STATE	EFFECTIVE DATE	DESCRIPTION
California	January 1, 2023	Ban on selling or offering any food packaging with PFAS
New York	December 31, 2022	Ban on distribution or sale of food packaging with intentionally added PFAS
Washington	February 1, 2023	Tiered ban on manufacture, sale of any food packaging with intentionally added PFAS
Colorado	January 1, 2024	Ban on PFAS in food packaging. Phase out sale of products in the state that contain intentionally added PFAS*
Maryland	January 1, 2024	Ban on food packaging or a component of food packaging with direct food contact in which PFAS were intentionally added*
Minnesota	January 1, 2024	Ban on all food packaging containing intentionally added PFAS*
Rhode Island	January 1, 2024	Ban on all food packaging containing intentionally added PFAS*
Vermont	July 1, 2023	Ban on all consumer products with intentionally added PFAS

2024 State legislation bills

STATE	PROPOSED START DATE	DESCRIPTION
Rhode Island Senate Bill 2850	July 1, 2027	Delayed ban on PFAS in processing agents until July 1, 2027
Maine L.D. 1537	Passed April 11, 2024	Update to PFAS law to clarify exemptions for companies with less than USD 20 MM in sales
California Senate Bill 903	January 1, 2032	Clarifies existing law. Prohibits PFAS unless Dept of Toxic Substances Control determines it is unavoidable
Wisconsin Senate Bill 1104	January 1, 2028	Ban on intentionally added PFAS in certain products. Ban on all products with intentionally added PFAS by January 1, 2034



Rosalyn Bandy is VP of sustainability for TLMI. For more information about TLMI sustainability, please contact Rosalyn.bandy@tlmi.com. For information about TLMI membership, please contact Engagement Director, dale.coates@tlmi.com

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PERFORMANCE IN EVOLUTION

Polilux expands IML reach

The Turkish BOPP manufacturer is now the number three supplier of IML films to the European market, with ambitious plans for global expansion. Andy Thomas-Emans reports

Turkey is home to a major BOPP film manufacturing industry, and one of its most recent members is Polilux, now one of the top three IML suppliers to the European market with an overall production capacity of 30,000 tons a year.

Today labeling and flexible packaging are the company's main fields of application. In labels, Polilux has become a major supplier of BOPP in-mold labeling materials across Europe and a substantial supplier of wraparound labels and filmic face materials for PS laminates.

Tayanç Top was recruited as head of IML sales at Polilux in October 2020 and started a rapid acceleration in this market segment.

'We asked, how many BOPP companies produce IML? Very few. So that needed to be our key focus,' recalls Top.

Polilux differentiated itself from its early days as a supplier of highly technical products, keeping away from the commodity market. 'There are more than 200 BOPP manufacturing companies, so Polilux needs to produce products that everyone cannot make,' says Top.

The success of this strategy can be seen in the booming production figures since Ender Ozmergen's acquisition.

In 2019, Polilux produced 15,000 tons of BOPP film and 6,900 tons of IML film. A year later, this had risen to 22,000 tons and 7,900 tons of IML, which was still mainly sold to Turkish converters. As Polilux expanded its sales effort to the wider European market, production of IML increased to 8,600 tons in 2021 and 12,500 tons last year.

Around half of all IML film production is now exported. Geographically, Poland is emerging as a key IML market and Polilux claims to be the leading player there.

The company has also developed export markets outside Europe in South Africa, Brazil and the US.



Polilux production plant

'Narrow web flexo has much lower investment costs than (sheetfed) offset - but offset has a major advantage because it is printing in a large format, and much of the IML market is for larger format containers'

The IML difference

What makes BOPP IML different from BOPP flexible packaging, and why is it a higher value-added product?

The most obvious difference between the two applications is the number of process steps involved from printing to finished pack, which defines the technical requirements of the film. Flexible packaging is a simple two-stage process – print/lamination followed by filling and sealing of the pack. IML has one additional step – the injection process – which has its own unique technical and performance requirements.

The second key difference lies in the printing process. Flexible packaging is mainly printed on CI flexo and gravure presses using standard water- or solvent-based inks. IML labels are printed mainly on sheetfed presses and need to be printable with the UV, LED-UV and conventional ink systems used in offset printing.

Another key difference is that flexible packaging printed on gravure or CI flexo presses is a reel-to-reel process. IML labels are printed either reel-to-sheet or sheet-to-sheet, after which the sheets are cut into strips, which is an additional process step.

IML label materials require mechanical properties to cope with these multiple converting and injection process steps. Additionally, IML materials must be static-free at the point of application. Any residual static will make labels stick together when picked up from the magazine and loaded into the mold.

With a technical service background, Top has been involved both in developing new products and consulting with existing and potential customers to ensure Polilux's IML materials perform properly at each process step.

'I am always speaking to ink producers, press manufacturers and molding machine manufacturers so we can understand any potential issues at an early stage, and I can inform our technical team what is coming, I then need to communicate that learning to my customers,' notes Top.

'The key to successful production of IML materials is consistent formulation,' says Top. 'Maintaining quality is like keeping an egg vertical – you always need to be touching the egg to stop it from falling. You need a very consistent raw material supply because any changes will affect your customer's process or their customers' process or their customers' customers. There are more variables than in flexible packaging and you need to control them all. This is why most other BOPP producers don't want to manufacture IML. And you need very good after-sales support.'

The critical requirement for consistency means Polilux will not use raw materials incorporating post-consumer recycled plastics. 'We will require a very high level of quality control and today that is not available to our satisfaction,' explains Top.

Growing the market

IML's share of the global labels market has hovered unchanged at around 2 percent for many years, with the European IML market

‘IML label materials require the mechanical properties to cope with multiple converting and injection process steps. Additionally, IML materials must be static-free at the point of application’

estimated to total around 24,000 tons per year.

This means suppliers need to increase their share of a relatively static market to grow in the IML space. ‘And unlike in a commodity market this is not because of low pricing,’ says Top. ‘It is a matter of the quality of materials and the support services you provide through to the end of the process.’

This all makes IML a tough market to break into. ‘In the early days, I convinced one customer to trial our material and then the market started to spread the word. Then other customers started to knock on your door. It’s not easy to break the mold of established suppliers.’

Looking ahead, Top is optimistic that sustainability requirements will accelerate the adoption of IML technology by the major brands.

‘IML is a very sustainable technology because the complete package is effectively a monomaterial – a BOPP label and a PP container. We do not have to wash off labels and there are no adhesive residues. This is a mono material and ready to recycle.’

Demographic changes will enhance IML’s favorable sustainability characteristics, Top believes. ‘People live in smaller households where they do not have dishwashers and they have less time to cook,



Tayanç Top heads up IML sales at Polilux


Polilux specializes in IML



Narrow web growth

Although IML is overwhelmingly a sheetfed offset application, Top sees narrow web as an interesting technology for IML production. 'I certainly see a growth in the narrow web IML market. Two years ago, we adapted our product to work with every print process including UV flexo. Narrow web flexo has much lower investment costs than offset – but offset has a major advantage because it is printing in a large format, and much of the IML market is for larger format containers.'

This is a serious limitation for narrow web. 'An important application for our opaque white IML is for 20L containers, and you simply cannot print that with the narrow web format – and this is 25 percent of our business. IML for smaller, single-use cups are printable with narrow web so this is a potential growth area. And all the major narrow web press brands can handle IML materials on a modern press.'

There is no appreciable performance difference using the heavier ink weight of UV compared to conventional offset inks when it comes to post-print processing steps

Labelexpo Europe 2023 saw an increased interest in mid-web (26in/630mm) flexo presses, and this wider format would open up more opportunities in the IML market, says Top.

'When the presses get wider you can go after more work.'

Today's flexo presses also have the ability to print multiple jobs on the same plate using a fixed set of extended color gamut inks. This is something offset printers have long been able to do, and it greatly enhances their productivity.

Polilux has only one customer printing IML labels on a digital press. 'There are some challenges in digital printing. And it generally needs coating, so is not great for mass production.'

so this will increase the consumption of single-use food containers, where you eat the food and throw it away. IML is very suitable for this. After the food is done you can easily recycle the pack.'

Technology developments

IML processing technology continues to develop, with faster and more efficient molding machines which make it more important than ever that IML materials have no problems with gaining or losing static.

'At the same time printing presses are getting faster and faster and also cutting and finishing units, so your material technology also needs to change.'

Material downgauging is a continuous process, but in IML there are process limits to how thin manufacturers can go. Currently, the industry standard is 60 microns, although some grades produced by Polilux are down to 55 microns. 'The question is, will downgauged materials be able to handle faster printing presses and go into the injector without problems?,' asks Top.

Going forward Polilux will also be looking more at the blow-mold market, although that will not take the focus away from IML. 'Blow mold labels have been our portfolio for the last two years,' says Top. 'The numbers are low but steady and growing. Now we are developing a machine, the first of its kind, that will be able to produce PS, wraparound and blow molding films.'

In-mold label suppliers will return to Labelexpo Americas 2024. Scan the QR code to learn more

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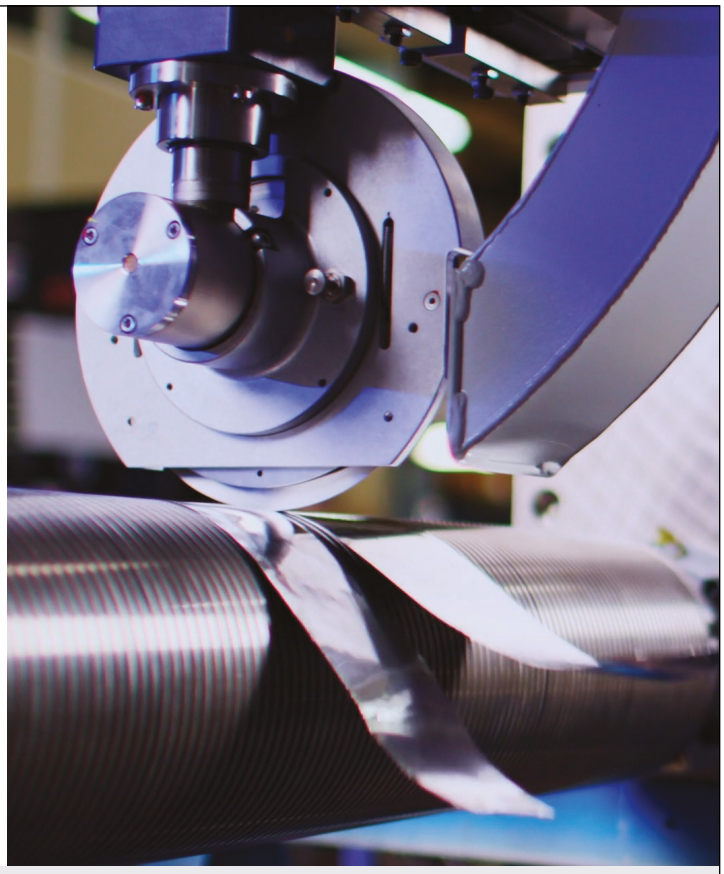

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Labor pains: TLMI addresses workforce issues at converter meeting

Conversations at the TLMI Converter Meeting centered largely around workforce issues and how to engage the next generation. Christine Won reports



A TLMI converter session on generations in the workplace by David and Jonah Stillman of GenGuru

The state of the market

Converters at the March TLMI meeting received good news: The market is stabilizing and stocking levels are normalizing.

Corey Reardon, president and CEO of AWA Alexander Watson Associates, forecast a positive market outlook in his 'Materials Outlook 2024' presentation.

'Looking forward, the material outlook is very balanced in terms of capacity across the different materials and components for the different labeling formats,' he says. 'The risk I see going into 2024 is that Q1 level of demand potentially could be a little exaggerated and Q2 can bring back some of the overstocking phenomenon, though not to the level of 2023. We'll get a little bit of a cat and mouse game in terms of inventory levels.'

Based on data and discussions with material suppliers, converters and brand owners, he says the consensus across the board is that 'the destocking phenomenon that plagued us through 2023' is over.

Additionally, the supply chain disruptions seen since 2020 seem to have subsided as well. 'That doesn't mean we won't see supply side disruptions going forward,' Reardon says, citing ongoing global events like the wars in Ukraine and the Middle East.

Even though that 'perfect storm' of coalescing factors of recent years is 'very unlikely' to happen again, Reardon nonetheless urged converters to continue to protect and diversify their supply bases to better prepare for future disruptions or pandemics.

Pressure-sensitive labels tend to see the most disruptive market in terms of overstocking because its format is more complex than others, involving liners, silicones, adhesives and face stocks, Reardon explains, which are 'all places where disruptions can affect that supply chain.'

One way converters are further padding their durability is by staying 'agnostic' in terms of labeling format as they branch out and adopt a comprehensive approach to labels, whether pressure-sensitive, shrink sleeve, in-mold or another.

'I think the industry is much better placed today than they were four years ago in addressing what comes at us, so bring it on,' he says, noting global events have a local impact but the industry has proven its resilience. 'I think we'll handle it just fine.'

The upcoming presidential election in November will also likely have an impact on North American converters, but overall, Reardon expects the market in 2024 on the material supply side will be 'relatively stable.'

"Partner with as many trade schools as possible and make sure you get on their radar as a great opportunity for employment. By junior year of college, it's too late"

Ask a child what they want to be when they grow up, and they often say: a doctor, an astronaut, a basketball player — or nowadays, a social media influencer. Why not a label converter, a press operator or production manager?

Labels are an integral, yet often overlooked, part of daily life, and converters beset by the broken labor market are looking for ways to join the conversation of childhood dreams, where careers begin.

From labor shortages and succession planning to Gen Z in the workplace, workforce issues arguably stood at the heart of this year's TLMI Converter Meeting, hosted in March at The Cloisters in Sea Island, Georgia.

The event featured sessions about the state of the industry and the uncertainty of the economy, while much of the converters' discussions revolved around how to attract and retain talent, particularly to fill second and third shifts. Business owners also debated people-driven alternatives to mergers and acquisitions that have largely dominated the industry in recent years.

Engaging the next generation

While industry veterans are prone to putting off retirement, wondering, 'Why would I retire? I love what I do,' the younger generation, TLMI converters said, don't seem as vested or connected.

A panel session titled 'Succession

Planning: Alternatives to Selling to PE,' offered perspectives from three different-sized converters that had opted to not sell to private equity.

Hosted by Andrea Crane of Crane Talent Group, the panelists – Craig Curran of Nosco, Bill Muir of Grand Rapid Labels and Liz Pecha-Poelker of PrintFlex Graphics – discussed the pros and cons of their respective succession strategies: employee stock ownership (ESOP); a family-owned and professionally managed company; and a family-owned and operated company.

Despite their varying approaches, they all shared a common challenge: rousing the next leaders, whether the latest group of new hires unfamiliar with ESOPs or the succeeding generations like the 'G4' or 'G5,' as the panelists referred to those in line to take up the family mantle.

'If they have no connection to the business, they're not going to have the same sort of values as G4,' Muir says, adding that is his generation's homework, to better engage G5, which is spread across the country and don't have as many opportunities to learn the family business.

Enticing Gen Z

One bright spot for many employers is Gen Z, a generation 'bred to be competitive', as father-son duo David and Jonah Stillman of GenGuru further explored at the TLMI meeting.

Most Gen Z — 67 percent — enter university with a predetermined career in mind, David Stillman says. 'So, what does that mean for all of you? The question I'm going to ask you is: are you on the radar early enough?

'Because what we know about this generation is they're sitting in high school, daydreaming out the window, to go work for brands that are front and center.'

So if you're not Meta or Spotify, what does that mean? You need to get your company on their radar earlier.

'Partner with as many trade schools as possible and make sure you get on their radar as a great opportunity for employment,' David Stillman says. 'By junior year of college, it's too late.'

For the most part, Gen Z is likely not aware of the 'robust career offerings' available in the industry, unless they grew up in the family business talking about labels around the dinner table.

'Making sure that young employees are able to see those career options is very important,' Jonah Stillman adds. 'Exposing young employees to resources like [TLMI's Label Leaders of Tomorrow] is so important because we know it's one of the strongest retention strategies for the Gen Z employees, showing them all the different places that they can go if they choose a career in this industry.'

"I think the industry is much better placed today than they were four years ago in addressing what comes at us, so bring it on. I think we'll handle it just fine"

Looking to automation

Meanwhile, artificial intelligence (AI) and automation have emerged as potential solutions to the people problem.

Adam Peek, senior vice president of sales at Meyers Printing and host of the People of Packaging podcast, was invited to give a talk titled: 'Don't Turn Your Back to the Future: How Sustainability, Social Media and Innovation are Impacting the Industry.' Peek put it simply: 'The robots are coming for your children.'

Peek, whose weekly newsletter 'Packaging is Awesome' has over 6,400 subscribers, told converters: 'Blockchain, AI and robotics are right now the three things that I get asked the most about.'

'Based on the conversations that I'm having and based on the way I see technology going, this is a possible future state for us in our industry.'

Because bottom line, he says: 'Nobody wants to buy stuff from you. They just want the stickers. They just want to buy the labels to go with their products.

'And there is technology that exists right now that I think should be making sales, marketing, estimating, prepress pretty nervous.'

So, prepare now, Peek says. It won't happen tomorrow, but it is the future.

For better or worse, for now, things seem to be the status quo on the labor front.

Claudia St John of The Workplace Advisors, who presented 'TLMI Compensation and Benefits Survey Results and Workplace Trends,' says the hiring frenzy of 2021 seems to be over, but no one seems to be laying off, either.

As St John surmised, things appear to be in 'a wait-and-see mode' as converters continue to navigate a tight labor market amid rising costs and increasing innovation.

The 2024 TLMI annual meeting is September 29-October 2 in Orlando, Florida. For more information, scan the QR code

At the 2024 TLMI Converter Meeting, the 2023 Eugene Singer Awards Winners were announced and recognized.

This year's winners exhibited excellence in various metrics, showcasing their company's overall financial performance and operational management.

In the Small Company category, Systems Graphics, based in St Louis, Missouri, won for the first time and the award was accepted by the company's president, Brian Moore.

In the Mid-Range category, ATL Corp, based in Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin, also won for the first time. Company president, Jason Hynes, was unable to attend, so TLMI chairman Tim McDonough accepted the award on the company's behalf.

Another first-time Wisconsin company, KDV Label, based in Waukesha, won in the Medium Company category and the award was accepted by CEO Keith Walz.

Lastly, Belmark's chief commercial officer, Jeff Dowd accepted the award in the Large Company category, marking the 12th time Belmark, based in De Pere, Wisconsin, has received a Eugene Singer Award.



Left to right: Linnea Keen, Tim McDonough, Keith Walz, Jeff Dowd and Brian Moore

The 2023 Eugene Singer Awards Winners:

Small Company: System Graphics of St Louis, Missouri
Mid-Range: ATL Corp of Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin
Medium Company: KDV Label of Waukesha, Wisconsin
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A digital revolution: Dscoop empowers print industry

Dscoop Edge Indy arrives in Indianapolis and brings 1,200 attendees from 37 countries, Christine Won reports

Robots don't get sick; they don't take days off; and the only breaks they need are to charge their batteries, or for maintenance and repair.

Automation and artificial intelligence (AI) took center stage at this year's Dscoop Edge Indy, in Indianapolis, Indiana on March 24–27. One highlight was an autonomous mobile robot (AMR) designed for the printing industry from MoviĜo Robotics.

Named after sharks that must keep moving to breathe, the Ŝharko5 debuted on the Solutions Showcase showfloor at Dscoop Edge Indy. That robot on display was purchased by Cober Solutions, a commercial printer in Kitchener, Ontario, which plans to use it to move materials around the warehouse and eventually to the press.

'Robots can still run around after the shop's closed,' says Erwin Driever, VP of technology at Cober and a panelist on 'Adopting a Digital Automation Mindset for Transformative Growth.'

From commercial printers to label converters, interest in automation has risen to new heights.

'Automation is key,' several speakers said at one time or another during the two-and-a-half-day event.

With over 45 education sessions focused on industry trends and three celebrity keynotes, Dscoop 2024 drew 1,200 attendees from 37 countries with 70 partners exhibiting, offering insight into how the digital print community is pivoting to stay relevant in the increasingly competitive space.

At its annual flagship event hailed as the biggest digital print community, HP announced three new digital presses for the commercial print space. Meanwhile, the HP Indigo V12 digital press, first showcased at Labelexpo Americas 2022 and Labelexpo Europe 2023, was also on the Indianapolis show floor. HP announced that the V12 will now be commercially available after successful beta-site installations at, among others, a Brook + Whittle facility in Hamilton, Ohio.

The evolution of automation

'The Morning Show: Automation in Print' featured commercial printers who shared various ways automation is changing the workflow at their respective companies, with lessons for the label industry.

'We have a robot,' says Christopher Burnley of Corefact in San Leandro, California. The company has a USD 15,000 bot from MūL Technologies that he estimates eliminates 66 trips per day just moving jobs.

The leaders hail from different backgrounds and markets but they all agree the key is to use automation to eliminate non-value adding activities — like walking over jobs — to free up skilled labor for those value-adding jobs.

'Automation helps take time out in-between,' Beck says. 'If I can have a robot move jobs and employees process more jobs, it's a win-win.'

'Automation is not about replacing employees but "repurposing" their time spent on menial jobs for "higher-level" tasks,' Gavin Rittmeyer, vice president, sales and marketing at Martin Automatic, says from the exhibit floor.

Still, for those still unsure about how to begin automating their business, the panelists advise starting small, perhaps focusing on one aspect like sales or marketing.



Dscoop 2024 drew 1,200 attendees from 37 countries with 70 exhibitors

"Automation helps take time out in-between. If I can have a robot move jobs and employees process more jobs, it's a win-win"

Another piece of advice they offered was to involve employees in the automating process because they know where the redundancies are and where inefficiencies can be eliminated.

'Automation is an evolution,' Burnley says, adding the 'ultimate Holy Grail' would be to automate the entire process from beginning to end — customer acquisition to finishing, and possibly even shipping and returns.

Plus, 'the great thing about a robot is it shows up to work every day,' Burnley adds, a sentiment the other panelists vehemently emphasized.

Former professional baseball shortstop and businessman Alex Rodriguez also weighed in on AI during his keynote.

He didn't graduate from college, but he's now teaching a class on strategic pivoting at Stanford University, and he tells the Dscoop audience: 'AI is coming for all of us.' Rodriguez further challenged the audience: 'What are you doing as a business to position yourself, so it enhances your company, not destroys it?'

'A blue ocean' of opportunity

Another way some companies are staying relevant is by diversifying with flexible packaging, a natural segue for label converters.

During a packed session on 'Double-Digit Growth: New Opportunities in Flexible Packaging,' those eyeing flexible packaging heard from digital disruptors like Charles Christopher of All State Printing, Felipe Toledo of Camargo Embalagens and Gary Whitehead of Traco Packaging.

'HP Indigo flexible packaging customers are seeing 135 percent year-over-growth since 2019, generating over USD 1 billion in sales revenue,' panel moderator Alon Schnitzer of HP says. 'It's like a blue ocean. There's plenty of opportunities and a lot of places to grow in the flexible packaging arena.'

All State Printing has seen growth double every year since its founding in 2019, having found its niche in the cannabis and pet



Dscoop 2024 offered over 45 education sessions focused on industry trends and three celebrity keynotes

foods sectors. 'It's an emerging market that has helped us grow significantly,' Christopher says, and the flexible packaging converter is now looking to add a third press.

However, pivoting into flexible packaging comes with its own set of regulations, and 'Regulatory Considerations When Moving from Labels to Flexible Packaging in Digital Printing' by Molly Hladik of Michelman addressed the many layers involved.

The global market for flexible packaging, estimated at 208.7 billion USD in 2023, is projected to reach 360.2 billion USD by 2030, growing at a CAGR of 7.1 percent during the period, according to the 'Flexible Packaging - Global Strategic Business Report' from ResearchAndMarkets.com.

Flexible packaging is made up of about 90 percent substrates and laminates, and 10 percent adhesives, with various layers like a durable film so it can be printed, a structural layer so the bag or pouch won't be punctured, as well as a barrier so the materials do not migrate.

Compounding that further, Hladik says, there are currently no set regulations in the US or the EU that offer clear guidance on specific ink formulations for food packaging. There are diverse and varying regulations, so there are always conditions and 'there is always a "but."'

Hladik says that complex multilayer is what makes it so hard to recycle to add to the challenge of sustainability. But as this growing global mentality of reduce, reuse and recycle continue to shape the future, the industry must continue to innovate new packaging designs to meet their needs.

Partnerships announced

At Dscoop 2024, HP and Esko also announced a partnership to deliver an integrated system for producing digitally printed packaging.

This partnership aims to help packaging converters streamline and automate the packaging value chain. An integrated web portal will enable brand owners to order their packages from converters on-demand, reducing order delivery times from weeks to days, decrease stocks and reduce overall cost.

Whether automation, AI or flexible packaging, it came down to staying relevant.

Todd Cober of Cober Solutions, a panelist during 'The Morning Show: Digital Transformation – State of the Industry,' talks about how important that flexibility will be going forward. 'I'm not going to predict the future; I'm going to prepare for it.'

Cober Solutions is now working with HP to install machine learning on all its equipment. 'It's not about whether print will still be relevant in 20 years,' he says. 'It's about providing whatever the consumers still want.'

Jon Bailey, CEO of Precision Proco in the UK and outgoing chair of the Dscoop global board, offers his parting words of wisdom: 'We must continue to evolve to stay relevant.'

"There's plenty of opportunities and a lot of places to grow in the flexible packaging arena"

Sustainablity: The 'new normal' for a successful converter

If automation is the next frontier, sustainability seems to be the new normal.

Sessions on sustainability at Dscoop Edge Indy were well-attended and full of practical tips for small businesses that may not know where to start.

'Initiating Sustainable Print Practices,' moderated by Rick Bellamy of Inflection, featured: Brian Scott of Blooming Color, Carlos Lahoz of HP, Jordan Darragh of PrintReleaf, Katy Hart of The BoxMaker and Lori Gobris of Michelman.

'It's a journey and you have to start with one step,' Bellamy says, noting major climate bills in California that took effect at the start of the year.

In October, California Governor Gavin Newsom signed into law the Climate Corporate Data Accountability Act (Senate Bill 253), mandating large companies doing business in the state to report its greenhouse gas emissions (GEG) by 2026 and indirect GEG across its supply chain by 2027.

Earlier this year, a lawsuit was filed challenging SB 253 and another – Climate-Related Financial Risk Act (SB 261) requiring financial risk disclosures.

Regardless the outcome, if the saying, 'As California Goes, so goes the nation,' follows, such a future of similar laws and suits may become the reality across the US, impacting converters and suppliers alike.

The panelists shared how they began their sustainability journey. For The BoxMaker, it started at Dscoop 2023. 'We want to be prepared for the future; the legislation is coming,' Hart says.

Companies can start small by controlling and reducing their energy usage and waste production, perhaps calculating the carbon footprint of one print job to start.

Michelman's Gobris also shared some statistics from the Flexible Packaging Association 2024 Annual Meeting:

The US lagged behind other countries in terms of the importance of sustainability: 66 percent of Americans believe in climate change and that humans are the cause. Additionally, 66 percent believe companies – above state and federal governments and individuals – have the responsibility to help correct the issues. Going a step further, 59 percent of Americans believe these companies are responsible for taking care of the full end-of-life of the materials and products they produce.

'It's only going to keep increasing in terms of consumer sentiment,' Gobris adds.

For HP, Lahoz says the focus on sustainability goes back to the foundation of the company, and more than 60 percent of sales now involve conversations about sustainability.

'We want to be a future-ready company and sustainability is a must,' he says. 'The future company will either be sustainable or it will not exist.'

Labelexpo Americas returns to Rosemont, Illinois on September 10-12. Scan the QR code for details

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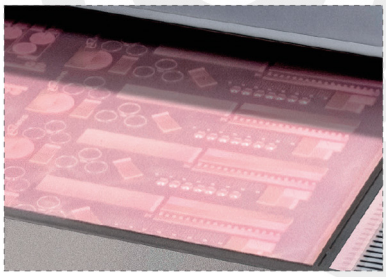

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DANTEX GROUP

Will converters be buying presses in 2024?

2024 may hold a pivotal turning point for the North American label industry, writes Jennifer Dochstader of LPC, Inc. In this guest piece, Dochstader explores a recent survey exploring capital equipment projections for 2024.

In the fourth quarter of 2023 LPC, Inc set out to determine the current state of the North American label industry and the forces having an impact on flexo and digital press installation rates. For many companies, 2023 was a challenging year in our industry. By the second quarter, many label converters were reporting a decrease in sales revenues year-over-year. As our corner of the printed packaging market witnessed unprecedented surges in demand due to pandemic forces in the years prior, 2023 painted a markedly different picture for both label converters, and their consumables and equipment suppliers.

In an effort to gauge how this landscape is impacting capital equipment purchasing decisions at the converter level, LPC carried out an extensive research initiative sponsored by four of the industry's most prominent press suppliers: Gallus, HP, Mark Andy and Xeikon. Our goal was to have in-depth feedback from label converters of all sizes, and companies that serve every end-use segment.

We wanted our sampling to be extensive, and 102 converters participated in our research. We surveyed and spoke to converters with annual revenues of less than USD 5 million who are true generalists and sell to a wide range of segments like food, chemicals, logistics, retail and personal care. We spoke to converters with annual revenues of more than USD 35 million who are specialists, serving only one or two major segments like beverage or pharmaceuticals. We also spoke to the largest companies in our market - multinational converting conglomerates that have been acquiring small to mid-sized converting companies at a furious pace over the past decade. The list that follows indicates some key collective data points from our total participant group.

Some key data points for participating label converters:

- Participant companies have more than 700 flexo presses on their production floors and more than 160 digital presses.
- Seventeen percent of participants have not yet purchased a digital press.
- The average number of flexo jobs produced per eight-hour shift is 3.9.
- The average number of digital jobs produced per eight-hour shift is 10.3.
- The average annual sales generated per flexo press is 1.9 million USD.
- The average annual sales generated per digital press is 1.6 million USD.

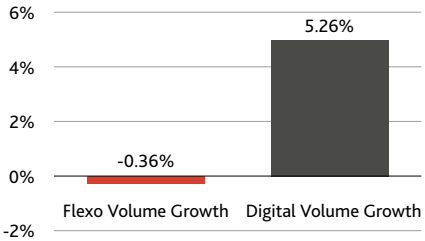
Our goal was a simple one, to capture in real-time what converters' most significant pain points are and where they see their greatest opportunities for growth and better positioning their companies in an increasingly competitive landscape. At the heart of our research were flexo and digital presses. After all, the growth of press installations equals the need for more products and services for the rest of the label-production process: labelstocks, anilox rolls, plates, inks, adhesives, varnishes, laminates, dies, press auxiliary equipment, inspection systems, MIS software, and on and on. Printing presses are the cogs in the wheels of just about every other consumable, piece of equipment, and software package on a label-converting production floor and we wanted to explore this foundational element of our industry's existence and evolution more deeply than has ever been done before.

Converters' volume growth in 2023

Just how challenging was 2023 for label converters in North America? Some of the first questions we asked participants to answer was to indicate their flexo and digital production volume growth in 2023 compared to the previous year.

Flexo volumes in 2023 declined an average of -0.36 percent (calculated by averaging all responses from the total participant group). If you compare volume growth by company size, small to mid-sized converters fared much better than larger companies. Among converters with annual sales under USD 35 million, 37 percent reported a decline in flexo volumes. In stark contrast, a significant 78 percent of converters with annual sales exceeding USD 35 million reported flexo growth declines.

Why such a marked difference between the two groups? The answer lies in the destocking that continued to take place through much of 2023. Larger converters serve larger brands and rising interest rates meant higher costs of carrying inventory at the brand level, leading to significant destocking in addition to the reduction of orders for longer-run applications. While brands were selling off stockpiled inventory left over from the pandemic, new packaging demand declined due to other economic conditions and increasing levels of consumer caution at the retail shelf. This created a perfect storm that had a significant impact on our industry's largest converting companies.



2023 production volume growth by format: Averages for total participant group

Age of flexo presses

A core part of our overall research strategy was to also determine the age spans of flexo and digital presses in the industry. This is particularly important for flexo presses since there are still a high number of older machines in the North American market. But how high actually is that number? And what happens when these machines age out of the market? Is the tendency of a converter to replace an older machine with a new flexo asset or do they instead purchase a digital press?

To answer the first question, we asked every company that participated in the research to tell us the total number of flexo presses they have on their production floor(s) and the precise age of each one of those presses. We then triangulated this new data with existing data we have, resulting in the following breakdown of flexo press ages in the North American market.

There is still a lot of older machinery in the market with nearly 25 percent of North America's total install base of flexo presses being more than 20 years old. Nearly one-third of installed flexo presses are between 11 to 15 years old. We expect a significant number of flexo presses to age out of the market over the next half decade and a key question is how converters will replace this capacity.

In interviews, a number of companies

referenced the 'one-for-two' replacement method - these converters will be retiring two older flexo presses and replacing this capacity with one new wider flexo press. Additionally, due to digital press systems continuously getting faster, and in some cases, wider, digital press adoption rates will in turn also drive converter preferences for wider flexo systems.

We asked our participant group to also indicate the number of digital presses they have on their production floors and the age of each of those presses. Like with the flexo data, this enables us to break down North American digital press installations by press age.

More than 25 percent of the digital press installation base in the region is made up of presses that are four to six years old. This bodes well for digital press suppliers as companies will be looking to replace these systems in the coming years as the technology continues to change quickly.

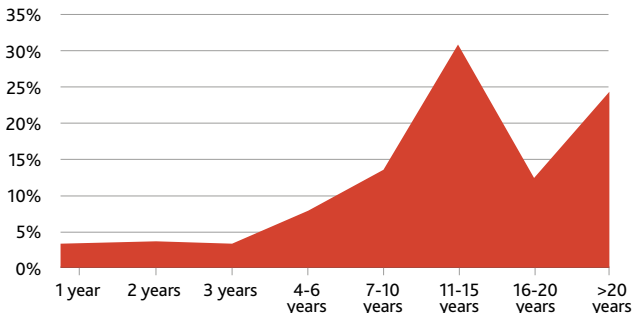
Converters' press acquisition predictions

Another question that was central to our converter survey was asking companies exactly when they plan to purchase their next flexo, digital and/or hybrid press.

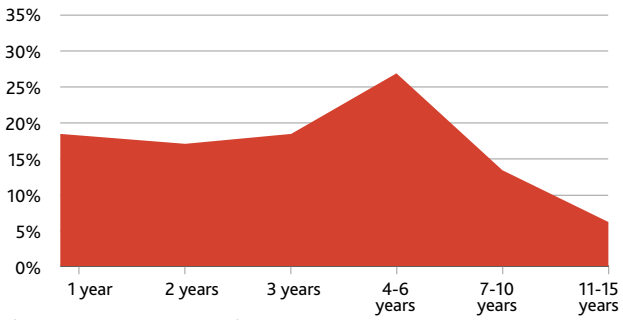
In order to prevent any confusion with nomenclature, in the survey hybrid press was defined as a press that has a digital engine of four or more colors, in addition to three or more conventional flexo print stations along with conventional finishing/die-cutting.

Nearly one-third of the participant group indicated that they would likely be purchasing a flexo press this year, one of the highest response rates we have ever received for flexo press projections. A number of our participants have already placed their orders for flexo presses in recent months. A central driver that will push flexo press acquisitions this year is a result of decisions that companies made early in 2023. Many of the converters we spoke to indicated that when disappointing sales numbers started coming in at the end of the last quarter a year ago, they decided to push all major planned CapEx purchases to 2024.

However, another critical flexo press purchasing driver was mentioned when we were interviewing companies. Every company



Age of flexo presses in the NA market

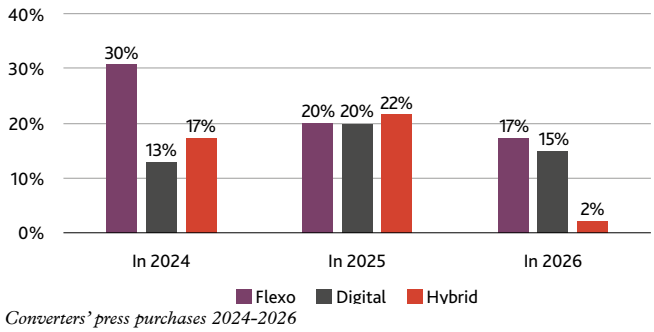


Age of digital presses in the NA market



we spoke to stressed how dire the situation currently is in trying to find flexo press operators. This workforce challenge isn't anything new, we have been hearing about the difficulty of finding press operators for the past decade or more. However, during our calls with converters companies indicated that due to the near impossibility of trying to find flexo press operators for second and third shifts, they are having to purchase new flexo presses to add to daytime shift capacity levels. In other words, many of these converters have enough flexo capacity if their presses could be running during these less desirable shifts; they just can't find the operators willing to work those shifts and run those presses.

As we peer into the future of the North American label industry, it's evident that 2024 may hold a pivotal turning point. Converters' journeys in 2023, marked by fluctuating sales, their customers' re-evaluation of inventory levels, and the evolving demand for the next generation of printing presses designed to meet the challenges of a post-pandemic world, underscores a landscape ripe for transformation.



Converters' press purchases 2024-2026

Converters are at a crossroads, balancing between advancing technology and the critical challenge of finding flexo press operators. This unique confluence of factors – ranging from the strategic aging out of older flexo presses to the pressing need for wider, more efficient machines – highlights a critical industry shift. Faced with the daunting task of filling the void left by a scarcity of willing operators for off-peak hours, companies are poised to make significant capital investments in new presses, primarily to bolster daytime production. This isn't merely a response to a temporary predicament but a strategic pivot towards future-proofing operations against the backdrop of a competitive and rapidly evolving market. As converters navigate these turbulent waters, their decisions in 2024 will not only redefine their operational capabilities but also set a new course for the North American label industry.

Scan the QR code to read more about the North American label industry in Labels & Labeling



Jennifer Dochstader is a founding partner at LPC, Inc, a prominent industry marketing communications and market research firm dedicated to the printed packaging industries. With more than 30 years' experience in the industry, she specializes in helping companies define and quantify market opportunities and position their brands in the most creative and compelling way possible. She can be reached at: jennifer@lpcprint.com.



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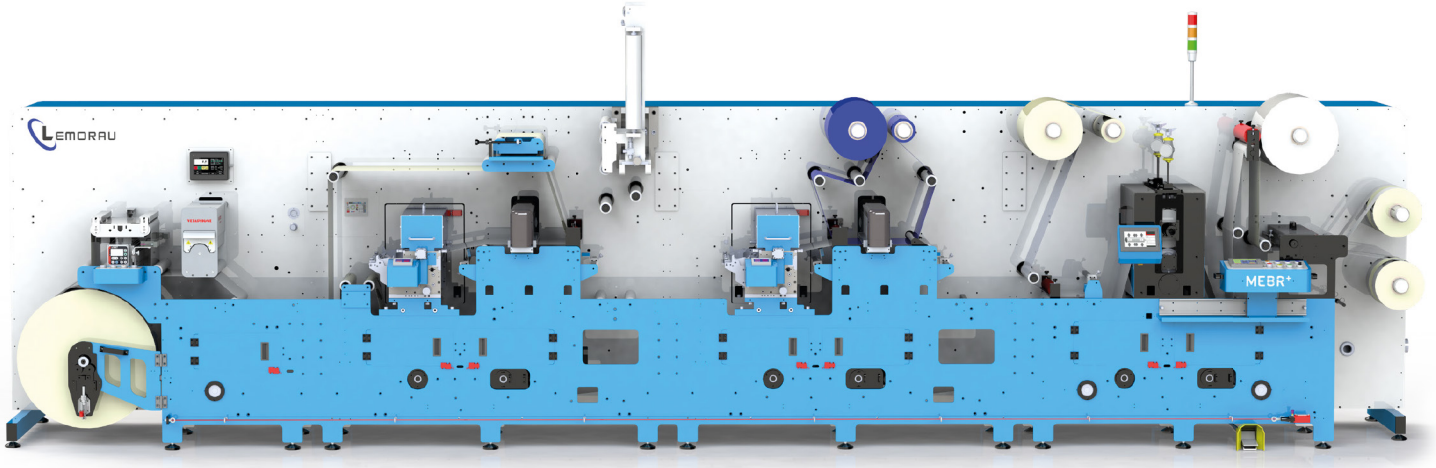

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Leftech opens US foil operation

Argentina-based Leftech has opened a foil slitting center in Florida to expand its Latin America coverage and ultimately target the US market. James Quirk reports

Argentina-based Leftech's foray into foil distribution, which began in 2019 and which L&L wrote about in December 2020, has proved such a success that the company has since set up a second dedicated facility in its native country, founded an operation in Brazil, and – at the beginning of this year – opened a site in Florida to expand the business throughout Latin America and the Caribbean, and ultimately serve the US market.

This latest move comes despite Leftech's Buenos Aires factory ceasing production for three months after it was ravaged by a fire in December.

Leftech is the Latin America distributor for Japanese water-wash flexo plate manufacturer Toyobo and CtP equipment from China-based Amsky.

CEO Martin Fraire began to investigate the foil market in 2018, identified a gap in his local market, and installed a dedicated foil slitter from Chinese company Hansoar Machinery in Leftech's Buenos Aires facility the following year.

The move was quickly vindicated. 'We had a great reception from the market in Argentina,' says Fraire. 'Hot foil in particular is important for the wine label market here.' Demand soon outstripped supply, so Leftech added a second slitter in Buenos Aires to increase capacity and installed a third in a new dedicated slitting center in Mendoza in 2022.

'Mendoza has a concentration of big label converters specializing in the wine sector, so it made sense to open a foil slitting center there,' explains Fraire. 'We can slit and deliver to local converters on the same day.'

Rapid growth meant that by 2023 Leftech was the second-largest importer of foils to Argentina, only just behind market leader Kurz. Foils rose to represent 30 percent of Leftech's overall business – and closer to 40 percent in Argentina, according to Fraire – in just three years.

'We installed very efficient equipment, so we were able to disrupt the market quickly,' says Fraire. 'The Hansoar Machinery slitter can run at up to 500m/min, though we usually run it at 300m/min. It is much more efficient than the machinery used by some of our competitors – indeed, two of the main ones have since installed the same machine.

'I already had great relationships with all the leading converters in Argentina, thanks to working in the label industry for many years, which was also a big advantage.'

Soon after establishing the foil operation in Argentina, Fraire saw the potential in doing the same in neighboring Brazil.

'As in Argentina, the foil market in Brazil is dominated by a small number of international suppliers, who generally serve the country's label converters from distribution centers in São Paulo,' says Fraire. 'I decided to open a facility in the south of the country – close to Brazil's emerging wine industry in the "Sierra Gaúcha", and home to several leading label converters.'

The site in Brazil was swiftly established, equipped with another Hansoar Machinery slitter, but the pandemic and recruitment issues delayed its full operation, which Fraire believes will begin properly this year.

Opportunity

Leftech's latest venture is the opening at the beginning of this year of a slitting center in Florida, with three staff and again equipped with a Hansoar Machinery slitter. The new operation took 18 months to plan and launch. Fraire's primary motivation is to better serve the rest of Latin America – which he says is easier from Florida than from Argentina or Brazil.



Martin Fraire (right), CEO of Leftech, and his team in the new foil slitting center in Florida, USA

"Many distributors like to import and sell on. We prefer to get involved, to get our hands dirty, and to add value"

'It is easier to serve the Bolivian market, for example, from Florida than it is from Argentina,' he says. 'The Florida site will help us serve Central America, the Caribbean and northern South America – countries such as Colombia, Venezuela and Ecuador. Brazil and Argentina, plus Paraguay and Uruguay, will be handled by the local facilities.'

'Though the initial target is converters in Latin America, we are also looking to sell to companies in Florida and some nearby states. We might target more of the US market in the future,' he says.

Cold foil represents 60 percent of the volume of Leftech's foil business, with hot foil the remainder. 'There is a big opportunity for cold foil in offset packaging production – toothpaste packaging is an example,' says Fraire. 'It is a more environmentally friendly product compared to laminating carton and adding a metalized finish. And more economic too: you can apply it in-line during production in the same pass.'

Fraire admits that he did not expect to be serving the wider Latin American region within such a short space of time. 'It was the reaction from the market that led us to realize the level of opportunity not just in Argentina but across the whole region,' he says. 'We are from a country where there are regular financial crises – we are used to seeing an opportunity and moving quickly. Our company has a regional culture: we have been selling Toyobo plates and platewashing equipment around the region for 20 years, so our network was already in place.

'Many distributors like to import something and simply sell it on. We prefer to get involved, to get our hands dirty, and to add value to the supply chain with a customized product.'

Scan the QR code to learn more about Leftech



Label Summit Latin America 2024 showcases Colombia's growth and potential

Latin American event returns to the region for the first time since 2020 and draws 750 visitors from 25 countries to Bogota. Christine Won and Chelsea McDougall report

The dynamic labeling market in Latin America is prime for opportunity, as industry experts estimate the percentage of digital presses in the region is still below that of the global average. And in this rapidly growing and diversifying market where cost is king, there is plenty of room for growth, as the Label Summit Latin America 2024 highlighted.

The 20th edition of Label Summit Latin America returned to Colombia this March, taking place in Bogotá for the first time, and returning to the region for the first time since Chile in March 2020.

The two-day conference, held at the Agora Bogotá Convention Center, brought together 750 visitors from 25 countries, with 13 conference sessions aimed at equipping delegates with in-depth label and package printing trade knowledge, market insights, regional trends and the latest technologies.

Hosted by Labelexpo Global Series, the conference program topics ranged from neuromarketing insights and industry sustainability to design innovations and coffee labels, as well as the impact of automation, the rise of counterfeiting and a keynote on the Colombia Plastics Pact.

More than 25 experts from well-known Colombian brands, label converters from the region and leading associations in Latin America's label and package printing industry shared their insights and knowledge about the trends and technologies that are shaping the future of the market.

> **"Commercial print is seeing a decline in volumes in recent years. In contrast, packaging and label work is booming"**

Meanwhile, converters participating in the conference included Viappiani, Servibarras, CCL, All4Labels, AlfaPrint, Everest Printed, Impresos y Acabados, Ideartes Impresores, Etiflex Mexico, Kuresa and Sismode.

The conference program was accompanied by a tabletop exposition featuring 54 industry suppliers.

'The two-day annual conference is a renowned educational highlight for local label converters looking to network with key suppliers and share knowledge with the industry,' says Mirco Mazzarella, Labelexpo Global Series event manager for Latin America. 'Colombia in particular has one of Latin America's most advanced label and package printing industries, driven in part by its flourishing coffee production market and Label Summit Latin America 2024 provides a big opportunity for label converters to grow their business.'

Day one

Chelsea McDougall, Labels & Labeling group managing editor, kicked off the two-day event with 'Industry overview: the Changing Global Market.'

'The label industry has shown impressive global growth over a number of decades and continues to do so when other print sectors are in decline,' McDougall says. 'Commercial print is seeing a decline in volumes in recent years. In contrast, packaging and label work is booming.

'This is leading to a new focus for print service providers outside the labeling sector starting to look at the label and packaging market in order to diversify their product offerings.'

Next, Tatiana Duarte, executive president, Andigraf, and Cesar Bernal Gonzalez, executive director, Everest Luxury Packaging, zeroed in on the relevant market with 'Colombia and the Wider Region: Market Analysis and Forecast.' The session addressed some key trends in a post-pandemic industry, developing new markets in Latin America and challenges ranging from economic to political and the supply chain.

Andrés Felipe Peláez, R&D director at Arclad, the event's platinum sponsor, talked of the responsibility of the industry to adopt and practice sustainability, and how Arclad is leading

"Our stakeholders believe we have to work hard in terms of how we positively impact the environment"

that charge in 'Demystifying Label and Package Printing Sustainability,' putting the planet above profit.

Arclad is leading the industry on that front with two products: sugar cane paper facestock and bio-based repulpable adhesives that wash off so the container can be recycled.

'Right now the market is not demanding sustainable products because of the high cost,' he says. 'The market is price dependent. But we believe the initiative starts with us.

The first-day keynote, 'The Colombia Plastics Pact,' featured Laura Reyes Castellanos, executive director at Cempre, and Kari Virtanen of CCL Label who both spoke on greenwashing versus green hushing, as well as how label converters can contribute toward a circular economy and support brand owners.

Reyes Castellanos says: 'The Label Summit Latin America 2024 event represented a valuable opportunity to explore and understand the dynamics of a consumer-oriented industry that has enormous potential to lead transformations that drive the circular economy and encourage changes in behaviors. Having these kinds of spaces is essential to continue exchanging knowledge and inspiring the development of sustainable solutions.'

In the afternoon, 'Exploring Innovations in Packaging Design' featured Juan José Posada of VML (previously Grey Colombia) and Eric Pell of supermarket chain Makro Colombia on how they partnered to address food waste, one sticker at a time, offering a simple solution to a massive problem. These stickers use colors, not technology, to help show consumers how their produce can be used at every stage of ripeness.

The first day concluded with 'Neuromarketing Insights for the Label Converter to Consider' from Fernando Arendar, founder of Nitid Studio, and 'Creating the Perfect Coffee Label' from Daniel Jaramillo of Alico and Juanita Jiménez of Buendía.

Packaging's purpose is twofold, Arendar says: to package your product but also to advertise it. 'The more exposed we are to a brand, the more familiar it becomes,' he adds.

Day two

Day two kicked off with 'Business Diversification: How to Become a One-Stop-Shop' from Carolina Petro Otero of Ideartes Impresores and Alfonso Cifuentes of Suprapak who discussed diversifying their portfolios into new markets such as flexible packaging and shrink sleeves.

'Flexible packaging was the big winner,' Petro Otero says.

The speakers also emphasized the importance of finding niche market opportunities and acquiring the appropriate technology and training.

Then 'Unlocking Your Continuous Improvement Potential' by Aislan Yaron Baer, CEO of ProjetoPack, offered tips on improving operational efficiency and financial management, and prioritizing business investment choices.

Consider, for example, 'the impact of an untrained operator,' he says.

In another session, María Paula Murcia Sánchez, a talent hunter and career adviser, advised on diversifying the workforce and bridging the skills gap.

'It is essential to foster a business culture based on data, research, critical thinking, learning and creativity,' Baer says, urging the audience to 'think outside the box' and 'question the status quo.'

The second afternoon started with a panel discussion, 'Pan-Regional Growth Opportunities for the Label Converter,' led by Giovanni Gomez of Asociación Nacional de Comercio Exterior.

He was joined by three panelists: Jaime Yoshiyama of Kuresa, Alessandra Costa of All4Labels and Francisco Arias of Sismode exploring ways to make the converter business more commercially viable and choosing the right suppliers amid the trend of diversification.

'Overall, it's a good outlook with nearshoring bringing vendors and suppliers closer to home to reduce dependency on China,' Arias says. 'This is going to put Latin America on the map.'

However, cost remains a major obstacle in the region, which has always been hyper-focused on the bottom figure, according to several experts.

'[In Latin America], everything is very focused on costs,' Costa says.

In 'The Rise of Counterfeiting and Opportunities in Brand Protection Through Traceability,' Ari Vonderwalde of Etiflex Mexico, Santiago Cadavid of ScanTrust and Juan Zuluaga of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization offered the latest on RFID, QR codes and traceability via smart labels and digital product passports.

The second and final day of the conference concluded with a forward-looking panel, 'The Converter of the Future: What Will It Look Like, and Are You Ready?'

David Ricardo Muñoz, editor-in-chief of El Empaque + Conversión, moderated the discussion with Manuel Yepes of Viappiani de Colombia, Luis Fernando Herrera Salinas of Impresos y Acabados, Jorge Galofre of Alfa Print and Angela Espinosa of Servibarras Official.

The panel addressed light-out converting, digital versus flexo, and the impact of digital technologies and automation.

The audience was curious about that precise tipping point from digital to flexo, but panelists advised it depends on various figures like volume, budget, quality and what the client is specifically looking for.

Leading exhibits

On the exhibit floor, 54 industry suppliers from across the label and printing value chain showcased tabletop exhibition.

Arclad, the event's platinum sponsor, focused its messaging on sustainability.

Carolina Jaramillo Osorio, marketing director at Arclad, states, 'Having the opportunity to share information on sustainability to our customers and industry delegates means a lot to us, understanding how to meet the requirements of sustainable labeling can be very challenging, and we believe this event provided the perfect platform for us to continue working together towards this goal.

'At our booth, we were able to experience a significant number of client visits, coming from different countries across the region, contributing to a very dynamic atmosphere where we even successfully closed several business deals.'

Other leading industry suppliers, **HP** and **Grafix Digital**, were the gold sponsors for this year's event. Grafix Digital discussed how HP Indigo digital presses are uniquely placed for customization in label printing.

Finishing equipment manufacturer, **Cartes**, was a silver sponsor, as well as an exhibitor at the accompanying exposition, presenting the latest finishing solutions to produce printed labels.

Also joining Cartes and **Eco3** as silver sponsors was **Avery Dennison**, which specializes in the design and manufacture of a wide variety of labeling and functional materials. It showcased a range of products, including its RFID and NFC inlays at a display of connected products.

Baldwin offered its upgraded Guardian PQV 4.0 with the new Wizard-iQ Interface. Wizard-iQ can set up a repeatable process with a few clicks, lowering the barrier of entry for new employees. PQV 4.0 incorporates automated-Delta-E color monitoring and both single- and dual-sided 100 percent print quality inspection.



The two-day conference offered 13 sessions to equip attendees with in-depth trade knowledge, market insights, regional trends and the latest technologies



Label Summit Latin America 2024 brought together 750 visitors from 25 countries

"Latin America Label Summit is a great opportunity for businesses in the label and packaging markets – and those considering moving into them"

Debuted was the Corona Narrow Web, a modified version of its corona surface treatment system for the narrow web industry with improved handling on a higher level. The handle grip is designed for easy removal of the cassette from the corona unit, allowing for simple cleaning and maintenance.

Beontag showcased its portfolio of products and sustainable technologies, including Eco RFID Tag, Couchê PCR, Liner rPet and linerless self-adhesives, all of which are also based on paper or recycled materials.

Ricardo Lobo, Beontag CEO, says: 'LATAM is a critical market for Beontag – it's where it began for us, and we look forward to meeting with customers, clients, friends, and partners to discuss their priorities and needs for 2024. Label Summit LATAM is another great opportunity to showcase Beontag's diverse portfolio, including self-adhesives, RFID technology, and linerless labels.'

Eco3, a global supplier of prepress systems to the offset industry formerly known as Agfa Offset Solutions, debuted at Labelexpo Europe 2023 to demonstrate its portfolio for the flexo label segment. Eco3 was a first-time exhibitor at Label Summit Latin America 2024 as a silver sponsor. It presented its Magis portfolio, a complete solution for flexographic label printers, from editing and improving image quality to producing the highest quality water-based flexographic plates.

Fujifilm discussed its Flenex FW, water washable flexo plate range, which the company says improves productivity by reducing platemaking times to 40 minutes, while still achieving high-quality resolution and better ink transfer significantly lowering the cost-in-use compared to solvent plate processing systems. The company also highlights its narrow web UV and LED inks for flexo.

GEW showcased its Aero LED, an air-cooled UV LED curing system. AeroLED is a high-power system for full cure, printing, coating and converting applications up to 60cm wide.

K Laser, a global manufacturer of metalized substrates and holographic paper, showcased four holography applications for the first time: traditional cold foil, Viridian holographic sheets and paperboard, holographic lamination, and Kast and Kure.

Mark Andy, the lanyard sponsor of the event, says there was a lot of interest in hybrid technology as companies seek to reduce costs and increase efficiency. Investment activity in the Andean region has slowed recently, mainly due to politics, but the Latin American sales manager expects that to turn around.

'Companies are a bit more cautious and are waiting before investing. But that always changes eventually.'

Nilpeter promoted its FA-Line and new FB-14/-17, which was launched earlier this year. The company also used the Latin American show to push for Labelexpo Americas, where we will bring both the FA-26 and his new FB-14/-17.

Nilpeter's Andean sales manager, Juan Pablo Patino Arevalo, says there is a notable increase in shrink sleeve production in the region, as countries like Peru, Ecuador and Colombia are mandating the use of shrink sleeves, particularly in dairy products. Meanwhile, the rest of the food industry is moving away from cardboard packaging in favor of flexible packaging.

'Overall volumes are on the rise, but they're spread across more SKUs,' Arevalo says. 'Customers are looking to reduce job change times and minimize waste.'

Other press OEMs were on hand at the exhibit, including **Bobst**, **Konica Minolta**, **Omet** and **Pulisi**.

Maxcess Group, which includes **RotoMetrics**, WebEx, Magpower, Tidland and Componex, discussed its full portfolio of narrow web offerings from every stage in the flexo printing operation, including rotary dies and tooling, web guides, vision systems, and winding, slitting and tension control rolls. Maxcess has a facility in Brazil for which it services the Latin American region.

Nazdar Ink Technologies showed its range of inks developed for narrow-web printing applications and explained the benefits of its UV and LED flexo, UV offset and UV letterpress inks, durable UV coatings, water-based flexo, UV and LED rotary screen inks, and UV and LED overprint varnishes and adhesives.

'Latin America Label Summit is a great opportunity for businesses in the label and packaging markets - and those considering moving into them – to meet us and discover why our inks and coatings are used worldwide,' comments Mike Harjung, Nazdar vice president of narrow web products.

A longtime supporter of Label Summit shows **Yupo** discussed the sustainability benefits of its n its in-mold label materials.

'We always expect good things, and the Label Summit delivered,' says Alex Cruz, Yupo director of sales. 'Our expectations were fulfilled, we saw key industry players that was evident in the quality of the speaker lineup and attendees coming by our booth.'

Mazzarella concludes: 'Label Summit Latin America always aims to deliver highly engaging, educational content with an esteemed line-up of expert speakers looking into the latest industry trends and market insights that are shaping the future of the industry.'

Stay tuned for Labelexpo Americas 2024, taking place in Chicago September 10-12, and Labelexpo Mexico 2025 in Guadalajara next April.

Labelexpo Americas returns to Rosemont, Illinois on Sept 10-12. Scan the QR code for details

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Entries for the Label Industry Global Awards are now open – who will reign supreme in 2024?

It's time to honor the industry pioneers who deserve recognition for their excellence. Get ready to celebrate the individuals and companies that illustrate passion, dedication and innovation in today's fast paced label and package printing marketplace.

The search is now on for this year's winners. We want to hear about your successes, incredible achievements, and celebrate them all at this year's ceremony during Labelexpo Americas 2024.

Submit your entry for free today!

Download the entry forms from *www.labelawards.com* and submit your entry along with any supporting material by 10 June 2024.

Late entries cannot be accepted.

2024 Awards Categories:

R.Stanton Avery Global Achievement Award

This award reflects the values and vision of Stan Avery and his innovative breakthroughs that founded the label industry.

Rising Star Award

This award recognizes the achievements of emerging talent in the label and packaging industry who represent the next generation of leaders.

Converter of the Year Award

This award is given to a printing/converting company who has encouraged a diverse and inclusive work environment, developed a comprehensive training program and contributed to community/charity initiatives.

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One-pass mono-material packaging from DG press & Siegwerk



Siegwerk and DG press collaborate on a one-pass solution for mono-material food packaging, reducing time and waste through the seamless integration of multiple printing and coating technologies

Siegwerk, a world-leading supplier of inks and coatings, has established itself as a key player in the sustainable packaging industry with its innovative functional coatings. Their coatings are designed to enhance the performance and recyclability of packaging materials, aligning with the global shift towards sustainability. By focusing on mono-material packaging solutions, Siegwerk is contributing to the reduction of complex packaging structures that are difficult to recycle.

Their coatings not only provide essential properties such as oxygen, grease and aroma barriers like the CIRKIT OxyBar BC 1582 and heat resistance like the Overprint Varnish CIRKIT HeatGuard but also support the creation of packaging that is both functional and environmentally friendly. This collaborative approach by Siegwerk and DG press demonstrates a commitment to advancing circular economy principles in the packaging sector, where the end-of-life recyclability of packaging is as important as its performance during use.

Furthermore, Siegwerk's de-inking technology plays a crucial role in the recycling process, providing de-inkable solutions that ensure high-quality recyclates and support the creation of new packaging materials without the degradation issues like discoloration or odors.

DG-AUXO modular design for recyclable packaging

The functional coating solutions developed by Siegwerk fit seamlessly with the hybrid web offset press technology from DG press.

The *DG-AUXO* hybrid web offset press series from DG press is a completely modular design, offering maximal freedom in press line configuration for modern, and designed-for-recycling packaging solutions.

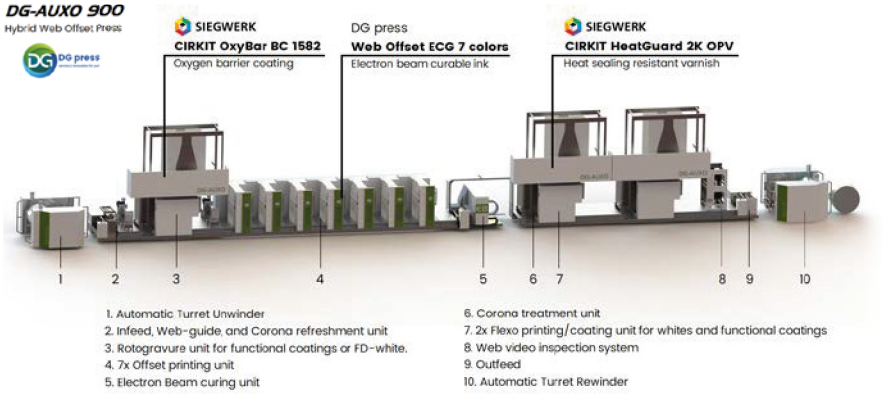
In the *DG-AUXO*, solvent-free and energy-efficient web offset print quality can be combined with up- and downstream coating applications, being flexo or roto, offering printers and converters flexibility and sustainable print production for a wide range of packaging and labels.

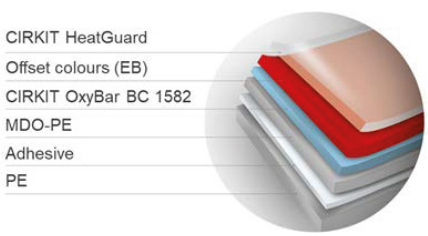
Mono-PE coffee bag

In a recent project, DG press and Siegwerk cooperated in the development and realization of a mono-PE material coffee bag with enhanced oxygen barrier properties by applying a barrier coating, printing inks, and an OPV in all in one-pass.

An MDO-PE//PE film was provided with an oxygen barrier coating that was dried with hot air, after which electron beam-cured inks in offset technology were printed on top of it. Hereafter a matte OPV was applied over the printed graphics, which also provided good resistance to the high temperatures of the heat-seal bars. Besides an enhanced oxygen barrier the coating also provides fast and easy de-inking. More details at www.dgpress.nl/coffee-pouch/

Visit DG press at Drupa: booth 16/A14 and booth 13/A56.





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Webtech showcases its latest innovation at open house

Revolutionizing the future of flexographic printing, Webtech International Machineries showcased its Labeltech X2 series and unveiled its fully-servo flexo label press. Adyasha Sinha reports

In April, Webtech International Machineries held an open house at its Faridabad, Haryana, India facility, unveiling its latest flexo machine, the Labeltech X2 series, introduced earlier this year.

The event commenced with a welcoming address from Sabhajeet Singh, managing director of Webtech International Machineries. Singh highlighted the innovative capabilities of the new machinery, emphasizing its role in pushing the boundaries of printing technology.

Founded in 1998, Webtech Group is an Indian manufacturer specializing in printing and paper converting machinery. Its product range includes narrow and wide-web flexo and offset label printing machines. The company has a client base of more than 3,000 global customers, supported by a workforce of over 200 skilled employees. Its products have been deployed in over 35 countries.

Redefining flexo

Shiv Nandan Singh, Webtech's director, presented the 8-color semi-servo flexo press. It boasts several advanced features, including web brake sensors, reel ending alarm, laser light registration setting system, motorized magnetic lifter on a sliding platform, pressure dial gauge on two die-cut stations and an emergency stop pull rope cable.

'Built on a shared foundation, this flexo press ensures stability and reliability throughout every printing operation,' Singh explains. 'The visually stunning and ergonomic design not only elevates the machine's aesthetic appeal but also enhances operational efficiency, positioning it a premier choice for industry professionals.'

Featuring eight individual touchscreen HMI controls managing each printing stations within a 330-mm working width, the press provides precise control and customization. Equipped with four servo drives along with eight LED UV units, it can handle a diverse range of substrates. Additionally, the machine includes a corona treating system tailored to enhance the surface energy of plastic films, foils and paper, facilitating better wettability and adhesion of inks, coatings and adhesives. Consequently, treated materials exhibit enhanced printing and coating quality along with increased lamination strength.

The turnbar is designed for flexo printers seeking to print on the web face and subsequently turn the web for printing on the reverse side of the material, catering for numerous applications that require converters to print on the front and backside of various web materials including paper, film and foil substrates.

'The machine can achieve perfect registration at high speeds,' Singh notes. 'The X2 series combines precision, speed and versatility to match the ever-changing demands of label printing. Its sturdy construction facilitates efficient job changeovers, showcasing durability and dependability.'

The machine integrates numerous intelligent features, including straightforward pneumatic reel loading/unloading on unwind with LM guide sliding blocks, pneumatic adjustment of ink tray, doctor blade and plate cylinder through individual HMI screens and a shared base for four printing stations. The base not only boosts stability and durability but also minimizes vibrations, ensuring seamless operation.



Webtech International Machineries unveiling its latest flexo machine, the Labeltech X2 series, earlier this year

"The X2 series combines precision, speed and versatility to match the ever-changing demands of label printing"

'The Labeltech X2 series isn't just a machine; it represents technological prowess and a dedication to excellence. It embodies the epitome of precision, agility and adaptability, perfectly attuned with the constantly changing demands of the label printing landscape. This blend has indeed captured the attention of industry leaders and experts,' Singh says.

A glimpse into the future

Webtech is gearing up for another milestone with the forthcoming launch of the Labeltech S1 series fully servo flexo label press. Set to debut in May, the machine will be unveiled at the upcoming Labelexpo India 2024. Since April 2023, the company has sold 18 flexo presses both domestically and internationally.

'In this financial year, we plan to unveil our latest generation fully servo flexo press by the mid-May 2024. With our expanding dealer network we are confident to take this count to above 30 machines per year,' shares Singh.

With Labeltech X2 series and the upcoming Labeltech S1 series, Webtech aims to revive the allure of flexographic printing.

'Over the past two months, we've been overwhelmed by the market's enthusiastic response, particularly for our flexo label press. The increased demand prompted us to strategically expand our manufacturing capabilities, ensuring prompt and efficient order fulfillment. These advancements underscore our dedication to equipping both current and prospective clients with the necessary tools to stay ahead in a constantly evolving market,' Shiv Nandan Singh says.

Webtech will unveill its latest flexo machine, the Labeltech S1 series at Labelexpo India 2024. Scan the QR code to find out more.



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Morya Labels goes digital to keep up with the start-up boom

India-based label converter diversifies its business by installing a Konica Minolta AccurioLabel 230 digital press, the company's first investment outside offset, screen and flexo in more than 15 years. Adyasha Sinha reports

One of the most intriguing and dynamic trends in recent decades has been India's start-up movement. The country has blossomed into a hub for entrepreneurial vigor, particularly within the realm of e-commerce. Remarkably, this phenomenon extends beyond the confines of large cities and commercial centers.

This spurred Mumbai-based, Morya Labels to broaden its horizons and introduce Morya Digital Labels (MDL) in late 2023, aiming to cater to the start-up industry with short-run jobs digital printing services.

Discussing the surge in India's start-up economy, Amit Bera, director at MDL, remarks: 'With the burgeoning Indian start-up ecosystem and the overall economic landscape, there is a widespread aspiration for entrepreneurship and brand creation. Whether venturing into food-tech or IT brand, the entrepreneurial drive permeates all sectors today. And what's a brand without labels and great packaging?'

With more than 15 years of experience in the print industry, Morya Labels boasts a seasoned presence in the labeling sector. Established by Ramesh Vanga and Babaji Gopale, the company fulfills diverse label needs through offset and screen printing, serving prominent Indian beverage brands such as Oxyrich (Manikchand), Kingfisher, McDowell, and more.

In 2021, Morya Labels ventured into a new domain with the establishment of Shri Morya Packaging, emphasizing roll-form labels. The company made significant investments in three flexo machines from China and Vietnam to bolster this division.

Embarking on the digital journey, one label at a time

Bera comments: 'Ramesh Vanga had contemplated transitioning to digital for some time now. We are witnessing a significant shift in label procurement patterns, with a preference for smaller, more frequent orders – making digital printing an ideal choice.'

That's when Bera and his team commenced their research of new digital label machinery, engaging with all the major machine manufacturers, before ultimately selecting Konica Minolta's AccurioLabel 230.

He elaborates: 'Print quality was paramount for us. We sought a press versatile enough to meet the diverse needs of our label portfolio, spanning form beverage to the food industry.

'We were particularly eager to acquire a robust roll-to-roll digital label printing machine, to complement our stack flexo presses. With its 4-color toner-based printing and impressive speeds of up to 23.4m/min, jobs move swiftly from production to delivery. Director Ramesh Vanga and I were thoroughly impressed by the quality, performance and technology of Konica Minolta's AccurioLabel 230 - it exceeded our expectations.'

The AccurioLabel 230 is a 13-inch-wide roll-to-roll machine with an unwinder and rewinder supplied by Brotech.

Vijay Kamat, Konica Minolta's product manager of industrial printing, explains: 'The AccurioLabel 230 offers customers a host of advantages, including enhanced productivity, flexibility and stability. The AccurioPress engine caters to small- and mid-range segments, making it suitable for label printers, print providers, brand owners, packaging companies and commercial printers.'



Newly installed Konica Minolta AccurioLabel 230 gives Morya Digital Labels the capability to bolster emerging brands

"What's a brand without labels and great packaging?"

The label line delivers print runs of up to 1,000 meters at 1,200 DPI without the need for recalibration. With an enhanced speed, it accommodates most coated/uncoated papers. PP and PET media can be printed at full speed. Additionally, the machine is capable of printing pre-printed media, including overprinting flexo white pre-printed on clear PP labels.

Kamat further states: 'Konica Minolta aimed to become a strategic partner for Morya Digital Labels. With the Accuriolabel 230 in place, MDL can incorporate digital content onto labels, addressing both short and ultra-short label printing requirements of its customers. Moreover, it enables MDL to explore new business opportunities that could not be considered before the installation of the AccrioLabel230.'

Empowered by its latest Konica Minolta press, Morya Digital Labels has a clear-cut strategy to expand its customer base from 650 to more than 1,000 customers.

Bera shares: 'The world is evolving rapidly, and it is crucial for label converters to aid brand development in this dynamic landscape. I firmly believe that digitally printed labels play a pivotal role in fostering the growth of start-up brands in India. We are engaging with numerous less-known brands, including those from smaller cities and regions, entrenched in the Indian start-up ecosystem, all seeking attractive labeling for their products. It's more than just offering solutions; it's about empowering them with customized strategies and insights to distinguish themselves in the market.'

In this context, the AccurioLabel 230 at Morya Digital Labels has the capability to bolster emerging brands in India's flourishing start-up economy, propelling fledgling brands to the next level of success.

'There is heightened awareness regarding labels and packaging, necessitating agility and efficiency on our part. We recognize that we are competing with the big players in the business, thus emphasizing the need to remain lean and responsive,' Bera says.

Scan the QR code to learn more about Morya Digital Labels.



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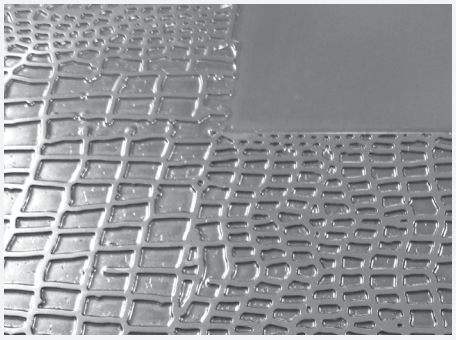

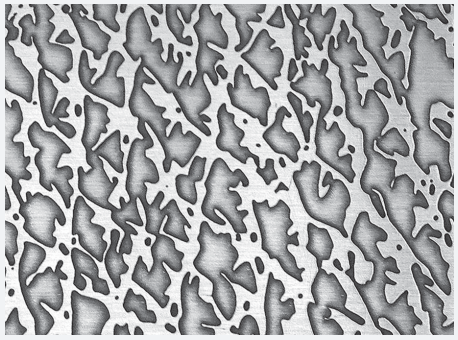



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Helen Miao: from production floor to global CEO

Helen Miao was never one to allow expectations of what a woman 'should do' hold her back. Today she runs one of China's leading label converting groups with operations across multiple continents. Yolanda Wang reports

Helen Miao, vice president and executive director of the globe-spanning Chinese converting group BSN, started as a front-line production worker 24 years ago. On her own initiative, she pushed herself to develop expertise in the materials, printing equipment, finishing technology and production processes that drive the label industry.

'Confidence, hard work, persistence. No matter the starting point, you should set yourself clear goals, then I believe everyone can achieve success,' she tells L&L with her characteristic enthusiasm.

The first time this writer met Ms Miao was at an industry forum in 2023, where she shared her story and industry experiences on a public stage with great confidence and elegance. In this special interview – one in a series of articles about women in the Chinese label printing industry - Miao shares her experiences with L&L's global audience. Read on to understand how she received the nickname of 'The Red Rose of BSN' from her colleagues.

Persistence pays

Born into an ordinary working-class family, even as a child Helen Miao was full of curiosity about how the world worked. Her trailblazing personality led her to consider new avenues when choosing her career after graduation.

She took some detours in the days before joining the labels industry. 'I started my first business with my husband, but it failed,' recalls Miao. 'At that very moment when things looked dark, I received an invitation from Chen Chengkai and his wife – the future founders of BSN Group – to cooperate in setting up a packaging and printing company.'

But which segment should they choose? Commercial printing? Folding cartons? With limited venture capital funding, they spent a long time making their final decision.

'At that time, I was completely unaware of this (label) industry. Learning from previous entrepreneurial failures, I conducted a survey of the industry with my partners. Finally, we founded Yamei Packaging Company (the predecessor of the BSN Group) in Wenzhou, Zhejiang Province, focusing on the production of flexible packaging and labels products,' recalls Miao.

In the company's infancy, Miao worked long hours 'doing what others do not want to do and learning what others do not want to learn'. Her unremitting efforts helped lay the foundation for the company's development, giving her a deep knowledge of the range of materials and printing production equipment used in the labels industry.

'Through these efforts, I grew rapidly from a newbie in the label printing industry to an expert and leader in our company. Even now, I give suggestions for operational improvements to our co-workers and operators.'

Behind all these achievements, Miao put in a lot of 'sweat and tears' which she hid from the people around her - especially in the early days when the company moved to a rented factory in Renhe Town, Baiyun District, Guangzhou City, where she lived in the factory with the workers.

'My persistence from the beginning was a matter of responsibility for the people working for the company. Today the driving force that ultimately supports me is the love of this industry, which multiplies daily, especially the moment when our label products are delivered and praised by customers. Then I feel that all the effort and hard work was worth it.'



Helen Miao of BSN

"You shouldn't limit yourself to what is 'expected'. You should dare to challenge traditional thinking and concepts and break the limits of gender roles and stereotypes"

Breaking limits

Miao has continued accumulating professional knowledge on different manufacturing technologies, material selection, printing processes and a wide range of marketing, brand promotion and other fields. Today she has become an outstanding and inspiring label industry practitioner and leader.

Miao also takes full advantage of her background in fashion design and previous experience in the clothing industry. Putting herself in the position of a brand designer helps when providing customized and personalized label solutions that help brands enhance their product image, supply chain efficiency and competitiveness.

When asked about the opportunities for female workers in the label printing industry, Miao shares, 'A manufacturing industry such as label printing does place some special requirements on female workers, which may vary depending on the specific job and working environment. Taking the traditional printing workshop as an example, workers must operate heavy machinery and move around heavy rolls of materials, so there are requirements for strength and endurance which may not be suitable for female workers. But as printing equipment becomes more automated and digital, these

positions are becoming less gender specific.

'To be honest, I think that this industry provides a lot of development opportunities for female workers – particularly jobs that require patience and accuracy, such as pre-press, quality inspection and delivery management. These are all very suitable, and it is very easy to achieve much, and quickly, in these positions. Also, as an enterprise manager, I think we need to establish equal and flexible training and incentive systems to provide better career promotion opportunities and an equal employment environment for all employees.'

Looking back on her experience over the past 24 years, Miao states, 'The most important thing is - no limits! That means you shouldn't limit yourself to what is "expected". You should dare to challenge traditional thinking and concepts and break the limits of gender roles and stereotypes. In my opinion, both male and female employees should determine their goals according to their interests and strengths, try their best to work hard, improve and act toward their self-defined goals. No matter what the outcome, you will emerge with a better version of yourself.'

Miao is also very grateful to Chen Chengkai and his wife, the founders of BSN group, for giving her their full trust and the space to become today's 'Red Rose of BSN'.

'Especially now, in a period of accelerating transformation in the industry, new technologies, new materials, new solutions are constantly being applied. Employees in the label printing industry need to constantly learn to improve their skills, adapt to the ever-changing needs and obtain opportunities for promotion. It is the job of company owners to ensure there are equal opportunities and challenges for both men and women.'

Teamwork

Helen Miao says she owes her achievements to the team and customers who have supported her over the years.

'If there's one lesson I can share, it's that I chose the right boss and then built an all-conquering, strong-willed team to support me. No matter what innovative technologies and products we have developed, how great the achievements we have contributed to the development of the industry, or how much we have influenced the industry, it is not through my own work, but the cooperation of our superb team.'

After years of development work, Miao and her team have brought the company from a small factory in Wenzhou to a group headquartered in Guangzhou, with factories in Wenzhou (Zhejiang Province), Guanzhou (Guandong Province), Indonesia, South and North Vietnam, and sales offices in Hong Kong, the United States, France, the Netherlands and Germany.



Helen Miao of BSN

"I think we need to establish equal and flexible training and incentive systems to provide better career promotion opportunities and an equal employment environment for all employees"

Its main products include PS labels, filmic anti-counterfeiting labels, RFID tags and anti-bacterial wrapping papers which are widely applied in footwear, clothing, luggage, furniture, cosmetics and other fields. The company has accumulated more than 80 patents.

To better understand market needs and trends, Miao remains in constant communication with suppliers and customers and listens to their opinions and suggestions. 'This not only allows us to better meet the needs of our customers but also gives us new ideas and sparks creativity.'

All this work has led the BSN Group to be considered one of China's leading label converters. In 2023, the total revenue of the group exceeded 1.8 billion RMB (250M USD).

'In 2024, we will pay more attention to the general trends of the industry, such as digital and sustainable development,' she says. 'While serving customers well, we will enhance the company's overall market competitiveness, and continue to strive to become a 'global one-stop supply chain platform' for label and packaging solutions.'

Scan the QR code to read more stories on the Chinese label market

NEWS IN BRIEF

Rongzhong invests in Durst Tau RSCi

South China-based converter Rongzhong has invested in the first Durst Tau RSCi in the region to improve its productivity, efficiency and print quality.

As a company dedicated to printing, paper tapes, labels and various high-end cultural and creative products, Rongzhong's investment in Durst not only highlights its pursuit of product quality and production efficiency but also reflects its leading position in the industry.

Wan Xinke, chairman of Rongzhong, said: 'I am very excited about the installation of Durst Tau RSCi. This important investment not only marks a significant enhancement of our company's technological strength but also symbolizes the further consolidation of our leading position in the relevant printing fields.

'Durst's Tau RSCi represents the forefront of digital printing technology, and its outstanding performance and leading technology fully align with our commitment to product quality and innovation. With this printer, we look forward to providing customers with more precise, efficient and high-quality printing solutions to meet the market's continuous pursuit of high-quality products.

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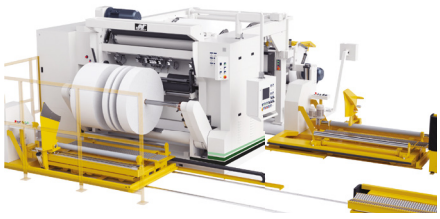

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Automation and digital tech power web-to-print operation

Chinese converter Boyue has moved into a new plant powered by process automation and digital printing, delivering on-demand to a global customer base. Yolanda Wang reports

Process automation and digital print and converting are the driving forces behind Chinese converter Boyue's new 15,000 sqm production plant in Heyuan City, Guangdong Province.

The new plant is equipped with three HP Indigo digital presses, a DMS digital foil machine and nearly 100 sets of digitally-controlled automated die-cutting equipment from suppliers including Reborn, Vorey and Graphtec. The main business of Boyue is short-run, personalized labels and flexible packaging.

Entering the label market

Founded in 2008, Boyue started producing folding carton products. In 2013, the company transitioned to the label printing industry and invested in four intermittent offset presses and one letterpress.

In 2017, Boyue invested in a used HP Indigo 4500 to begin the company's transformation to a fully digital print operation. In 2019, Boyue purchased a new HP Indigo 6900 digital press, two offset presses and a letterpress machine. In 2021, Boyue bought an HP Indigo 6K and retired its conventional printing equipment.

In addition, the company purchased nearly 100 sets of Reborn, Vorey and Graphtec digital die-cutting equipment and a DMS BMS 800W UV digital foil machine, fully realizing the goal of transitioning into a digital print and finishing operation.

Before starting his print business, general manager Zhang Yu'an worked for Nestlé and Unilever, giving him a deeper appreciation of trends in consumer packaging.

'My friends inspired me to enter the printing industry,' he shares. 'During the early years, our main investments were in conventional printing equipment. But with the growth and expansion of our business, we found market demand and potential for personalized, short-run orders, which absolutely require digital printing technology, so we decided to gradually transform into a fully digital operation.

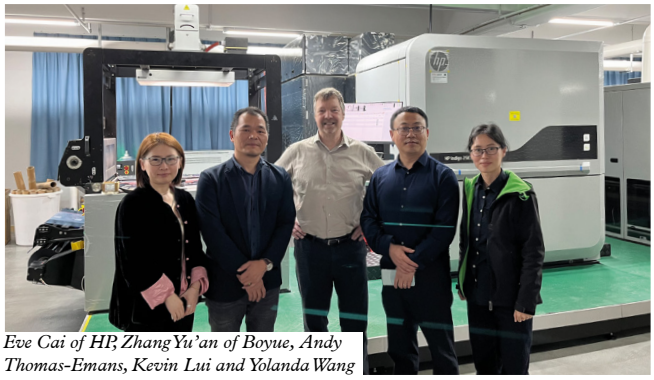
'Digital printing equipment is completely different from conventional printing equipment. It is very easy for employees to learn and operate, which not only solves the problem of recruitment but also simplifies the pre-press process.'

Technology

Alongside the hardware investment, Boyue has improved its automated internal management processes to achieve a comprehensive digital production environment. The company created its own ERP system and at the same time analyzed all the production data it has collected over the years.

Boyue created a self-service website where customers can choose materials, processes, quantities, shapes and logistics, all the way through to online ordering and settlement. After payment, orders are automatically entered into the production process. Employees receive their job orders automatically through the ERP system.

'The development of the online system not only optimizes and improves the processing speed of our company's orders, but also greatly improves our internal management efficiency,' Zhang says. 'We have a performance-based salary system, where employees' salaries are directly linked to the volume of orders that pass through the system, so there is basically no need for on-site supervision, and everyone's motivation is very high.



Eve Cai of HP, Zhang Yu'an of Boyue, Andy Thomas-Emans, Kevin Lui and Yolanda Wang

"In the future, we plan to incorporate AI design functions to fully automate and solve customer pain points"

'In the future, we plan to incorporate AI design functions to fully automate and solve customer pain points,' he adds.

This software development benefited from the company's strong IT team - Zhang was a computer science major.

Expansion

With the continued development and growth of its label business, Boyue recently expanded into the digital flexible packaging business. In 2022, the company invested in its first HP Indigo 25K. After that, Boyue also invested in machines for seaming shrink sleeves, laminating and pouch-making.

Today, the company's flexible packaging business has reached a turnover of 1 million RMB (140,000 USD) per month, and is expected to triple in the next three or four months. The company will also increase the number of pouch-making machines from three to 10.

At least 90 percent of Boyue's business is export orders, of which 60 percent come from the US. The number of orders processed by Boyue has reached 1,000 per day, and the cumulative number of customers they have served has exceeded 100,000.

Based on the company's automated process control system, each order takes between 48-72 hours from payment to delivery into the efficient local transportation network. In addition to the production plant in Heyuan, Boyue Technology has set up front-end and sales service points in Guangzhou and Heyuan downtown. In 2023, the annual output value of the company reached 70 million RMB (USD 9.71m).

Digital printing and process automation will feature strongly at Labelexpo South China this December. Scan the QR code to learn more

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Mi'er enters label business with digital technology

Chinese commercial print company expands into personalized label and flexible packaging production with a new digital press. Yolanda Wang reports

Founded in 1992, located in Minhang District, Shanghai, Mi'er is a company focused on commercial printing and book publishing.

'In the printing industry for more than 30 years, Mi'er has experienced and witnessed different periods of development of this industry in the Chinese market, including periods of early development, rapid growth, declining growth and now the complete transformation by digital technology,' shares Yao Yuande, founder and general manager of the company.

The overall development of Mi'er is consistent with the pace of the print industry's wider development. 'I felt the huge demand and potential for printed matter in the Chinese market when we established this company. With the development of the business, we have accumulated many high-quality loyal international brand customers, like Bosch and Disney.' Yao reveals that at its peak, the company's annual sales reached 30 million RMB (4.15M USD), and has more than 100 employees.

When it reached the 2010s, Mi'er realized that the growth of its existing business had reached a bottleneck, as the entire market entered a stable development stage where little real growth was happening.

To achieve longer-term growth, the company started actively looking for new areas to invest in. 'The first new area we tried was the folding cartons industry,' recalls Yao. 'We invested in a new factory and equipment in Shanghai. But we found that this field is not suitable for small and micro enterprises like Mi'er, because the capital investment required is very large and the profit margin of this industry is not as high as we expected.'

At the same time, the company was faced with declining demand across its commercial printing business. The situation became worse when its book and publication business took a major hit after the Chinese government banned extra-curricular teaching and training courses in 2021. Then came the global pandemic.

Mi'er made full use of the lockdown years to lay out new plans. The company actively integrated the existing businesses, continuously improved internal management efficiency, reduced production costs, and concentrated resources on servicing high-value customers, thereby enhancing the company's overall market competitiveness.

The company once again searched for a new direction for growth. This time, they set the target firmly in the field of label printing. 'We learned from the experience and lessons of that first unfavorable transition. Before setting the new target, we visited relevant industry events to understand the trends and growth prospects of label printing. The size of the label is small, the related investment is relatively small, its growth is currently the fastest in the whole printing field, and the profit and market prospects are very considerable, which prompted us to transition to this industry,' explains Yao.

New business

After selecting its new focus, Mi'er quickly started investing in the necessary equipment for label production.

'After comparing conventional printing and digital printing technology, we chose digital printing equipment,' recalls Yao.



Screen L350UV SAI digital press at Mi'er

"The size of the label is small, the related investment pressure is relatively small, its growth is currently the fastest in the whole printing field, and the profit and market prospects are considerable"

'The development of digital printing technology in the past two years has been very rapid, especially in the field of small and medium-sized label orders, which is our future core target market.'

But which digital press to choose? Mi'er carried out a lot of research before investing because they were beginners in digital printing technology.

After comparing the printing performance, printing speed, available materials range, and the color control system on different presses, Mi'er locked into UV inkjet printing technology.

In October 2023, its first label printing equipment, a Screen L350UV SAI UV inkjet press was installed. 'We are confident about the quality of Screen products. What most impressed me is that, in addition to printing label products, this device can also perform very well for flexible packaging products, which is exactly the business area we want to explore. And the color calibration software of this press could solve our color consistency requirements for digital printing products,' Yao tells L&L.

Mi'er has also invested in three Rhyguan die-cutting machines for its new business. In addition, a new DMS digital foil machine will be installed in May.

The next China Labelexpo show takes place this December in Guangzhou. Scan the QR code to clearn more www.labelexpo-southchina.com

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HanGlory Group invests in hybrid future

Chinese developer of inkjet drive technology commits to standalone and hybrid label press development. Andy Thomas-Emans reports

Chinese print and converting machinery suppliers have been making major strides on the world stage at recent Labelexpo shows around the world, but not much is known about their backgrounds.

L&L recently got the chance to look in depth at one of these suppliers, Shenzhen HanGlory Group, whose upgraded LabStar 330S UV inkjet press – in both standalone and hybrid formats – was introduced to visitors at Labelexpos in Brussels and Shanghai last year.

"We do not simply use inkjet heads off the shelf. It is about how to control the drop size and how to redevelop a print head for industrial use"



HanGlory manufacturing and R&D factory complex


Label Source-HangGlobal LabStar 330S hybrid press

Shenzhen HanGlory Group is a relatively recent start-up, having launched in 2010. Since then, the company has developed a strong IP suite with 280 patents covering a range of core inkjet technologies for the precision driving of third-party inkjet heads.

'We do not simply use inkjet heads off the shelf,' says Johnson Lai, HanGlory Group brand director. 'It is about how to control the drop size and how to redevelop a print head for industrial use.'

HanGlory owns a pigment water-based ink manufacturing factory in Zhuhai City, while UV inkjet inks are brought from outside. HanGlory runs comprehensive tests to ensure tight matching between ink and printhead.

The company's core inkjet technology is applied across a range of digital printing systems for industries as diverse as textiles, garment printing, corrugated packaging, book printing, precision PCBs (jetting conductive inks) and labels, and in configurations from wide-format to water-based corrugated presses to compact inline UV inkjet label presses.

As well as building its own machinery, HanGlory is an OEM supplier to well-known international machine builders, with five to six projects currently underway.

Since its inception, Hanglory has focused on international markets, establishing a US operation in 2017 and becoming a regular exhibitor at Drupa and global Labelexpo shows. Over 50 digital label presses have been sold outside China.

Digital label technology

HanGlory is divided into a number of divisions according to application. For the labels industry, this is HanGlobal.

HanGlobal launched the Labstar 330S single-pass UV inkjet press in 2017. Since then, 50 presses have been sold to converters in Europe, Russia and North and South Americas. Key customers have included EuroLabel in Milan, one of two machines sold in Italy. 'Italy could become a hub for us,' says Lai.

In Mexico, there are currently three standalone LabStar 330S installations, with the first hybrid press installed and a second to follow. Multiple presses have been sold to Russian converters.

The standard Labstar model is white + CMYK, with a double white mode optionally available. The upgraded Labstar 330S is

Process transformation

HanGlory recently moved into a vast combined showroom, factory, R&D and sales support complex in Shenzhen.

A key focus, alongside inkjet development, is on automating print industry workflows, including color management; reducing reliance on skilled technical personnel; allowing for last-minute order changes, prioritization, sorting and cancellation; and enabling non-stop file loading without downtime.

The company's self-built intelligent MES production management system is under pilot testing across various industries including corrugated, garment manufacturing and labels. It interfaces with customers' ERP systems to realize the benefits of data-driven manufacturing.

Thirty of the company's engineers are from an IT background and the company owner is a former executive at Chinese cellphone and network powerhouse Huawei, which gives an insight into HanGlory's priorities.


Johnson Lai, HanGlory Group brand director

now available with seven colors, shipping with CMYK and two spot colors chosen from OVG and an optional digital varnish unit capable of producing 3D embossed varnish-type effects.

Lai says the digital varnish head jets a 20+ DPL drop size capable of a 5-micron build, making it suitable as a Screen replacement for applications including wine labels.

This press can also be configured with digital cold foil lamination, jetting a UV-cured adhesive using the same heavy coat weight inkjet head.

'We call this a digital hot foil unit,' says Lai. 'We reheat the adhesive with a heat roll to 40-50deg to make it tacky, meaning you do not a need UV lamp for the final cure.'

A cooling system for the inkjet heads and UV chill rollers allows the handling of heat-sensitive materials including thermal paper and shrink sleeve labels.

The substrate range of the press includes non-label materials such as folding cartons and garment tags.

Lai says over 90 percent of the label materials tested by HanGlobal can be used without a primer.

The LabStar 330S prints at 50m/min at 600DPI resolution on a maximum web width of 350mm (108mm per head x3 = 324mm print width). The press includes LED-UV pinning and a final conventional UV cure.

HanGlory has developed its own machine control software, which delivers intelligent standby mode – so the machine is instantly available with no heat-up period – intelligent order management, variable data printing and ink usage/cost calculation.

The press includes a re-registration function.

Flexo hybrid

At Labelexpos in Asia and Europe last year HanGlobal launched its first hybrid press in a joint venture with flexo press specialist Label Source.

'Since 2010 the company has developed a strong IP suite with 280 patents covering a range of core inkjet technologies for precision driving of third-party inkjet heads.'

A new joint company was set up called HanLabel to develop the project.

New is a semi-rotary flexo printing unit that can be switched to full rotary operation. The flexo printing units can run either left-to-right or right-to-left with two independent ink trains.

'The flexo unit is ideal for a range of added-value applications, including multi-layer labels and labels incorporating spot colors, temperature-changing inks, heat transfer labels and much more,' says Lai. 'The semi-rotary flexo units for special vanish applications along with semi-rotary die-cutting means there is no need to change plate and magnetic cylinders, considerably reducing upfront investment.'

As an option, HanGlory offers the CGS Oris color management system for spot color matching, which can also be used to manage both flexo and digital color units on a combination press.

Other conventional technology modules include cold foiling, high gloss/matte flexo varnishing and semi-rotary or full rotary die-cutting.

Flexo cold foil and can also be placed before the print engine to print digitally on foil.

'Flexo white can also be placed before the digital unit. Inkjet white can be a problem because it has bigger pigment particles and can clog up more.'

The press controller is built by Label Source.

'Inkjet prints only at one speed, not like conventional where you have to ramp up and down. So, it is only when the web is up to speed you start to print when the auto register and auto pressure adjustment take over.'

Lai points out that the hybrid press does not require operators with flexo skills, since the flexo units are mainly used for coating.

HanGlobal demonstrates the Labstar 330S at drupa and forthcoming Labelexpo shows. See drupa preview starting on page110

NEWS IN BRIEF



Schreiner Group

Schreiner Group opens new Chinese facility

Schreiner Group has finalized the relocation of its Chinese production plant from Fengpu to the 5,300sqm facility in Jinshan. The move was part of the expansion strategy and a response to consistent growth in the region.

Schreiner Group has been present in China for the last eight years, however, the plant, which was initially established in Fengpu to supply customers from the automotive industry has since evolved into an established location for the healthcare industry as well.

The end of 2022 saw the relocation of Schreiner Group's Chinese site within Shanghai from Fengpu to Jinshan. Whereas at the old location around 2,200 sqm of floor space were available the new location currently offers nearly 5,300 sqm.

The newly gained area had become urgently necessary due to the company's constant growth. The new site has since become successfully established especially with production for the Chinese market because Schreiner Group's success formula says: 'local for local'.

'Due to our local production, we can deliver products to our customers fast, reliably, and in our usual top quality,' said CEO of the company Roland Schreiner. 'As a result, we not only avoid long shipping routes and offer short delivery times but also show a presence on the Chinese market that's not focused on exports. By pursuing this purpose, that element, just like our location in America, has clearly strengthened our entire group of companies.'

Jinshan is staffed almost exclusively by Chinese employees with high loyalty and retention to Schreiner Group.

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Screen L350UV SAI inkjet press is a win-win for Theia

Digital label printing specialist Theia has become the first company in Indonesia and Southeast Asia to invest in the Screen L350UV SAI inkjet series through Jet Technologies. Piotr Wnuk reports

Theia, a division of Cahaya Jakarta, one of Indonesia's leading label printing companies that was founded in 1991, was set up in 2018 to focus entirely on digital label printing at its facility in Cikarang, near Jakarta.

'The sales and marketing strategy for digitally printed labels, therefore, is different from its parent company because we cater to different requirements of customers. Hence, the decision was taken to create a separate entity,' says Danny Lim, sales and marketing director at Theia.

Start of the digital journey

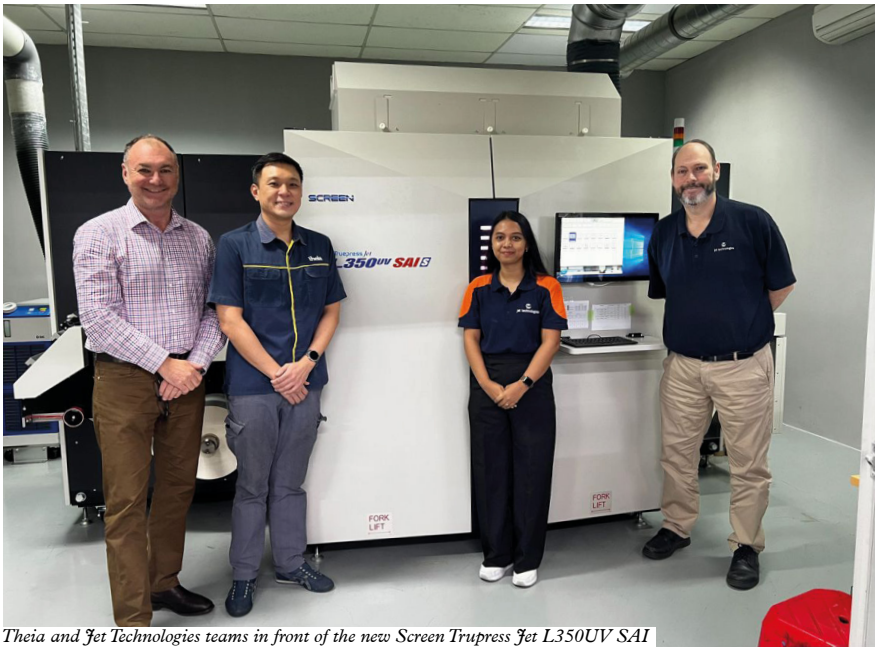
Anything less than 2,000 linear meters is considered a short run at Theia. The group's flexo business usually requires between 2,000 to 4,000 linear meters, depending on the complexity of the job, to begin production.

Lim says there are opportunities for both flexo as well as digital printing in the country. 'Big brand owners want to decorate their labels with hot foil stamping, matte varnish, matte and gloss lamination so they stand out on the shelf. Some companies even like to apply holograms as a security feature to create an appealing effect. Different techniques are being used in combination on one label to make the product look good.

'On the other hand, multinational companies are now asking us to create mosaic patterns and use promotional packaging using QR codes that link to their websites and other promotions they want customers to see. We have been approached by many brands that want to move toward more interactive and smart packaging. The market is huge, young and developing. It's in the early stages of rapid growth.'

However, Lim agrees that digital printing is done at a premium: 'In the printing industry, the higher the volume, the lower the cost. Brand owners now have the option to spend one-tenth of the amount on the stock they need. Per label cost may be double when compared to gravure, but the amount on the purchase order is much lower and companies can print according to market demand.

This not only saves them inventory and warehousing costs but also wastage, resulting in more savings and better planning. Digital label printing technology allows brands to control their numbers, so if one variant is selling better than the others, the companies can now print according to sales made at the retail store.'



Theia and Jet Technologies teams in front of the new Screen Trupress Jet L350UV SAI

"Multinational companies are now asking us to create mosaic patterns and use promotional packaging using QR codes that link to their websites and other promotions they want customers to see"

It is clear that the market in Indonesia is shifting to shorter life cycles and run lengths.

'It comes down to the fact that a lot of business owners don't want their cash flow to get stuck on something like labels. With digital printing, the cash doesn't get stuck because you are printing what you need at that time,' Lim adds.

Investment in inkjet

Cahaya Jakarta started with letterpress printing before investing in flexographic printing in 2002 and the first industrial digital printing press in Indonesia in 2009.

'To be able to continue this trend and install the very first L350UV SAI in Indonesia is another exciting milestone for the entire company and our Theia division,' Lim adds. 'We had been watching inkjet technology for many years as we understood that the productivity benefits were substantial.'

Jet Technologies has a long history with Theia and Cahaya Jakarta, having installed an Omet X6 530-wide flexo press at the latter in 2016, which at the time was Indonesia's widest and most productive label press. It came as no surprise when the company turned to Jet Technologies for its latest inkjet investment.

'We're excited to have partnered with Theia and the Cahaya Jakarta group to enhance their digital printing production and provide them with a strong advantage in what is an ultra-competitive label printing market in Indonesia,' says Yulianawati Yulianawati, sales manager of

Jet Technologies Indonesia. 'Theia's dedicated team has ensured that they bring the very best of digital label printing to Indonesia, with HP Indigo presses previously installed and now the addition of a complementary L350UV inkjet press.

'Installation and training on the L350UV has now been completed – we promised Theia that it would deliver extremely reliable and consistent print – it is pleasing to see that they are achieving those goals.'

Stable, accurate and integrated

The Truepress Jet L350UV SAI made its international debut at Labelexpo Europe 2019 in Brussels. Screen developed its first label printer, the Truepress Jet L350UV inkjet system, in 2013. Since this initial release, wide-ranging, continuous improvements have seen the Truepress Jet L350UV series ship a total of more than 150 presses to date. Adoption has also been accelerating in Europe, where short runs are particularly beneficial for language localization, as well as in the Americas and Asia.

In recent years, requirements for mixed, short-run printing have also been growing in relation to products for the high-price and luxury segments. This has created a need for better print quality than ever before. At the same time, however, there have been growing calls to improve installation costs and other aspects of digital label presses.

In response to these industry trends, Screen developed the Truepress Jet L350UV SAI.

The system enables significantly richer color expression and is available in a line-up of four models that can be selected according to the production environment. Its name SAI represents its design concept and refers to its extremely 'stable' operation,



Theia was set up in 2018 to focus entirely on digital label printing

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"Our focus is service and quality, and the L350UV allows us to improve our service substantially while maintaining the highest quality standards. It's a win-win for us"

highly 'accurate' color reproduction and time-tested 'integrated' technologies. The word Sai also means both color and high in Japanese and was chosen to reflect the company's continuous pursuit of peak color expression.

Screen has equipped the Truepress Jet L350UV SAI with additional slots for mounting inkjet printheads. This means, along with C, M, Y and K, it can be loaded with white, orange and blue inks for a total of seven colors. The system also features proprietary color management technologies, providing a far wider range of color expression than was previously possible.

The L350UV SAI perfectly supports Theia to significantly increase turn-around speeds for digital printing jobs by automating the process. With its software-generated 'lead in, lead out' and 'reverse-feed' functions, the system also works to considerably lower ink and material waste, reducing overhead costs and improving sustainability standards within operations.

The L350UV SAI is one of the most flexible and automated label production systems in its class. The machine offers seven vibrant colors at 60m/min, (50m/min when using white) and is fully supported by local Jet Technologies and Screen factory-trained engineers.

Most recently, Screen Graphic Solutions has been honored with the 2024 Technology Award by the Japanese Society of Printing Science and Technology (JSPST) for the 350UV series. When evaluating the candidates for this year's awards, the judges praised the Truepress Label 350UV series' outstanding contribution to the development of label printing technologies. They specifically cited its excellent productivity, quality and stability, as well as its ability to use low migration inks with reduced odor for food products plus orange and blue inks.

They also noted its impressive range of features, including variable printing functions designed for very small lot work, and Screen's continuous development of new models.

This is in fact the fifth time in six years that Screen has received a JSPST award. Going forward, it plans to further accelerate its development of high-speed inkjet technologies.

With the L350UV SAI, Theia has a press that can deliver outstanding quality print on a wide range of materials with productivity that approaches flexo.

'Our focus is service and quality, and the L350UV allows us to improve our service substantially while maintaining the highest quality standards. It's a win-win for us,' concludes Lim.

Scan the QR code to learn more about Theia



Neuromarketing study reveals insight for Gin label design

UPM Raflatac's Ginnasium project blends science and art, using neuromarketing to assess how consumers react to gin packaging design. Akanksha Meena reports

An avant-garde venture, sponsored by UPM Raflatac, brings together design experts, bottle and label manufacturers, embellishment artisans, printing specialists, closure craftsmen and neuromarketing pioneers to understand consumer preferences.

"Our focus centered on crafting premium packaging where details, textures and enhancements form an integral part of the consumer experience"

The Ginnasium project focuses on educating stakeholders in the packaging supply chain about the importance of design choices on the final product's effectiveness. Ginnasium employs a scientific approach to analyze consumer experiences with gin bottles, exploring different design elements such as bottle shapes, closures, papers, embellishments, printing techniques and inks.

The project aims to understand how these elements capture consumer attention on the shelf and emotionally convey the product's identity. The SenseCatch method, using neuromarketing methodologies, was used to discover unconscious and emotional aspects of consumer behavior. Additionally, in-depth interviews were conducted to understand consumer opinions, expectations and message interpretation.

UPM Raflatac provided for the project Forest PP Clear TC 50 wood-based film, Genesi WSA-FSC textured white paper, Aluflex Premium triple-layer aluminum foil, Jazz Ice Premium FSC white paper with debossed texture barrier-coated in the pulp and Cotton Black WSA 100 percent black cotton paper.

Printing specialist Sovemec used multiple printing techniques for the project including flexo varnishing, hot foil colors, cast and cure laminations, embossing matte/glossy screen printing, a label-on-label application using two different papers, special die-cutting methods, embossing, debossing, paper texture, sand-textured varnishes and waterless offset printing.

Glass bottles were provided by Vetroelite and Vinolok supplied glass closures for the project. Luxoro provided its metallic and holographic foils, semi-transparent and translucent effect films by Kurz and brass stamping tools by Hinderer + Mühlich Italia.

T&K provided UV 171 UT series of waterless printing inks specially crafted for the label industry and Terragloss UV matte varnish by Actega formulated to be over-printable and benzophenone-free for label applications.

SenseCatch is a research and consulting company specializing in applying neuroscience and behavioral psychology to measure marketing effectiveness and consumer experiences.

The project

Five designers from Southern Italy including Leonardo Recalcati, Marco D'Aroma, Silvia Cacace, Gianluca Bartolazzi, Andrea Basile, Giuseppe Salerno and Flavio Sisto took part in the project to create unique designs for gin bottles. Each designer represented the essence of their respective regions. They were provided with bottles, glass closures, paper and options for enhancements, inks and printing techniques. Their challenge was to artistically convey their regions' characteristics while staying true to the brief, which intentionally omitted any information about the gin's taste. This allowed the designers complete freedom in their design.

Recalcati says: 'I chose to participate in Ginnasium, the gym for gin design, because it is interesting to discover, through SenseCatch's work, if my thinking is shared and evokes emotions.'

'Ginnasium has been a project that captured our hearts from the beginning. Being able to narrate our land through a label was a unique and rewarding experience that allowed us to express our creativity without limitations. The success of this project is also attributed to all the partners involved, who consistently supported our agency in achieving this excellent outcome,' Sisto comments.

Consumers were asked to select bottles representing different Italian regions from a shelf where bottles of the same shape were placed alternately. They had 30 seconds to choose bottles for each region, followed by in-depth interviews. Participants could touch and inspect the bottles to appreciate their details visually and tactically. The study aimed to understand consumers' perceptions of the designs and their emotional involvement using neuromarketing technologies such as eye-tracker, bio-tracker sensor and EEG headset.

D'Aroma states: 'Ginnasium served as our experimental ground, allowing us to delve into new materials and printing techniques. Our focus centered on crafting premium packaging where details, textures, and enhancements form an integral part of the consumer experience. Our objective was to spotlight its distinctive characteristics and uniqueness.'

Study findings

Eye-tracking technology was used to analyze the designs' ability to catch shoppers' attention. The analysis revealed that elements such as label color, shape contrasts, glossy enhancements, colored closures and raised finishes were particularly attention-grabbing.

The emotional involvement data indicated that designs with visual and tactile elements, such as contrasts and textures, effectively engage shoppers. This leads consumers to perceive the product as richer and more refined. While sight initially attracts consumers, tactile sensations during the interaction enhance engagement.

Soft and velvety surfaces are appreciated, but the tactile experience must be consistent with the image a brand aims to convey. Consumers appreciated textures and embellishments such as finishes resembling sand dunes, paper patterns resembling waves, smooth closures evoking a seaside imagery and labels featuring textured and rough surfaces looking like fossils and mosaics evoking stone conveying a sense of naturalness and authenticity. Consistent engagement of sight and touch is crucial for emotional involvement and perceived product value.

"I chose to participate in Ginnasium, the gym for gin design because it is interesting to discover, through SenseCatch's work, if my thinking is shared and evokes emotions"

Closure
Closures play a crucial role in shaping consumer perception, with tall and vibrant closures capturing attention and conveying a specific message. While flat caps receive less initial attention, they are perceived as refined during physical interaction. Concave caps spark greater curiosity and preference compared to flat caps. Smooth closures are pleasing to the touch, but textured closures enhance the overall product experience.

Printing
Embossing and debossing printing techniques not only capture consumer attention visually but also through touch, creating a multisensory experience that allows consumers to assume the product's characteristics before experiencing it. The strategic use of metallic embellishments highlights the product's qualities and overall design.

Bottle
The shape of the bottle influences how embellishments are displayed. Square bottles enhance edge decorations and round bottles convey softness. Square bottles are associated with premium and assertive products, while round bottles suggest refinement and softness. The fusion of a round bottle shape with a poetic design evokes curiosity and conveys attention to detail and refinement through the blend of smooth and textured surfaces.



Graphic design
The harmonious blend of shapes, colors and materials reinforces the intended image and message. Dark colors on angular bottles evoke heightened value and intensity, suggesting an intensely flavored product. Softer colors on rounded bottles create the perception of a smoother, refined gin, implying freshness. Colorful designs suggest a sweet, fruit-infused beverage. Both visual and tactile contrasts also influence perception

Strategic selection of packaging elements is vital for shelf appeal. Contrasting colors, shapes, glossy finishes and unique closures make the gin bottle visually striking. Unexpected tactile experiences increase engagement, enhancing the desire for the product. Golden details against textured papers convey elegance. Every detail communicates a message, shaping expectations about the product and influencing consumer choices. Considering consumer psychology is crucial, as their attention to detail recognized in psychology as 'weak signals', can impact packaging success and product perception.

Paper
Glossy and embossed papers draw consumer attention to the bottle. Similarly, matte paper elevates the sophistication and uniqueness of the label, evoking a poetic and theatrical context. Dark papers with textured surfaces give the bottle character and convey an expectation of a rich, intense taste.

Scan the QR code to read the full Ginnasium study

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Skyne takes packaging design to the next level

Packaging designers are taking design to new heights with AI and mastering the technical processes behind print production, Akanksha Meena reports

Dubai-based design agency Skyne is breaking the mold with founder Dennis De Rond leading the charge. With a deep understanding of printing technologies, Skyne is revolutionizing the packaging design game.

De Rond comes from a family of designers with his father owning a design studio. When De Rond expressed his desire to pursue a career in design, he sought guidance from his father.

'He advised me, "It is nice that you want to do something in design and packaging, but I have met so many designers who had no clue about printing techniques. I want you to grasp these techniques first". So, he introduced me to the flexo printing,' De Rond recalls.

During the six-week school summer holidays, De Rond worked next to a flexo printing professional and was able to operate the machine in five weeks at 16 years old.

'And then the year after I told my father that now that I know flexo printing, can I come work in the studio? He said, "You know flexo but you don't know offset. So, I want you to learn offset printing".'

De Rond then learned to operate a 5-color Heidelberg rotary offset press. Equipped with the knowledge of printing techniques, he enrolled in art school.

'I always liked packaging design. I worked in different design companies. I'm the worst person to go to a supermarket because I will shop four times longer than anyone else as I'm always looking at the new packaging and I want to touch it and see it,' he says.

De Rond lent his expertise to branding and rebranding projects for brands across Europe and Asia before making his mark in Dubai.

His first project in the UAE was for Masafi Water, where he crafted packaging that remains influential to this day.

Recently, Skyne undertook the rebranding of Al Shifa honey, the fourth largest honey brand globally with roots in Saudi Arabia. The designer chose clear plastic labels for honey jars.

Additionally, he led the rebranding efforts for a vegan haircare brand, opting for biodegradable packaging crafted from sugarcane plastic.

'If you understand flexo then you know that if you put blue on top of orange, you will get a certain color but vice versa, you get a slightly different color. So, if you understand how it works then you can play with it and you can create certain effects,' he says.



Dennis De Rond, founder of Skyne

'I realize that it is an enormous plus to have that background in printing technology. But I also see that almost all designers that are finishing art school now don't have that background. They might have been in a print house once or have no idea about the technology at all. This is also one of the points that I always discuss with designers during the recruitment process. I ask them what their knowledge is on the technical aspects.'

One trend seeing an impact in design is incorporating Artificial Intelligence (AI) in creating new colors and designs for branded products.

De Rond says that with AI, the design landscape has expanded to new horizons. 'Two years ago, you would do a shoot and then use Photoshop and maybe after four to five days you could have an image. But today, you can create any image instantly.

'I think we will see that change in packaging lines as well. We might see more complex labels because now the tools have changed. On the other hand, because of that, you will also see a counter response. Designers will also create things that you will clearly see are crafted by hand.'

"I think we don't collaborate enough with packaging converters. I would love to in an earlier phase already be in touch with the converter so that you can almost bounce your ideas with them and because they know the technique better than we do"

De Rond already integrates AI in his work, for example, opening new opportunities for using metallic colors in label design.

Scannable designs

Skyne is developing an AI tool that allows consumers to scan a pack or label graphics with their phone camera to access additional content. The company has created a platform where brands can upload their campaign material, ensuring that consumers receive the most up-to-date content when scanning the pack. Instead of relying solely on QR codes, Skyne is exploring other options such as logos and typography to trigger interactions when scanned with a phone.

'It operates similarly because the QR code consists of dark and white spots arranged in a specific order. Similarly, typography and logos follow a specific arrangement. By computerizing this process, scanning them triggers the same action, directing users to a platform. This feature is compatible with smart phones, as it can be picked up by any standard camera. We see it as extending the experience that you want from your packaging,' De Rond explains.

"I realize that it is an enormous plus to have that background in printing technology. But I also see that almost all designers that are finishing art school now don't have that background"

Controlling print quality

While creating new and eye-catching designs with AI has become easier, translating it into print takes far more than the click of a button.

If Skyne knows where the print will be produced, the agency establishes direct contact with the packaging producers. It is more challenging to control the print quality when Skyne is simply providing the brand with the artwork.

'Sometimes, a brand returns complaining about inaccurate colors. It's not uncommon for me to accompany the client to the printer, where we conduct tests together. During these tests, adjustments may be made, such as increasing a color tone. However, even after these adjustments, the color may not match the Pantone color as expected.

'The printer then presents his Pantone swatch claiming it's almost the same, but upon closer inspection, it is evident that the color is incorrect. This discrepancy can occur because the Pantone swatch is from five years ago, and over time, it has undergone color changes,' De Rond explains.

'I then present my current Pantone color reference and compare it side by side. This helps to clarify the correct color. It's a common issue, and if you're unfamiliar with the process, it can be challenging to manage. The brand might express dissatisfaction, stating that the design looked fantastic initially but doesn't match expectations now.'

However, convincing brands of the necessity for quality control and allocating budget for it is not always straightforward. Often, large print runs are outsourced to other countries, which can pose logistical challenges.

For instance, if a brand insists on printing in Turkey but is hesitant to cover the expenses for the designer's visit, it becomes a matter of weighing risks. While they may advise on the importance of quality control, ultimately, the decision lies with the brand, and it assumes the associated risks.

'I think we don't collaborate enough with packaging converters. I would love to in an earlier phase already be in touch with the converter so that you can almost bounce your ideas with them and because they know the technique better than we do. By involving the converters early on, we can explore ideas together and leverage their expertise to optimize the design process,' he adds.

In most cases, the converter is not identified until the later stages of a project, as the process involves the purchasing department obtaining quotes from different converters. 'Consequently, we often find out who the printer or producer of the packaging will be only at the last moment.'

De Rond adds that occasionally, he encounters production houses that may not have access to the latest software programs. This can lead to compatibility issues when exchanging files, as they may be unable to open files created with newer versions.

'While this is less common in the UAE, it can be more prevalent when working with production houses in African countries. Additionally, some of these production houses may use software programs that may not be the most up-to-date or cutting-edge,' he states.

'Then, of course, you have to address the situation. Often there is a considerable amount of back-and-forth regarding files, only to realize that what we've created cannot be produced by the specific producer in that country.

'It's not necessarily due to the complexity of the design, but rather because their production capabilities do not meet our standards. This can be challenging at times, but we strive to find solutions that accommodate the client. When considering countries like Nigeria, Egypt, or Ethiopia, we often encounter print houses that struggle with such issues.'

While Skyne can recommend to brands where to source their packaging, ultimately, the decision lies with the brand.

'If a company needs to run a print job or create packaging worth a significant amount, it's up to them to choose based on their own criteria. I can certainly recommend one option over another, but if the preferred choice happens to be more expensive, the client may still opt for it based on their own considerations,' De Rond explains.

Developing new label applications

New ideas are constantly brewing at Skyne. For example, De Rond is exploring new applications for temperature-sensitive labels.

'I recall seeing labels that indicate temperature for the first time on beer bottles. It ensures the beer is at the optimal temperature for the best taste, which I can imagine being useful for wine as well. However, I found it could be very interesting from a food safety perspective.

'For instance, with chicken or meat in supermarkets or shops, if at any point in the logistics chain the meat has been exposed to unfavorable conditions. Having a three-color indicator system could be beneficial, indicating if something went wrong with the product. For instance, if half of the label turns blue, it could signify an issue. I believe leveraging this technology for food safety rather than just as a gimmick for temperature control could be quite impactful,' he says.

Pharma and medicine packaging are other possible applications for this technology, where the products must be stored at a certain temperature. But if the product has been in a container at a port without proper cooling, how does one know if it's still safe to consume? Manufacturers could explore new packaging ideas to address this concern.

De Rond is open to manufacturers who would want to develop this technology with him. He is always on the lookout for new innovations in packaging and packaging techniques. 'I'm intrigued by different material techniques and unique packaging shapes. While many designs follow conventional patterns for efficiency reasons, I wonder if there are alternative approaches to creating efficient yet more visually interesting packaging. Exploring these possibilities is something I find fascinating,' he concludes.



Al Shifa honey packaging redesign by Skyne

Scan the QR code to learn more about Skyne

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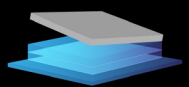
Conventional labelstock	Mono-material labelstock
	
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Pernod Ricard is elevating labels with supply chain synergy

Capturing consumer attention is the ultimate objective for every brand, and breathtaking packaging designs undoubtedly contribute. But how do brands transform these head-turning visions into reality? The answer may lie in the collaborative efforts of design and technology. Akanksha Meena reports

The primary objective for every brand owner is straightforward: to gain consumer attention. Brands strive to capture attention at the store shelves, and usually, it's the packaging that does the initial job. Labels, with their dynamic nature, hold particular importance. Unlike bottles or glass, which incur high costs to change or replace, labels offer a faster and more convenient option for differentiation, and label changes often are the easiest and quickest way to make a brand stand out.

However, when designing a label or packaging, brands often find challenges in turning vision into reality. The biggest hurdle seems to stem from a lack of technical knowledge concerning print production processes.

Ingrida Kanopkaite, packaging category director, closures and labels at global wine and spirits brand Pernod Ricard, says: 'When we create a label from scratch, it normally starts with design agencies and then brand managers or marketing teams get involved. What I see quite often is that the technical knowledge is not there. Yes, agencies have nice visuals, but can they know how to make it a reality? That's another story.'

Labels are susceptible to change, and their shelf life is typically an average of 12 months. 'Normally, you may change legal text because of evolving regulations, or you may need to rebrand. Promotions also drive quite a lot of changes in labels. And when it comes to labels, we have high complexity in labels. We have more than 10,000 SKUs in labels only,' says Kanopkaite.

Pernod Ricard holds second in the wines and spirits industry and is a market leader in the premium spirit segment. The company

> **"I'm not buying labels for just price A or price B. There are a lot of considerations beyond the price"**

has one of the most comprehensive portfolios in the industry and owns more than 240 brands. Pernod Ricard is perhaps best known for its world-renowned brands including Absolut, Chivas, Jameson, Mumm, Martell Ballentine's, Jameson, Malfi and many others.

Supply chain

The focus of Pernod Ricard's procurement in the last two years has been on the security of its supply chain and managing inflation.

Kanopkaite explains: 'We all know that the label industry was suffering because of long strikes. Despite that, we grew by double digits and recovered after Covid. The year-on-year growth was 20 percent plus. So, we had massive growth, but on top of that, we had supply issues. That was a fun journey, I would say. And besides the inflationary market that we've been living in the last two years, we also had to deal with price increases, whether it's driven by energy cost or supply demand.'

Kanopkaite's professional understanding of the label market and printing technologies aided her in navigating the challenging times.

Pernod Ricard now focuses on sustainability and innovations for which the company is partnering with leading technology and material suppliers globally. Kanopkaite spoke with Labels & Labeling as she made her way through Labelexpo Europe 2023.

'I am here to meet our indirect suppliers such as UPM, Fedrigoni or Avery Dennison, as well as ink suppliers, hot foil or cold foil suppliers because that is where I see a lot of value.'

As a supply chain professional, Kanopkaite advises design agencies and marketing professionals on the right materials to use and where to source them from. 'For instance, I can advise that we might not need this special paper or 20 colors when we can achieve the same results just with a slightly different process.'

She adds that having technical knowledge in printing, in terms of choosing the right substrates, inks or processes can help her as a procurement professional to achieve her goals of having better costs and a shorter supply chain. Collaboration is essential. Only 10 percent of procurement professionals know their indirect suppliers beyond their label vendor.

Kanopkaite has a network of paper mills, ink and adhesive suppliers. She highlights the importance of bringing together brand managers and marketing teams to explain the technology. 'I organized knowledge workshops for marketing teams, explaining to them what is flexo, offset, or silkscreen and what can be achieved with these technologies. They didn't know these things, and this changes the mindset of people about how different substrates can impact the final result of the label.

'I am happy to share this knowledge because then, with time, you will see the



labelsandlabeling.com



Ingrida Kanopkaite, packaging category director, closures and labels at global wine and spirits brand Pernod Ricard

"When we create a label from scratch, it normally starts with design agencies and then brand managers or marketing get involved. What I see quite often is that the technical knowledge is not there"

results. It takes time to train them but, in the end, we, as supply chain professionals, can direct our teams a bit and support our goals as well. Becoming a business partner who can advise, but not become a bottleneck or blocker.'

Developments in sustainable packaging

Pernod Ricard has been building its sustainability agenda for several years and has defined sustainable guidance for its packaging vendors. The company has laid down guidance regarding cutting down the use of plastic and using more bio-degradable materials in packaging. The company recently added labels to that guide.

'But again, if you look at the labels on a bottle, labels typically contribute below 2 percent of total CO2 emissions of the bottle in your hand. The label typically is the non-essential component, and all the attention goes either to cartons or glass. Labels are still a gray zone. We are now focusing on labels and that is the beauty of having this blank page to start with. That's why I welcome all possible solutions. By attending this event [Labelexpo Europe 2023] I can bring new ideas to Pernod Ricard,' Kanopkaite explains.

For instance, Pernod Ricard has switched to the 'forest' label by UPM for its Lillet range.

Kanopkaite adds that spirit brands today are working toward reducing the use of rigid boxes as a sustainable measure making the label a main message sender to the consumer. 'We are expecting label sizes to become bigger or increase the use of digital QR codes on each of our brands, so consumers can get all the required information.'

Unlike other categories in the beverage market that have a well-developed deposit system to collect used bottles, spirit bottles are often not returnable given their long shelf life. As countries introduce new directives about waste, recycling and extended producer responsibilities, this concerns spirit brands such as Pernod Ricard.

For Pernod Ricard, a sizable portion, around 85 percent, of its labels are pressure sensitive and often have high standards for its adhesives, often requiring features such as ice water resistance, and in some cases, using hotmelt adhesives. This often means that a label can't be removed in the recycling wash process.

These challenges loom large, often presenting time constraints, especially when new guidelines emerge with tight deadlines, such as those set for 2025. As the industry undergoes substantial changes, staying proactive is crucial to ensure preparedness for what lies ahead.

Kanopkaite states that this is a challenge not just for brands but also for converters. Converters might not know who the decision maker is. Labels are often seen as commodities or treated as an afterthought, but Kanopkaite recommends that brand owners include their label converters earlier in the process.

'Converters say that they want to talk more with brand owners,' she says. 'Yes, please involve procurement, but we are not the only ones who should be involved. Behind me, there are brand managers, finance, planning, sustainability and sales. Connecting them all together is not where it ends because I need to understand the process of how they operate and what we can do together as a big team to achieve these big results. I'm not buying labels for just price A or price B. There are a lot of considerations beyond the price.'

Pernod Ricard looks to extend its culture of innovation beyond its walls to all the vendors it works with. The security of its supply chain is essential, but the company also expects new ideas from its packaging supply chain as well.

'Because now, within the transformation of Pernod Ricard, we are much more able to drive and implement those ideas. If you look back 10 to 15 years ago, brand owners talking with paper mills did not exist because we have always been talking to converters. Now we are becoming open to other elements in the supply chain and that is where we see a lot of opportunities,' she notes.

When it comes to printing technologies, Kanopkaite has been carefully following developments for a significant portion of her career. Reflecting on the past, there have been significant innovations in terms of processes and technologies available in traditional methods such as flexo and offset and in digital printing.

Kanopkaite intends to focus on exploring these avenues to bring additional value to the process at Pernod Ricard.

The true value, Kanopkaite summarizes, lies beyond the machinery. It's in the collective understanding of each aspect of print production and innovation that the possibilities of groundbreaking ideas lie.

Scan the QR code to learn more about Pernod Ricard





ROUND AND ROUND THE LOOP

The circular economy represents a crucial approach to sustainability. The packaging industry is actively striving to embrace its full potential, as Akanksha Meena reports

In the packaging industry, terms such as 'circular economy' and 'sustainability' are often used together. The circular economy can be defined as sharing, leasing, reusing, repairing, refurbishing and recycling materials and products to increase their lifespan as much as possible while ensuring they retain their function and value. The circular economy aims at minimizing waste – sustainability is the ultimate objective.

The industry's efforts to move from a linear economy of 'take, make, dispose' to a circular model are fueled by consumer sentiment and government regulations that hold both manufacturers and brand owners accountable for the packaging they place on the market.

A worthy initiative, surely, but not without its challenges.

CHALLENGES IN PLASTIC RECYCLING

There are currently three main ways to recycle plastics.

Mechanical recycling transforms waste plastics into new products without changing their chemical structure. This involves sorting, shredding and melting before extrusion into pellets.

Energy recycling converts plastic into thermal and electrical energy through incineration.

Chemical recycling breaks down plastic polymers into monomers for re-polymerization – effectively producing virgin, food-grade plastics.

The main challenge in recycling packaging arises from inadequate recycling infrastructure in many countries. Packaging consisting of mixed materials and contaminated with inks, adhesives and other chemical coatings hinders waste separation, recycling and processing.

Renee Schouten, vice president of marketing for INX International Ink, explains: 'Specific recycling processes and infrastructures may vary between European countries, and different states or regions in the US. Recycling practices are influenced by factors such as local regulations, market demand and available technologies. Efforts are continuously being made to improve recycling rates, increase the quality of recycled materials, and develop innovative recycling solutions to address environmental challenges.'

Contamination due to food residue, chemicals, or use of non-compatible substrates also hampers recycling. The waste may not be suitable for recycling into food-grade packaging without thorough separation, cleaning and processing. Some materials may also degrade or lose quality during the recycling process.

Anna Niewiadomska, marketing manager narrow web at Flint Group, adds: 'Whether this be fiber-based materials mixed with plastics, or the use of inks, coatings and adhesives adhered to a substrate, today's traditional mechanical recycling systems are often unable to effectively separate materials to create single stream flows of high value recycled material for onward commercial sale and use in new products.'

"EFFORTS ARE CONTINUOUSLY BEING MADE TO IMPROVE RECYCLING RATES, INCREASE THE QUALITY OF RECYCLED MATERIALS, AND DEVELOP INNOVATIVE RECYCLING SOLUTIONS TO ADDRESS ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES"

Intelligent labels may also help here. Michael Goller, senior director for atma.io at Avery Dennison notes that when goods reach the end of life, recyclers and dismantlers don't know what a product is made from, and the materials end up in the waste stream. Any label a product once had may have been destroyed or rendered unreadable. With data carriers such as RFID and QR codes, the information is directly accessible online without the need for all the information to be printed on the label.

HOLYGRAIL PROJECT

Established in 2017 as part of the Ellen MacArthur Foundation's New Plastics Economy program, Project HolyGrail united 29 corporations, spearheaded by P&G, to enhance post-consumer recycling by improving material sorting methods. Recognizing the obstacle posed by ineffective waste sorting in Europe, the initiative selected digital watermark technology developed by Digimarc, a US-based company.

This technology, which consists of imperceptible codes resembling postage stamps covering packaging surfaces, received support from the majority of stakeholders and successfully underwent initial testing on a sorting line. These digital watermarks can be decoded by a high-resolution camera on the sorting line to convey attributes such as manufacturer details, SKU information, food contact status, plastic type and composition for multilayer items in a sorting facility for better sorting and recycling.

The program has been updated with a HolyGrail 2.0 pilot project aimed at demonstrating the technical feasibility of Digimarc's digital watermarks for the precise sorting of packaging waste. Additionally, it seeks to assess the economic viability of implementing this technology on a larger scale.

HolyGrail 2.0 is advancing to the final R&D trials for market readiness and preparing for a pilot launch in France in 2024 in light of EU-wide targets mandating increased plastic recycled content by 2030.

Tests will evaluate the technology's ability to detect, sort and remove two types of flexible packaging materials – PP flexibles, produced by PepsiCo and LDPE flexibles, produced by Essity and P&G. Granular sorting trials will take place at the German materials recovery facility Hündgen Entsorgung. Concurrently, a three-month sorting trial will begin for digital watermarked rigid packaging, launched by HG2.0 member companies in the Danish and German markets, utilizing prototypes from Pellenc ST and Digimarc installed on Hündgen Entsorgung's commercial sorting line.

MONO MATERIALS

Multilayer packaging materials, like those found in flexible and rigid packaging, pose challenges for mechanical recycling technology due to chemical incompatibility among layers. 'However, innovative methods like solvent-targeted recovery and precipitation (STRAP) offer a solution,' explains Tim Bohlke, director of sustainability, Resource Label Group. 'While traditional recycling struggles with multilayer plastics, advancements like STRAP show potential for more sustainable handling of these complex materials, crucial for items such as laundry detergent pods, cereals and juices, which are difficult to recycle and often end up in landfills. The true answer is chemical recycling.'

Inappropriate choice of materials can also hinder recycling, adds Bohlke. 'As an example, a paper label on a plastic bottle is deemed detrimental to the recyclability of that bottle. In working with the value chain a label supplier can determine proper testing protocols to make sure the package will fully support recycling standards.'

Matching the label material to the main packaging component (container, tray, bottle, cardboard box) can improve the yield of the recyclate. These materials are referred to as mono-material packaging.

Lintec Europe has developed MMP Mono Material Polyester (PET) labelstock designed for single-use PET containers. Both film and adhesive are manufactured from polyester, reducing the risk of contamination if the labels are not removed before the washing and grinding process. The adhesive contains 40 percent bio-mass content. A special top coating also enables the labels to be de-inked in an alkaline washing process.

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UPM Raflatac Ocean Action label is the world's first label material made with ocean-bound plastic

Avery Dennison's CleanFlake adhesive technology is another step towards the circular economy. CleanFlake is designed to help the recovery of both PET and HDPE packaging materials. During PET recycling, the adhesive deactivates to allow both the label and adhesive to separate cleanly, leaving the plastic free of contamination. During colored HDPE recycling, the label stays attached, but does not compromise the resulting plastic pellets, the company reports.

Jindal Films has introduced BICOR 25 and 30 MBH568 PP mono-material and PE mono-material to help the industry conform to the new guidelines for mechanical recycling in Europe. Saica Flex has developed a new mono-material, metalized structure composed of three layers (triplex), all of which are made of polyethylene (PE).

Exemplifying industry collaboration towards circular economy, Siegwerk, ExxonMobil, Henkel, Kraus Folie and Windmöller & Hölscher created an award-winning mono-material PE-pouch with barrier properties that produces almost colorless recyclate after removing printing ink and the oxygen-barrier coating layer. Siegwerk's deinking and delamination primer technology, applied using a Windmöller & Hölscher Miraflex II flexo printing press, played a crucial role. Oxygen barrier properties were achieved using barrier coatings from Siegwerk and Henkel. The pouch comprises ExxonMobil's polyethylene, including Exceed S and Exceed XP, combined with Exact materials in the sealant layer. The MDO-PE films, developed by ExxonMobil and Kraus Folie, were produced on their Varex II extrusion line with an inline MDO unit.

MONO MATERIAL SHRINK SLEEVES

The global shrink sleeve label market is thriving, offering enhanced branding and protection for products while improving recyclability with the right choice of materials. Manufacturers are opting for clear PET and HDPE bottles to boost recyclability, replacing colored ones that are harder to recycle. Shrink sleeves maintain brand visibility on clear bottles by adding vibrant colors. They can be easily removed from PET or HDPE bottles before recycling provided they have been converted with a 'zipper' and the consumer has been educated in removing and separating the sleeves.

Even where shrink sleeve materials are fully compatible with the container, contamination issues can arise from the ink. Because PET-based shrink sleeves and containers have the same molecular weight, the contaminated material cannot be separated in a

"INKS AND COATINGS HAVE A KEY ROLE TO PLAY IN THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY BY SUPPORTING AND NOT HINDERING THE RECYCLING PROCESS"

Connected packaging

The European Commission has introduced the Digital Product Passport (DPP) legislation for all products placed onto the European market, including imports. This is designed to provide comprehensive data on a product's life cycle, durability, sustainability and traceability. The product passport data is accessible via electronic means through a data carrier such as a QR code or RFID chip.

Implemented gradually from 2026 to 2030, the DPP will initially impact batteries, followed by apparel and consumer electronics. It aims to empower consumers and businesses with transparent information to make informed choices, thereby driving supply chain sustainability.

While some technical guidelines for the EU Digital Product Passport are still being developed, Avery Dennison has already created an end-to-end solution to assist brands in complying with the upcoming regulation. Digital Product Passport as a Service (DPPaaS) by Avery Dennison includes hardware, software (including atma.io), digital ID technology, physical labels and support services.

Avery Dennison's atma.io software assigns unique digital IDs to everyday items. This provides end-to-end transparency by tracking, storing and managing all the events associated with each individual product.

It works across all 'digital triggers' including RFID, QR and barcodes.

Michael Goller, senior director for atma.io at Avery Dennison, says: 'Our traceability features go far beyond the ability to track finished goods across the supply chain and enable companies to track on a very granular level which raw materials are used for production and capture the full genealogy of their products. In addition, we enable brands to capture and track the carbon footprint of each product individually. The platform also empowers consumers to contribute to the circular economy by enabling efficient resale, returns, and recycling so that products can be given a second life.'

Polytag is another company pushing forward the tracking and tracing of packaging. Its Invisible UV Tags printed on labels and GS1-approved, unique-every-time QR codes act as a tool for consumer tracing and recycling efforts. Connected to these are customizable web pages that can be used to share product information, sustainability information and ingredient origins.

Polytag's QR codes offer real-time insights into packaging journeys, enabling waste reduction and design optimization. This transparency incentivizes recycling, fostering sustainability and consumer engagement.

Last year, Polytag partnered with UK retail giants Aldi, Co-op, and Ocado Retail to help capture recycling data and gain greater transparency of their product packaging lifecycles. Its pilot with Ocado Retail last summer saw 87 percent of those who scanned and recycled Ocado's milk bottles obtaining rewards for recycling. Within just 56 days, over 20,000 20p rewards were collected.

Using Polytag's dashboard, Ocado tracked each product's packaging journey from purchase to recycling, including its path to Material Recovery Facilities (MRFs) at the barcode level.

Polytag launched the EcoTrace Programme, uniting major FMCG brands to improve single-use plastic recycling in the UK. The initiative collects funds from single-use plastic businesses to install UV-tag detection equipment in recycling centers, aiming to enhance national recycling rates.

flotation tank.

To meet these challenges, Innovia Films, a division of CCL, has developed floatable polyolefin shrink films – a low-density white film that retains its floatability after printing. According to Innovia, this opaque film enhances the light-blocking capabilities of shrink sleeves, suited for light-sensitive industries such as dairy, food supplements, nutrition and cosmetics. These films enable the use of transparent PET bottles for light-sensitive applications replacing HDPE bottles that are not recycled back into food-grade packaging.

Innovia's RayoFloat white APO separates during sorting and recycling, producing a high yield of high-quality PET flakes suitable for food-grade recycling through the sink-and-float process. Additionally, it contains up to 20 percent post-industrial recycled content.

Emsur's Emfull is a polyolefin-based shrink sleeve with floatability properties that facilitate its separation from bottles during recycling washing phases.

WATER WASHABLE INKS AND COATINGS

Material recyclability is just one consideration in developing circular economy packaging. Labels are printed and coated with a range of chemical formulations which are critical to their functionality, but these can also hinder the recyclability of the label substrate and the container material.

Explains Niewiadomska of Flint Group: 'Inks and coatings have a key role to play in the circular economy by supporting and not hindering the recycling process. Depending on the packaging application, the correct selection of inks and coatings can either enable the ink to be washed through the system without contamination or ensure it adheres to a label or substrate that is effectively separated and designated for a separate waste stream.'

Traditionally, during the recycling process, conventional printed inks bleed during the caustic bath phase. This causes discoloration of the wash solution and contaminates the plastic so it cannot be recycled as a new product.

Flint's Evolution range of inks and coatings consists of both a deinking primer, which allows inks to the safely washed away, and a caustic-resistant overprint varnish (OPV) which encapsulates the ink, preventing it from leaching into the recycling system.

Evolution varnish ensures that inks remain on the label during the caustic wash used in the recycling process while not impacting the floatability of the label. The protected ink can then be skimmed off with the floating label and directed to an alternative waste stream.

"THERE IS LIMITED AVAILABILITY OF FOOD-GRADE RECYCLED PLASTICS, BUT THE RECYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE IS STILL DEVELOPING, BOTH MECHANICAL AND CHEMICAL RECYCLING HAVING THEIR ROLES"

Both products increase the yield of material from shrink sleeve recycling processes by up to 10 percent, says Flint.

'Our Evolution range has been fully migration-tested in Europe, confirming that this range is certified for FCM (food contact material) substantiating that this next-gen technology is safe and sustainable,' Niewiadomska says.

INX has also developed a range of washable inks. INX's Genesis Washable inks meet the PET-CG-02 Critical Guidance Protocol established by the Association of Plastic Recyclers. They are deinkable from cPET films and floatable with roll-fed OPP labels where ink is typically required to stay attached in the recycling process.

Schouten of INX explains: 'Since washable inks are deinkable from plastic packaging – and considering with the advanced formulation of pigment particles there is minimal bleed in the caustic wash solution and a reduced impact on recycled PET discoloration – new clear bottles can be made from the circular re-use of recovered material.'

Emsur's Ecoem PET shrink sleeves use washable inks to prevent contamination by ink residues. These sleeves can be mixed and recycled with PET bottles in the recycling process. Emsur's washable inks are APR-certified to maintain the quality of recycled PET flakes.

RECYCLING FOR FOOD-GRADE PLASTIC

For true, lasting packaging circularity, recovered plastic materials should be reusable in the same applications as virgin materials instead of being downcycled into secondary applications. This is particularly important for food-contact-approved materials. Making recycled food-grade plastics could unlock huge potential for recycled packaging. But is it possible?

'Yes, packaging made from recycled materials can be food grade,' says Robert Taylor, director of sustainability of UPM Raflatac. 'There is limited availability of food-grade recycled plastics, but the recycling infrastructure is still developing, both mechanical and chemical recycling having their roles.'

For food-grade plastic recycling there are specific requirements for the recycling lines, raw material and recyclate quality. For example, limiting non-food grade feedstock



Matching the label to the main packaging component can improve the yield of the recyclate



By utilizing water-based wash-off adhesives, UPM Raflatac's SmartCircle Wash-off labels can be effortlessly separated from PET plastics without leaving any residue

Robust gasification

Currently undergoing pilot testing, Robust Gasification is a modern take on a technology used to power streetlights in 19th-century America. By heating organic products to a temperature that releases their chemical bonds, synthetic gas, or syngas, is produced. Syngas is the precursor to manufacturing plastics which are indistinguishable from oil-based plastics. The pilot is taking place at a landfill site, and since all packaging products apart from metal and glass are organic-based, they can all be processed alongside other organic waste found in landfill sites. This has the advantage of using existing garbage collection and landfill logistics and provides a limitless source of syngas which can be used directly in the manufacture of new plastic containers and films.

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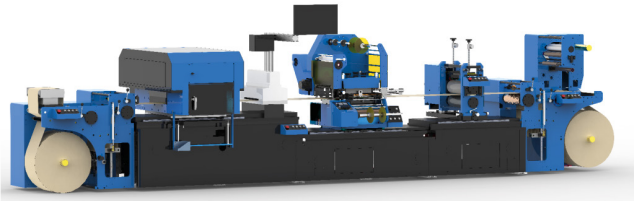

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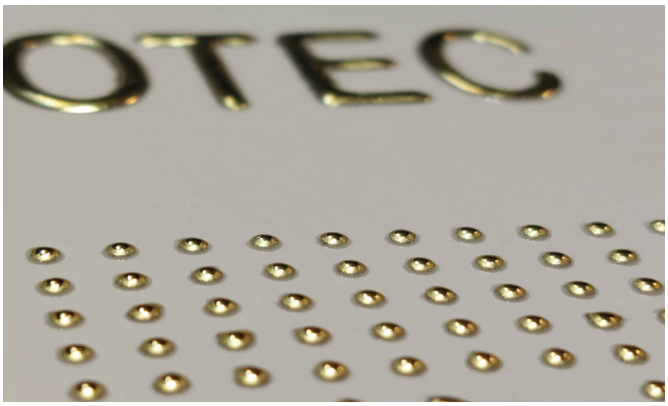

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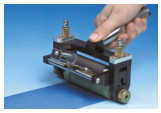

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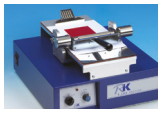

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Inside INX International Inks plant

"LABELS CAN HELP WITH EVERYTHING THEY'RE AFFIXED TO, NOT MAKE IT DETRIMENTAL TO RECYCLE. THE HOW2RECYCLE LABEL ON THE PACKAGE CAN GIVE CONSUMERS DIRECTION"

as raw material to a very small share in mechanical recycling processes. 'In mechanical recycling, PET bottle recycling is a good example of large-scale plastic recycling in food grade. Another example is mechanical food-grade HDPE recycling. Chemical recycling can create food-grade material from lower-grade feedstock as well,' Taylor explains.

Recycled packaging intended for food must undergo extensive cleaning and sterilization to meet food safety requirements and prevent contamination risks. Certain plastics, paper, and metals can be recycled to create new food-grade packaging. Proper selection of inks and coatings is crucial to ensure that the recycled packaging maintains its food-grade status.

Innovation in recycled products

Innovative new products are being developed utilizing raw materials originating not just from packaging industry waste, but also other sources.

The aim is to reduce pressure on virgin feedstocks and prevent leakage to nature – for example, the plastic pollution found in oceans today. A good example of this approach is the UPM Raflatac Ocean Action label, the world's first label material made with ocean-bound plastic.

Recycled liner waste can also be reused for label manufacture. UPM Raflatac, for example, offers its RafCycle recycling service to convert label waste into a resource. The total amount of liner waste recycled through the RafCycle service between 2014 and 2022 equals the weight of over three Eiffel Towers. This also equates to 463,000 trees left for other uses, or 334 long-haul flights worth of CO_2 emissions avoided compared with waste material ending up in landfills, according to UPM.

Resins manufactured through the chemical recycling process are also being more widely adopted. Toray, for example, is manufacturing polypropylene film from ExxonMobil's Exxtend chemical recycling process. ExxonMobil's recycling facilities are certified by ISCC Plus, ensuring adherence to robust mass balance practices.

CONVERTERS LEADING IN CIRCULAR ECONOMY

All4Labels is among the leading converters demonstrating a practical commitment to the principles of a circular economy. With ambitious goals set for 2030, All4Labels aims to cut waste generation by 30 percent and ensure that over 95 percent of waste is recyclable or reusable.

Since 2020, the company has been measuring CO_2 emissions across all production sites and is working towards carbon neutrality by 2030 and to reduce 38 percent of the emissions intensity in its operations.

Additionally, All4Labels has developed an in-house Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) tool designed for printed labels to help customers minimize environmental impact throughout a product's lifecycle.

'This analytical LCA tool captures the overall environmental impact of a product, process, or human activity, from raw material acquisition, through production and use to waste management,' says Gabriela Neves Ferri, vice president R&D and sustainability at All4Labels.

The converter has developed its own Star portfolio of sustainable labels, featuring products such as Starloop made with post-consumer recycled content.

'By showing comparisons with virgin materials, and mechanically and chemically recycled substrates, we can back up the claim that a more sustainable material will not have a significant impact on the design of the label,' Ferri explains.

Its waste management efforts, particularly in Latin America, have seen significant progress. In 'Blumenau, Brazil, we have successfully achieved zero landfill disposal, preventing inappropriate waste disposal and advancing our commitment to the UN's SDG 12 responsible consumption and production standard. More recently, our Indaiatuba site has achieved the same result, further underscoring our dedication to environmental responsibility and sustainable business practices,' Ferri highlights.

Similarly, Resource Label Group has introduced its RLGreen portfolio that improves container recycling and utilizes products that include recycled content.

Bohlke of Resource Label Group says, 'Labels can help with everything they're affixed to, not make it detrimental to recycle. The How2recycle label on the package can give consumers directions. As members of the APR (Association of Plastic Recyclers), we work with the recycling industry on how to bring best-in-class materials. Working with our customers to ensure the proper face stock, adhesives, inks and liner all work together to help with a more robust recycling process.'

THE WAY FORWARD

Schouten of INX says a range of wider improvements need to be made across consumer education, advanced recycling technologies, infrastructure improvement and policy support if the circular economy is truly to become a reality. All4Labels' Gabriela Neves Ferri advocates for supply chain collaboration to ensure recyclable materials are effectively collected, sorted and processed. All4Labels has intensified cooperation with CELAB and Finat, and is part of the Ellen MacArthur Foundation Community, contributing to broader industry-wide progress in sustainability.

UPM Raflatac's Taylor stresses a multi-spectrum approach to achieving a low-carbon circular economy, emphasizing the importance of reducing, recycling, renewing and reusing materials. 'There is no one-fits-all solution: some products need to switch materials, but most will need to be downgauged or include recycled content. One thing is for sure, they must be made more circular by following recycling design guidelines and meeting the compliance needs of legislation, such as the PPWR in Europe.'

Niewiadomska of Flint Group highlights the significance of ink and coating technology in advancing the circular label and packaging economy. Flint Group collaborates with organizations such as the Association of Plastic Recyclers to enhance ink and coating recyclability, developing products that function seamlessly in recycling systems.



HOW HAS CIRCULAR ECONOMY LEGISLATION BEEN IMPLEMENTED AROUND THE WORLD?

North America

As of 2023, six US states have active EPR (extended producer responsibility) or similar packaging laws. California mandated that all packaging in the state must be recyclable or compostable, 65 percent of single-use plastic packaging should be recycled, and a 25 percent reduction in plastic packaging is required by 2032. Colorado mandates producers finance recycling systems.

Maine shifts packaging waste responsibility to producers. Oregon encourages recycling via producer funding and higher fees on non-recyclables.

New Jersey mandates post-consumer recycled content for various products. Washington requires producers to use recycled plastic and label plastic trash bags with QR codes linking to their website.

Europe

The European Union aims to reduce packaging waste by 15 percent per capita for each member state by 2040, resulting in a 37 percent overall waste reduction compared to current legislation. Reuse and recycling are key strategies. Companies must offer a percentage of products in reusable or refillable packaging. Certain packaging formats will be banned, such as single-use items in restaurants and hotels. By 2030, packaging should be fully recyclable through a combination of design criteria, mandatory deposit return systems for plastic bottles and cans, and clear labeling for compostable packaging. Producers must include recycled content in new plastic packaging, enhancing plastic recycling efforts.

United Kingdom

The UK plans to minimize waste, reuse materials, and manage end-of-life packaging to reduce environmental impact. Goals include achieving zero avoidable waste by 2050, eliminating avoidable plastic waste by 2042, meeting current waste targets, and establishing ambitious new targets. Efforts will also focus on combating illegal disposal, reducing littering and addressing marine plastic pollution originating from land.

India

In 2021, India updated its Plastic Waste Management Amendment rules by banning plastic carry bags under 120-micron thickness and single-use plastics/films. These rules require brand owners to register and demonstrate compliance with EPR guidelines to promote the circular economy in plastic waste management. EPR efforts include a centralized portal, certificate trading, and penalties for non-compliance. India also launched a Circular Economy Roadmap in 2021 to boost sustainable material solutions, the supply of recycled plastics and alternative uses for plastic waste.

Japan

In 2022, Japan passed legislation requiring hotels and restaurants to reduce single-use plastics through consumer reward programs and the use of alternative materials. Mechanisms for collecting and recycling plastics, including municipal waste, were established, and led by local authorities. Certification systems were introduced to incentivize businesses to recycle their products.

China

China's National Development and Reform Commission unveiled the Circular Economy Development Plan that spans from 2021 to 2025.

It emphasizes initiatives like promoting green product design, enhancing clean production methods through audits and innovation, encouraging resource utilization in industrial parks, optimizing resource extraction and waste utilization, and facilitating urban waste co-processing through policy improvements and market-oriented approaches.

The plan also focuses on enhancing the recycling infrastructure by integrating facilities into urban planning, establishing standardized recycling networks, and optimizing rural recycling systems. Efforts focus on advancing renewable resource utilization by fostering industry clusters, and standardizing product recycling. Standardization of the second-hand goods market involves refining regulations, promoting online trading, and increasing oversight of offline markets.

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Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) technology is rapidly changing the landscape of the labeling industry. This growing technology is relevant to a wide range of applications across various industries due to its ability to offer efficient and automated tracking and identification.

RFID labeling offers numerous advantages over traditional barcode labeling, including faster data capture, enhanced automation and improved inventory management. It enables businesses to track items throughout the supply chain, from manufacturing to distribution to retail.

In this special section, we focused on the automotive, textiles and healthcare industries, but the opportunities are open to any brand looking to streamline operations, enhance security, and gain valuable insights into their processes.

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CHANGING GEARS WITH RFID

RFID label technology has emerged as a game-changer for the automotive industry, Adyasha Sinha reports

When Walmart announced in 2003 that its 100 largest suppliers would be required to use RFID tags on every case and pallet shipped to the retailer's stores, tiremaker Goodyear Tire & Rubber volunteered to participate in this effort.

Fast forward to 2020, Walmart again adopted RFID tags in its retail apparel sector and saw the benefits of inventory management, resulting in a better in-store shopping experience for customers, additional online and in-store pickup opportunities, and improved sales potential. This led Walmart to expand RFID deployment to other categories, including automotive tires and batteries, in 2022.

As both Walmart and Goodyear learned, RFID integration not only streamlines car manufacturers' processes, but also creates transparent integration with parts suppliers – and enables all the potential benefits of the digital transformation. Embracing this technology can give car manufacturers a competitive edge in this dynamic industry.

Sean Lowry, president at auto ID specialist Lowry Solutions, says: 'A good solution, like RFID tags, makes everyone's work easier by offering unprecedented levels of efficiency, accuracy and visibility in logistics and tracking operations. By utilizing radio waves to automatically identify and track objects, RFID systems have transformed the auto industry, enabling seamless supply chain management and enhancing overall operational performance—ultimately reducing stress and boosting the bottom line.'

THE AUTOMOTIVE LABELS MARKET

According to Consegic Business Intelligence, the automotive labels market is anticipated to be worth USD 10.7 million by 2030, showing significant growth from its value of USD 6.9 million in 2022. This growth is expected to be at a CAGR of 5.7 percent between 2023 and 2030.

RFID technology is a key driver in this market, adding value to traditional labeling methods. A passive RFID label allows data to be read from and written to an integral chip attached to an antenna powered from an external radio frequency source. These chips contain unique identification codes, which are 'read' by radio transceivers. RFID can be used to provide information about a product and track its location and update that information wherever a powered read/write unit is located.

RFID tag and label manufacturer FineLine Technologies has built a global reputation for its work within the tire industry, as well as aviation, entertainment and retail industries.

George Hoffman, chairman and CEO of FineLine Technologies, says RFID is revolutionizing how items are tracked throughout the supply chain; at the source, distribution center, warehouse and at the point of use. 'RFID tag and label technology enables superior track and trace capabilities and dramatically shortens the time required for inventory management while increasing accuracy to near-perfect levels. As tires leave the manufacturer, they can now be tracked throughout the supply chain and into warehouses. From there, tires can be tracked through distribution, resale and even in the field. Finally, at the end of a tire's lifecycle, the tire can be tracked all the way through recycling, re-manufacturing, or to the point of becoming waste material—leading to reducing carbon footprint.'

According to tire manufacturer Goodyear, RFID provides numerous advantages over barcodes, including more information storage, better durability and the ability to retrieve data from a distance.

Beyond the obvious supply chain benefits, Goodyear sees value for the consumer. The tiremaker has been collaborating with Siemens VDO to provide tire electronics through the TireIQ system. It relays specific tire information to drivers through a custom 'tire tag', composed of a computer chip and sensor built into the tire. The system provides the driver with warnings when improper inflation is detected.



The automotive industry is expanding the use cases for RFID, from prototype testing to personalization and smart after-sales

"RFID TAGS CAN BE IMPLEMENTED ACROSS VARIOUS COMPONENTS OF AN AUTOMOBILE STARTING FROM TIRES, SEATS, BUMPERS AS WELL AS SOME DECORATIVE ELEMENTS IN THE INTERIOR OF A CAR. TODAY EVERYTHING IS POSSIBLE WITH A LITTLE INNOVATION AND CUSTOMIZATION"

Goodyear's investment in RFID has also led to more efficient supply chain operations, improved business processes and lower operating costs.

PUT TO USE

Intelligent labels have a profound impact on the automotive supply chain by providing real-time visibility into the movement of parts and components. It helps companies to track inventory levels, monitor the location of assets and identify potential bottlenecks in the supply chain. By leveraging this data, automotive companies can make informed decisions to optimize their supply chain operations and improve overall efficiency.

'The automotive industry has long been a pioneer when it comes to RFID transponders, deploying the technology for use across a range of demanding and rigorous scenarios,' shares Lauri Hyytinen, market development manager for automotive at Avery Dennison. 'Our work with partners supports the innovation initiatives of leading automotive players, providing them with more than just accurate and reliable tracking. Today everything is possible with a little innovation and customization.'

Ricardo Lobo, CEO of RFID chip manufacturer Beontag, agrees: 'Going forward, we are seeing more and more parts of the vehicle subject to supply chain traceability requirements, and this will see both NFC and RFID tags used across the many separate elements that make up a final vehicle – be that tires, seats, or technology systems.'

LABEL ACADEMY



THE HISTORY OF LABELS

The evolution of labels and the story of the early label industry pioneers in Europe can be traced back over several hundred years. However, it was most certainly the period of the Industrial Revolution during the late 1700s and early 1800s that really began to shape the use and production of labels in a way that we would recognize them today.

Charting the label's development from first being produced in single colors on wooden hand presses, **The History of Labels** explores all aspects of the industry's history from the invention of the first presses and papermaking machines to the advent of self-adhesive converting in Europe.

It is a must-read title for all those who have an interest in how the world of labels and label production has grown from its early origins.

The chapters in this book will look specifically at:

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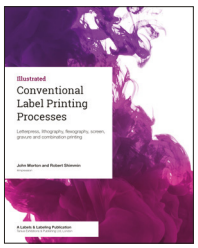

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The use of RFID technologies provides the automotive supply chain with real-time visibility into the movement of parts and components

The automotive industry is expanding the use cases for RFID.

- **Prototype testing:** When testing prototypes, Porsche requires that drivers fill out paperwork and speak with employees at the gate to exit the facility. By using a RAIN RFID enabled access, Porsche eliminated this hassle and increased security around its prototype operations. As a vehicle approaches the gates, readers capture the tag attached to its windshield, recording the location and ID number. If the vehicle was approved to leave, the system permits it. The process is repeated upon re-entry.
- **Storage and shipping:** Another German automaker, Audi, deployed Avery Dennison Smartrac's Dogbone UHF tags, attached to the inside of the front bumper, to record information about each car's position in the finishing, storage and shipping processes. This resulted in reduced labor for drivers who locate and transport the vehicles, as well as increased visibility for production management.
- **Racing performance improvements:** Bridgestone Japan and Sumitomo Rubber Industries motorsport department selected Avery Dennison Maxdura Tire Tag for endurance racing applications.

Avery Dennison's Hyytinen states that teams benefit from a range of data to help them prepare and improve race performance. 'Since a unique identifier can be assigned to each tire, information can be read automatically and used by the teams and the organizers to identify precisely which tires are in use. This automation enables teams to optimize real-time inventory, logistics and make the race more interesting for spectators. Providing a unique ID for each tire also improves reuse and recycling processes after the race to make events more sustainable.'

- **Elevating customer satisfaction:** Nemak, a global automotive parts manufacturing company headquartered in México, partnered with Teklynx International to implement the Teklynx Central enterprise label management system.

Comments Nick Recht, Teklynx Americas sales manager: 'The technology helped Nemak automate label printing from SAP integration to eliminate manual errors and achieve 98 percent improvement in labeling accuracy and 100 percent improvement in labeling efficiency—which ultimately led to an increase in Nemak's customer satisfaction rating by 75 percent.'

- **Payment transactions:** Engineering and technology company Honeywell has developed a windshield-mounted IT70 RFID tag that can be used for highway tolling applications and electronic vehicle registration, as well as vehicle access and parking or fuel payment systems.

According to Honeywell, the tag incorporates a range of cryptographic devices to provide two-way authentication and data security with up to six access keys with fully configurable privileges. Although commonly used for toll lanes and parking bays, the RFID tags could also be used for other electronic payment transactions such as buying gas without having to leave the car.

- **Anti-counterfeiting:** In 2021 alone 1.86 million counterfeit Mercedes Benz products were seized in 650 customs raids. The sale of counterfeit car parts and components not only has financial repercussions but also affects the safety of drivers and passengers. Popular among the counterfeited parts are brake pads, airbags, windshields, lights and wheels. The company's solution involved a combination of UHF RFID tags, crypto-signatures, holograms and barcodes.
- **Personalization and customization:** RFID technology allows automotive manufacturers to manufacture personalized and customizable vehicles. RFID tags can store customer preferences and desired configurations, allowing manufacturers to tailor vehicles according to individual needs. From interior settings to infotainment options, RFID-driven personalization enhances the customer experience and builds brand loyalty.

Using Impinj RAIN RFID, Volvo manages the production of custom cars made to meet individual customer requests. RAIN RFID tags are permanently mounted on the chassis of the car at the beginning of the manufacturing process, and are used to uniquely identify each vehicle and reliably track it through the production process. It ensures custom orders are built correctly. Volvo also uses Beontag tags to steer the timing of the 'just in time' automated production line at their manufacturing plants, where production of every car. Today, Beontag tags have played a part in the accuracy and efficiency of the manufacturing of more than 10 million Volvo cars around the world, the chip manufacturer says.

- **Enhancing user experience:** RFID technology can transform the driving experience, making it more seamless and user-friendly. Keyless entry and ignition systems using RFID tags simplify vehicle access for owners, enhancing convenience. Additionally, RFID-labeled infotainment systems and smart controls makes driving more interactive and engaging. The ease of using RFID-based features enhances customer satisfaction and fosters brand loyalty.
- **Smart after-sales service:** RFID enables more intelligent and efficient after-sales service. By equipping vehicles with RFID tags, manufacturers and service centers can remotely access real-time diagnostic data, identifying potential issues before they escalate. Proactive maintenance reminders and remote diagnostics streamline the servicing process, reducing downtime and customer inconvenience. RFID-driven smart after-sales services lead to

REGULATORY COMPLIANCE

Regulatory compliance is a critical aspect of the automotive labeling industry.

'Without regulatory standards formed by associations such as GDSO (the global data service organization for tires and automotive components), VDA (Verband der Automobilindustrie-German association of the automotive industry), Odette and AIAG (automotive industry action group), the automotive industry would face significant challenges in ensuring the safety and quality of its products,' comments Hoffman. 'Regulatory standards help to establish a level playing field for automotive companies and ensure that consumers can trust the labels on automotive products.'

"REGULATORY STANDARDS HELP TO ESTABLISH A LEVEL PLAYING FIELD FOR AUTOMOTIVE COMPANIES AND ENSURE THAT CONSUMERS CAN TRUST THE LABELS ON AUTOMOTIVE PRODUCTS"

increased customer loyalty and retention.

- **Sustainability:** Bridgestone Tires is planning to help reduce the carbon footprint of its commercial vehicle line of tires by producing RFID-tagged tires in 2024. Tires on vehicles like trucks and buses will be linked to a cloud-based system that is designed to help clients maximize the tires' lifespan and minimize their carbon footprint.

RFID tags now have many other uses in the auto industry, from warning lights alerting technicians to particular problems to automated systems that can correctly track inventory levels across production lines.

RFID labels and tags offer a wide various other benefits:

- **Transportation companies** can better track large fleets in real-time,
- **Car dealerships** can quickly gain information about which vehicles are available, rented, or need maintenance,
- **Rental services** can instantly provide customers with information about which vehicles are rented out,
- **Auto manufacturers** can streamline parts tracking and gain insights into usage patterns so they can predict products to prioritize.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Integration with IoT: The integration of RFID with the Internet of Things (IoT) opens up new possibilities in transportation management. By combining RFID technology with sensors and other IoT devices, transportation companies can gather a wealth of data and gain valuable insights. For instance, RFID-enabled tags or labels can monitor temperature and humidity levels in perishable goods during transit, ensuring their quality and freshness. This integration enhances safety, reduces waste, and allows for proactive maintenance of vehicles and infrastructure. As the IoT develops, the benefits of smart tagging with RFID will become more apparent. It will provide new opportunities to increase customer convenience and safety, and offer label converters a way to differentiate their products and improve the operational efficiency of their customers.

Collaboration with ecosystem partners: Collaboration between RFID tech providers, automotive manufacturers and logistics services will lead to the development of a new range of customized applications.

For example, Avery Dennison is working with Wiliot to create a sticker-sized Bluetooth sensor tag incorporating an ARM processor powered solely by scavenging energy from ambient radio frequencies.

'Wiliot's strategy for battery-free Bluetooth transponders, which sense and communicate without needing specific action by consumers, is very relevant to Avery Dennison's intelligent RFID label strategy,' explains Hyytinen. 'We believe in a future where every item will have a unique digital identity and a digital life, benefiting both consumers and brands, with relevant and contextual information. We see this as an extension to our RFID solutions, enabling consumers to connect with products through multiple smartphone and IoT devices from end to end.'

Emerging markets: Rapid industrialization, urbanization and rising disposable income has led to more consumption and sale of vehicles in emerging markets. As per McKinsey, over the last 10 years, automotive sales in emerging markets, such as China, India and Brazil, have proved not only resilient but also, until recently, more robust than many experts would have predicted.

Electronic vehicles (EVs) are expected to account for 26 percent of global vehicle sales by 2030, with China leading the way as the largest EV market in the world. This has presented significant growth opportunities for the automotive RFID market.

Technological advancements: Traditionally, RFID tags were rigid, limiting their application to flat, non-flexible surfaces. However, the advent of flexible RFID tags has revolutionized the industry. These soft RFID tags, made from materials like special plastics, paper or fabrics, are suitable for curved surfaces or applications requiring a certain level of flexibility.

In the automotive and electronics industries, a specialized type of soft RFID tag is increasingly being utilized. These tags' unique antenna designs allow them to adhere to and function on metal surfaces like car engines and electronic device casings, overcoming traditional RFID limitations.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

RFID technology in industrial manufacturing can significantly speed up production and reduce manual labor. However, it is not without its challenges.

The RFID tags must be durable enough to withstand the extreme pressures and temperatures of car assembly.

Beontag's Lobo notes: 'One of the main challenges of RFID implementation in the automotive industry is that the tags must be incredibly durable and resilient to do their job (communicating data) during the many phases of production that a car must go through to become showroom ready. For this, we have made sure to create and deploy tags that can withstand the heat and pressure of assembly, painting and finishing to play their role in the full deployment of each new vehicle.'

Hoffman, of FineLine Technologies adds: 'They might not be readable at these temperatures, but they will survive and can be read when back when at operating temperature.'

Furthermore, RFID systems can be vulnerable to radio frequency jamming, particularly in crowded spaces. In a crowded environment, multiple RFID tags operating in close proximity can interfere with each other and cause collision issues. This can lead to difficulties in accurately identifying and tracking individual tags

'In most cases, we can find workarounds that allow the labels to work appropriately,' comments Hyytinen. 'For example, by carefully positioning and tuning the reader's signal, you can ensure it is not blocked or is in any way interfered with. By using FlagTag or foam tags on a metal surface, we make sure that the tags can backscatter without signal disturbance.'

Finally, RFID tags have a limited range of data transmission, which means they are unable to capture and transmit information when used at a distance.

Explains Hyytinen: 'Most RFID labels have a read range of 10 meters or more, provided nothing interferes with the radio signals; but for every reading point, you must fine-tune the reader to the optimum settings. Sometimes this involves reducing the power and the reading range.'

Intelligent labels are transforming the automotive industry by providing enhanced supply chain visibility, improved inventory management, and increased efficiency.

As the market for automotive labels continues to grow, driven by trends such as Industry 4.0, integration of IoT and the increasing demand for sustainable labeling, there are significant opportunities for growth and innovation in the industry.

By embracing intelligent labels, automotive companies can improve their operations, enhance their brand image, and stay competitive in a rapidly evolving market.

RFID will feature strongly in the educational sessions at Labelexpo Americas 2024. For info see www.labelexpo-americas.com

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Polilux is the youngest player of BOPP production industry. The company was established in 2018 and its main purpose has been to focus special products such as IML, PSL so far. Polilux has been performing production with specially designed Brückner Technology in order to produce the highest quality of label materials.

Polilux today exports material to 26 countries and this number reached in only 3 years after establishment. The company has only one purpose as to be a leading producer of special products. As a consequence Polilux launched its first BML (Blow-Moulding Label) product in 2022 and the company is producing high quality of PSL Facestock material which can serve high end market since January 2023. Polilux invested the first of its kind investment which will be the only one in the World. The main purpose of this investment is to match with company's objectives as to be leading special product supplier.

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UNITVISID LEADS GROWING RFID USE IN HEALTHCARE

Pharma specialists unite under UnitVisID, a membership-driven alliance with a mission to advance the use of RFID-tagged pharmaceutical products as they move through the supply chain – from manufacturing to patient use. PiotrWnuk reports

Shortages, recalls, workflow inefficiencies and lack of interoperability are some of the challenges in the pharma supply chain despite significant investments by hospitals and healthcare organizations.

The confluence of the Covid-19 pandemic, drug shortages and staff shortages have accelerated RFID technology adoption. Emergen Research forecasts that the market for RFID in healthcare will reach almost USD 15 billion in 2028 globally from USD 4.24 billion in 2020.

With advancements in technology and innovation, RFID-tagged pharmaceutical products in the healthcare industry present opportunities to improve inventory management and, ultimately, better patient outcomes.

In recent years, various RFID technologies have been introduced to the healthcare market to track pharmaceutical products, instruments and supplies without establishing industry-wide specifications to ensure accuracy and performance.

With industry-wide support of a comprehensive set of RFID specifications for healthcare, players along the pharmaceutical supply chain can work together to solve these issues proactively.

RFID BRINGS THE INDUSTRY TOGETHER

The UnitVisID Alliance (launched initially as the DoseID Consortium in August 2020) founding members recognized the need to bring together the industry in a way that ensures RFID-tagged pharmaceutical products work in all the downstream systems in hospitals and health systems.

This centralized backbone of data exchange, combined with a unified set of performance specifications, opens a world of interoperability that provides a complete and accurate history of each single-unit-dose pharmaceutical product that every industry participant can use.

The alliance maintains the UnitVisID Specification with participation by representatives of hospitals, automation vendors, software vendors, and pharmaceutical manufacturers working side-by-side to ensure an interoperable, high-performance future for RFID in the pharmaceutical industry and improved patient outcomes.

Furthermore, the UnitVisID Registry was created to provide a complete and evolving record of each pharmaceutical's components and event history securely stored in the cloud and available to all authorized parties anytime throughout the product's entire lifecycle.

Currently, UnitVisID is used by more than 1,000 hospitals and healthcare organizations, and more than 210 million RFID-tagged products utilizing the UnitVisID platform have been scanned, more than any other RFID system in the US healthcare space.

'We've realized the many benefits of RFID in healthcare, and its massive adoption is a testament that we are now at a tipping point,' says Tim Kress-Spatz, president at UnitVisID Alliance. 'The rebrand reflects this change, and to really tackle the challenges of shortages, recalls, workflow inefficiencies, and lack of interoperability, it requires a whole of industry approach from the entire healthcare supply chain.'

The alliance provides a unified approach with research, tools and resources for the healthcare industry that ensures RFID-tagged pharmaceutical products work in all downstream systems in hospitals and healthcare systems.



The UnitVisID Alliance aims to ensure RFID-tagged pharmaceutical products work in all the downstream systems in hospitals and health systems

"WE'VE REALIZED THE MANY BENEFITS OF RFID IN HEALTHCARE, AND ITS MASSIVE ADOPTION IS A TESTAMENT THAT WE ARE NOW AT A TIPPING POINT"

UnitVisID is open to hospitals and industry organizations. Founding members hail from companies across the industry spectrum, including Avery Dennison, SML RFID and CCL Healthcare. Current industry members span the pharmaceutical manufacturing ecosystem and include RFID companies, pharmaceutical manufacturers, 503B outsourcing facilities, technology and automation vendors, label converters and service suppliers.

The alliance is opening a world of opportunity for interoperability, performance and tracking of an accurate history of medication use so that any industry participant has access to reliable information on each medication dose.

'We are thrilled to be working with pharmaceutical industry leaders to introduce UnitVisID and ensure the standardization of RFID in the healthcare space,' says Dr Bill Hardgrave, senior vice president for academic affairs at Auburn University and the founder of the RFID Lab. 'After assisting the retail and aerospace industries in fully commercializing RFID for unit-level visibility, we are pleased we can help revolutionize healthcare with those lessons learned.'

The RFID Lab is an established research institute that has worked with industry groups representing some of the largest users of RFID technology. The ARC program has served as a neutral third-party RFID certification body for the industry establishing performance and quality specifications that have evolved into industry standards.

Medications tagged at the unit dose with UnitVisID-certified RFID labels will be open to all automation vendors that wish to use the standard for searching drug provenance. This assures items like refrigerated drugs with beyond-use dating are understood by all parties.

'We are very supportive of the UnitVisID mission and glad to be part of the founding membership,' says DJ Lee, global channel

"AS A WORLD LEADER IN DIGITAL IDENTIFICATION TECHNOLOGIES AND RFID PRODUCTION, CREATING OVER 30 BILLION TAGS TO DATE, WE ARE EXCITED TO SUPPORT UNITVISID WITH THIS CRUCIAL INITIATIVE FOR THE HEALTHCARE INDUSTRY"



RFID medication tracking systems can help solve the supply chain problems, such as shortages, recalls and diversions

sales director of Avery Dennison. 'As a world leader in digital identification technologies and RFID production, creating over 30 billion tags to date, we are excited to support UnitVisID with this crucial initiative for the healthcare industry. We have a long-standing partnership with third-party certification group ARC Lab and our experience and R&D capabilities have enabled the innovation of RFID products to support the challenging demands of the healthcare industry.'

'As a leading player in healthcare labeling, CCL is excited to join UnitVisID and help pave the way for the future of RFID,' adds Pramit Sen, vice president and general manager for Labels USA at CCL Healthcare. 'With all different aspects of the medication supply chain represented, we are enthusiastic about continued innovation.'

CERTIFICATION MATTERS

As one of the founding members, Avery Dennison Smartrac is manufacturing inlays for pharmaceutical applications, unlocking critical RFID value for healthcare, pharmacies and laboratory asset management.

In February 2022, the company launched AD Minidose U9, one of the smallest products on the market, to receive ARC certification (Spec S) from Auburn University's RFID Lab and to be approved for use by the UnitVisID Industry Alliance.

AD Minidose U9 builds on the success of the Minidose U8 inlay launched in 2021 and performs in the standard UHF RFID frequency band between 860MHz-960MHz, with a small form factor of 22x12mm. With its long read range, even in densely packed inventory environments, it is certified to work on all current UnitVisID product categories. The inlay uses NXP's proven UCODE 9 IC, which is equipped with 96 bits of EPC memory, including a 96-bit Tag IDentifier (TID) with a 48-bit unique serial number factory-encoded into the TID.

'AD Minidose U9 meets the needs of a wide range of pharmaceutical item-level use cases,' comments Max Winograd, vice president of connected products at Avery Dennison Smartrac. 'The inlay performs robustly on the clear and amber glass as well as plastics and syringes, even when filled with pharmaceuticals and biologicals. This unlocks critical RFID value for asset and inventory management in multiple pharma or healthcare applications. It also meets specific customer requirements with the goal of ensuring patient safety, increasing nursing "time to care", and decreasing inefficiencies in the operational process.'

Avery Dennison Smartrac is also a key RFID partner for Kit Check, one of the leading providers of automated medication tracking and diversion detection technologies for hospital pharmacies in the US and has supplied RFID tags for the Kit Check application since its inception.

The Kit Check RFID-enabled inventory management solution helps hospitals modernize restocking processes and automates them to save redundant drug spend and ensure patient safety.

According to Tim Kress-Spatz, Kit Check co-founder and president of UnitVisID Alliance, Kit Check's inventory of pharmaceutical containers continues to expand by adding different series of containers in various sizes.

'We pursue to work successfully with Avery Dennison Smartrac, and their product line continuously evolves to meet our needs. We tag a myriad of pharmaceuticals through the Kit Check solution to deliver the right medicine to the right patient at the right time, every time,' adds Kress-Spatz.

With the EOS-202 U9, Tageos has not simply expanded the range of UnitVissID-certified and ARC Spec S-approved inlays designed for unit-of-use medications and specimens in pharmaceutical applications. The French-headquartered RFID supplier is fundamentally upgrading that range with a product of unique capabilities.

The new UHF product features a sophisticated, small-footprint antenna design measuring just 20x10 mm (wet inlay finished size 22x12 mm) alongside NXP's state-of-the-art UCODE9 IC. The IC complies with the EPC Class 1 Gen 2 protocol and the ISO 18000-6c standard for global use and features auto-adjust technology, unique brand identifiers, and pre-serialized 96-bit EPC memory.

'The new EOS-202 U9 inlay underpins our strong commitment to always provide our customers with the most advanced products in terms of maximum performance, quality and sustainability. With its unique combination of the smallest size and optimum read characteristics in challenging environments, the new inlay provides the healthcare and pharmaceutical sector with the ultimate "one-size-fits-all" solution,' says Chris Reese, head of product management at Tageos. 'Because of its broad range of applications, we consider the EOS-202 U9 as a true breakthrough product in the market.'

'It's good to see our list of certified inlays growing. The fact that there is now a product that passes all ARC Spec S tests also confirms our certification and testing concept making it very easy for customers to choose the right solution,' adds Kress-Spatz.

As more companies incorporate RFID tags on external packaging or within the drug delivery format, it is critical that the technology works reliably and is open to all downstream participants so they can consistently access both existing standards information like the GS1 SGTIN as well as the medication history, including lot numbers and beyond use dates.

By offering players throughout the supply chain a mechanism for RFID standardization, UnitVisID certification can ensure optimized performance for end users and industry participants. When properly configured, RFID medication tracking systems can help solve the problems that plague the supply chain, including shortages, recalls and diversion, while reducing integration headaches that are currently prevalent in siloed healthcare systems.

Scan the QR code to access more information about UnitVisID Alliance

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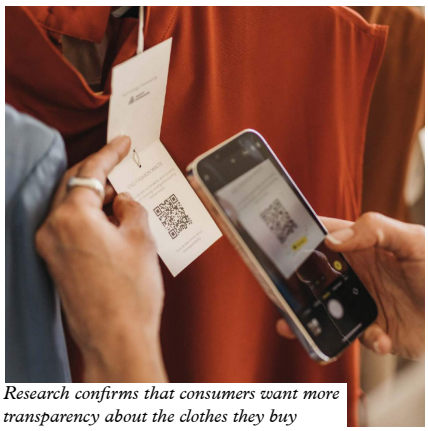
THREADS OF CHANGE

A recent report highlighted the environmental crisis facing the global textile industry. Introducing unique Digital Product Passport and integrating RFID technology holds significant promise for revolutionizing this sector. Piotr Wnuk reports.

The textile industry faces several challenges with governments drafting new legislation and consumers are demanding more transparency. The good news is that new technology and insights have provided innovative ways of not just solving these problems but thriving in the face of them.



Research confirms that consumers want more transparency about the clothes they buy



Kappahl has outfitted over 3,000 pilot products with ID carriers containing vital supply chain and transparency information

MARKET PRESSURES

The 2024 Threads of Change report by Avery Dennison revealed that USD 163 billion worth of textile inventory is thrown away each year due to expiry or overproduction. Avery Dennison says it is more than the GDPs of Croatia, Costa Rica and Iceland combined.

The magnitude of this waste demands urgent action. However, although companies recognize this issue, they are not allocating sufficient investment to modern technologies. In fact, three-quarters of businesses are investing only 5 percent or less of their technology budget in supply chain sustainability.

Conversely, consumers are advocating for improvement. They seek quality in their purchases while also desiring a clear conscience. An inspiring 86 percent of people worldwide express a desire for a more ethical and sustainable world, as per the World Economic Forum report.

In addition to changing consumer attitudes, governments are advocating for higher standards within their economies.

The European Commission, for instance, is advancing Digital Product Passport (DPP) legislation under the Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation (ESPR).

The DPP is an initiative that's part of the EU's Circular Economy Action Plan (CEAP), aiming to provide a digital identity to products in various economic sectors. It's officially defined as 'an environmental policy instrument that aims to improve product circularity by exploiting the power of digital to collect, organize and store information in a secure way'.

The DPP is expected to include details regarding the item's origin, material composition, environmental impact, and other relevant information. Initially, product categories such as apparel, textiles, and batteries are the primary focus, with the scope anticipated to broaden in the years ahead.

The DPP is anticipated to have a significant impact on fostering sustainability and transparency within global supply chains. It will be applicable to any business introducing a product to the EU internal market. While the specifics of its rollout are currently under discussion, its effects are already evident in certain global sectors as supply chain participants begin their preparations.

"DPP SETS THE NEXT IMPORTANT STEP IN CIRCULARITY. BY BEING THE FIRST IN THE INDUSTRY TO BEGIN COMPLIANCE WE WANT TO LEAD BY EXAMPLE TO INSPIRE THE MARKETS, OUR INDUSTRY PARTNERS AND THE BEDDING SECTOR OVERALL"

FASHION RETAILERS TRIAL DDP

The Trace 4 Value initiative, funded by the Swedish Governmental Agency for Innovation Systems (Vinnova), encompasses five sub-projects focusing on traceability, one of which delves into the textile sector.

Leading brands Kappahl and Marimekko have outfitted over 3,000 pilot products with ID carriers containing vital supply chain and transparency information. These ID carriers, along with QR codes, were affixed to the garments during the production phase.

Scanning the QR code with a mobile device grants consumers and stakeholders immediate access to comprehensive product details. Trace 4 Value DPP follows global interoperability standards and utilizes decentralized data storage across two platforms.

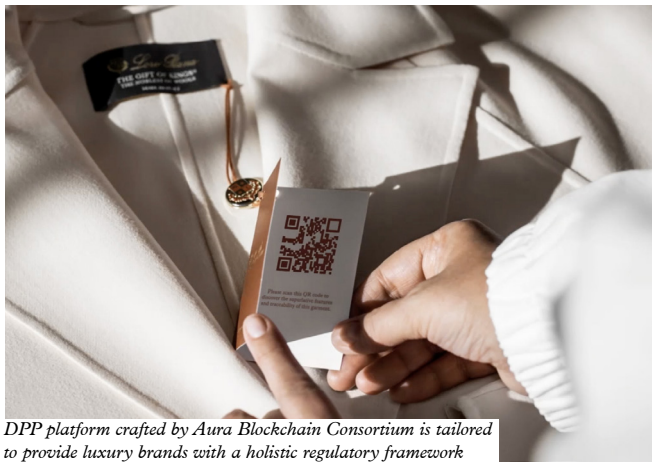
In addition to the pilot project, Kappahl has also adopted a traceability technology, enabling suppliers to digitally trace all its garments. Such a traceability tool is essential for brands looking to implement a scalable DPP system with accurate traceability data.

'Kappahl wants to be a pioneer when it comes to sustainability and transparency in fashion and is part of a pilot project on the development of digital product passports in textiles initiated by Trace4Value,' says Sandra Roos, vice president of sustainability at Kappahl. 'We can now show our customers a first version of the digital product passport in textiles, all the way from production to sales.'

'The introduction of digital product passports means a major change for the industry. We will not solve it on our own but must work together and learn together. The Trace4Value project is extremely valuable to us as a fashion company and we are now very curious about how the passports will be received by customers and what knowledge the pilot will give us,' adds Roos.

In March, the findings were showcased at DCongress in Göteborg, organized by Swedish Commerce. Roos provided attendees with a glimpse into how a digital product passport functions for consumers, demonstrating by scanning a QR code on a garment.

'This set-up provides possibilities to share and add unique product information into the DPP throughout the product life. So, the QR code is scanned, the unique ID through a GS1 digital link sends a request to a resolver, which identifies in what data source the data associated to that specific product resides. The data is validated then



DPP platform crafted by Aura Blockchain Consortium is tailored to provide luxury brands with a holistic regulatory framework

"WE ARE GIVING OUR MEMBERS EXCITING AND EXCEPTIONAL NEW TECHNOLOGICAL OPPORTUNITIES IN THE FIELD OF TRACEABILITY TO PROTECT AND GROW THEIR BRANDS GLOBALLY"

UNLOCK THE POWER OF RFID TECHNOLOGY: DIVE DEEP AT LABELEXPO AMERICAS 2024

As part of the educational program at Labelexpo Americas 2024, scheduled for September in Rosemont, Illinois, organizers have arranged a five-hour workshop featuring prominent RFID and smart labeling experts. This workshop, presented by the Label Academy, a global training initiative for the label and package printing industry, aims to equip participants with the technical know-how and expert insights necessary for converters seeking success in the rapidly evolving realm of RFID and smart labeling.

Attendees can expect to delve into a broad spectrum of topics, beginning with an overview of RFID technology and the converter's role within this ecosystem. The session will also explore the materials and equipment essential for engaging with interactive technologies, delve into testing procedures, address cybersecurity concerns, and conclude with practical case studies and a discussion on sustainability within this segment.

Scheduled to coincide with Labelexpo Americas 2024, the workshop kicks off on the first day of the exhibition, September 10, at 9:15 am. More information is available at www.labelexpo-americas.com.

fetched from the different data sources and then shown up your screen. The data can be stored in different places, in a decentralized data storage, in this pilot it is stored in two different platforms.'

Roos emphasized that the DPP is beneficial not only for customers, but also for companies: 'Kappahl and other brands can benefit because the DPP will provide relevant information to the consumers in a standardized way. The information will be validated, and we will have a lot more information about the sustainability claims we make, to see if they are true or false.'

'It will be easier to distinguish between good and bad products. It will also be easier for authorities to do this legal supervision to see if the claims are correct. This is important if we want to reach this transition to a sustainable society,' adds Roos.

LUXURY ELEVATES DPP WITH BLOCKCHAIN

Nearly three years ago, several luxury brands, including Prada, Louis Vuitton, Loro Piana, Fendi, Celine, and Christian Dior, joined forces to establish the Aura Blockchain Consortium. Despite being competitors in the market, they came together to tackle common challenges related to authenticity, responsible sourcing, and sustainability through a secure digital format.

In December last year, the consortium added DPP platform crafted by Aura Blockchain Consortium, tailored to provide brands with a holistic regulatory framework, elevate product narratives, and engage customers through innovative functionalities. This bespoke platform is carefully curated to address the distinct requirements of brands, offering customizable features that enable them to create a tailored digital journey for their audience.

In January this year the consortium has partnered with Mojix, an item-level supply chain intelligence specialist. Connecting its cloud-based platform to the Aura Blockchain enables certified traceability via immutable item identification, as well as instant and accurate track-and-trace, back to any original material composing an individual article. Thanks to NFC and RFID technology and serialization, Mojix delivers standardized unique identities to luxury items and track them from source to sale.

The benefits include facilitating brand protection, enhancing quality and provider control and improving customer loyalty through unique, item-specific, and undisputed information on provenance and conditions of manufacture and transportation.

DPP-PROOF MATTRESS

Aquinos Group, one of Europe's leading mattress manufacturers, has proactively responded to market pressures, leveraging its foresight to set itself apart in a crowded and fiercely competitive market.

Since the beginning of this year, the company initiated a practice of tagging its products with digital ID technology, facilitated by Avery Dennison's atma.io connected product cloud. This implementation offers stakeholders within the circularity chain unprecedented access to information regarding the product's origins and materials. This process generates a 'digital twin' on the atma.io platform, providing precise details about the product.

'We are proud to be working on this project with Aquinos and TripleR,' says Michael Goller, senior director for atma.io at Avery Dennison. 'Mattresses are complex and bulky products that require a highly sophisticated sorting and dismantling process. To date, it has proven difficult to do this in a cost-efficient manner - leading to millions of mattresses going to landfill each year. This is precisely why DPPs have been established and we are excited to push boundaries with our partners towards greater traceability, efficiency and circularity.'

Down the line, the RFID tags affixed to Aquinos products will undergo scanning at recycling centers. This process enables product dismantlers to swiftly discern the materials utilized in manufacturing, facilitating a more efficient and effective separation for potential reuse.

Additionally, consumers will have the option to scan a QR code using their smartphone, granting them access to comprehensive product information both before and after purchase, empowering them to make well-informed decisions.

Once the DPP scheme for mattresses is enforced, Aquinos will have already tagged one million items, positioning itself as the inaugural producer to adhere to the DPP scheme on a pan-EU scale.

Turn to page 105 to read an excerpt from the Label Academy book on to the developments of RFID technology.

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RFID MARKETS AND APPLICATIONS

The applications for RFID extend beyond what was explored earlier in this issue. In excerpts from the Label Academy book "Label Markets and Applications", we explore these markets in more detail

Each end-user market is different. Understanding these differences is essential to satisfy the customer, the brand owner, and work with them to meet present and future needs. In excerpts from the "Label Markets and Applications" book published by the Label Academy, further applications for RFID technology are explored.

PHARMACEUTICAL AND MEDICAL

In developed markets, and particularly the United States, the health sector is large and growing. Americans spend an estimated 13 percent of their GDP on health-related products and services. In almost all parts of the world, regulations and directives for the labeling of medical and pharmaceutical products are very strict. Counterfeiting is rife, particularly in developing countries. It has been estimated that one-third of all the drugs sold in Africa are fake. Many of these fakes are useless, others may be actively harmful.

With increasing concern for better protection and counterfeit protection, we can be sure that pharmaceutical label markets are likely to grow even faster than the pharma market itself.

RFID labels are typically being employed in the pharmaceutical and medical markets for hygiene, inventory accuracy and patient safety. Medical facilities and hospitals must follow many regulations regarding clinical practice and keep track of their medical equipment at the same time.

For this, RFID labels are being used, particularly in hospitals and clinics. In a Danish dental clinic, RFID tracking of dental instruments is said to improve patient safety and hygiene. Instruments can be tracked continuously from the time of entry into the system, through their use and processing, and can even be sterilized (without harming the label).

For label converters, the importance of the hospital/medical sector must not be underrated. Hospitals and health services are quite rightly more concerned about reliability than cost. Having established a relationship of trust with a label supplier, they are reluctant to change. That is the reason why so many world-class label converters (CCL, Reynders, Schreiner Medipharm and others) all have a division devoted exclusively to meeting the needs of this sector.

THE BATTLE AGAINST COUNTERFEITERS

Pharmaceutical brands are in a constant battle against deliberate counterfeiting. Worldwide, Viagra is said to be the most frequently counterfeited medical product. Other commonly counterfeited products include antibiotics, cancer drugs, anti-malaria pills and treatments said to cure conditions ranging from hair loss to obesity or depression. In some developing countries medical authorities estimate that more than half the pharmaceuticals in circulation are counterfeit. As a result, millions of people are at risk of buying drugs that in the best case will not cure them and may even do deadly harm. Labels and packaging have a vital role to play in fighting this menace.

All these security features have a cost, which needs to be proportional to the risk, and the value of the product.

Non-food retail and household durable products (prod: Big section)

Non-food retail products include cleaning and disinfecting products (also called 'under-the-sink'), and all kinds of apparel and shoes. These account for the biggest volumes of labels. Also included in this category are most of the goods you will find in a hardware or do-it-yourself store, or a sports goods retail outlet.

Most products in this category have low unit value and do not need complex anti-counterfeit measures. Among the exceptions are high-end luxury household goods, designer clothing and shoes. Smart technologies (RFID, NFC) are a common feature in identifying and tracking clothing of all kinds.

For all kinds of clothing, woven and care labels represent a huge market, as do swing tags. RFID labels are now becoming the standard way of controlling supply chains and preventing counterfeiting.

Sports goods and other leisure products (production: regular subhead)

While labeling mass-production sports items needs to be cost-conscious, equipment for professional sportsmen (or for those who emulate them) must meet exacting standards and must be protected from counterfeiters.

Wilson, a leading maker of ball sports equipment, is using an RFID-based labeling system to identify each carton shipped out of its factories. Using printers/encoders supplied by Zebra, Wilson aims to achieve anti-counterfeit protection as well as track and trace capabilities for total asset visibility throughout its supply chain. When the new SAP system is complete, Wilson plans to integrate the RFID label data further into its operations so that it can encode additional information, such as ship-to address, SKU number and item quantity.

LUXURY GOODS

A high unit price (e.g. for handbags or luxury items of clothing) attracts

"HOSPITALS AND HEALTH SERVICES ARE QUITE RIGHTLY MORE CONCERNED ABOUT RELIABILITY THAN COST"



Not just a label – August Faller has developed imaginative label solutions for the medical sector



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Beating the counterfeiter: customers' authentication

RFID TAGS IN SHOES

Italian shoemaker and fashion house Sal¬vatore Ferragamo conceals a smart label in every left shoe it makes. The RFID tag em¬bedded in the label can be interrogated by a special transmitter-receiver which sends back the signal that the shoe is genuine – or not. The company says most fakes come from China. Ferragamo and Chinese cus¬toms authorities seized more than 34,000 counterfeit products in 2015. Ferragamo estimates the value of these goods to be more than 17 million USD. Other makers of luxury goods are said to be using the same or similar devices to trap product pirates.

"A HIGH UNIT PRICE ATTRACTS COUNTERFEITERS LIKE FLIES AROUND A JAM POT"

counterfeiters like flies around a jam pot. Labels play a major role in helping importers, retailers and consumers to establish authenticity. To replace the QR code, secure identification specialists offer an item-level unique ID label enabling anyone along the supply chain (including customs officials) to authenticate the product using a smartphone.

It will come as a surprise to most people that, measured by the number of customs seizures, shoes are the most smuggled product of all. A report by the World Customs Organization puts Nike in the unenviable top slot for the biggest number of counterfeit goods customs seizures, well ahead of Apple (second) and Rolex (third). Adidas occupied the fifth slot. Manufacturers of luxury footwear have resorted to electronic devices to bring this counterfeiting under control (see boxout).

APPAREL LABELING

Item-level RFID tagging has grown significantly since it launched more than 20 years ago. An end-user sector where it has flourished is apparel. In this context, it is hard not to mention Marks & Spencer, the UK-based retailer generally known as M&S. Apparel accounts for just under half of M&S' revenue, and the group controls its supply lines from the source factory right through to the customer.

Since 2014, all M&S clothing items have been tagged, using UHF (869,5 MHz) technology. Each item is tagged at the point of manufacture, and the tags follow the merchandise until it is sold to a customer. This offers the potential of visibility into the goods' movements throughout the supply chain, into a store's back room and onto the sales floor. It is particularly important in speeding inventory control, which is done using a hand-held reader.

However, not all apparel items benefit equally from RFID labeling. Typically, the categories that gain the most are items of clothing with many different sizes and colors, with high average selling prices and a long sales life. Experience has shown that for short-term fashion clothing, it is preferable to use other forms of label.

Tesco, one of Britain's leading retailers, plans to take smart apparel tagging one step further. In a pilot project, smart robots that roam through the store's clothing department, are doing real-time inventory control; onboard readers perform inventory counts by reading each garment's Gen 2 UHF tag. This robotic system and service is being provided by a US-based technology company which reports that a half-dozen other retailers, globally, are carrying out similar pilot schemes.

HOME AND GARDEN

Certain home appliances (for example, water filters) need regular maintenance or replacement of moving parts. To ensure these deadlines are not forgotten, elapsed time indicator labels can be used. Custom-calibrated for periods up to a year, these labels indicate by a visible sign (generally a color change) when a replacement is due. The labels are 'switched on' by finger pressure. Once activated, a color dye migrates along a display window, showing elapsed time in a range from a few days up to 12 months.

RFID labels in the home are increasingly used as sensors to measure light, temperature, or humidity. The information is then fed back to a central control panel which either takes corrective action or warns the householder of an anomaly. This smart system is used for opening/closing shutters, regulating temperature room-by-room, or even deciding when to water the garden.

INDUSTRIAL LABELS

Industrial labels are also a steadily growing end-user sector. These labels are technical and are generally machine-readable. They are frequently subsumed into a track-and-trace system to provide security and traceability ensuring traceability and combatting the counterfeiter. This is particularly true for car and aircraft parts.

The humble industrial label is the unsung hero of the label world. Lacking the hype that goes with primary labels, industrial labels are nonetheless an essential ingredient in keeping the wheels of industry turning, worldwide. The different types of industrial end-users are varied.

LOGISTICS MANAGEMENT

Label converters need to understand at least the broad outlines of their industrial customers' logistics and warehousing system. This is best seen in the requirements for medical, automobile and aerospace parts, where security is paramount. Labels will be used a) on the individual part, b) on the case and c) on the pallet. For each of these levels, the labeling requirement will be different, but each label must conform to the logistics system used. For industrial labels, even more than for other categories, barcodes, data matrix codes and QR codes are almost universally used. RFID-enabled labels are the most complete (and most expensive) solution since an RFID-label-based logistics management system can not only

determine the number and types of units in every pallet, but it can also record the date/ time of entry/exit from the factory or warehouse. This highly efficient system however requires goods to pass under an RFID-enabled portal each time they are moved to a new location. The costs involved are the main reason why this type of logistics management was not widely used.

When RFID labels became generally available in the 1990s many people foresaw their general use in keeping track of any movable asset. Everything from a fleet of hire cars to a batch of hospital trolleys can usefully be tracked and managed via an RFID label. The reason that growth was slow was firstly the cost, secondly the less than 100 percent reliability of the labels, and thirdly the fact that they can only be machine-read at short range. If a hospital trolley gets pushed into the river, no amount of RFID labels will locate it. Even 'active' RFIDs (with battery and transmitter) can only emit a weak signal, and none when the battery runs out.



Schreiner's RFID-enabled booklet labels enhance medical security

AEROSPACE

Within the past several years airlines, in response to terrorist attacks and changed priorities, have reviewed all their security arrangements: one of the weak points found was the absence of security for aircraft galley equipment and trolleys. To remedy this, several RFID-based solutions have been developed. One development is called 'Air-Seal'. This 'smart' closing and securing device is based on encrypted banking algorithm technology. When the smart closure is fitted, only authorized staff with the correct ID-tagged security device will be able to open the trolleys. Every action performed on every trolley along the whole supply chain can then be electronically monitored and logged, regardless of location. The system, developed by several European research institutes, is said to be 'tamper-proof, and impossible to duplicate or infiltrate'. At present the system is too costly to install in anything but high-risk locations like aircraft, but similar applications such as hospital equipment could well follow soon.

SPECIALTY LABELS

There are many special label innovations, with new ones appearing every day. In this section, we look at just a few of these: re-closable labels, multi-page and 'smart' labels are examples of how ingenious ideas have been turned into profitable products to expand the global label market while helping the end-user solve a problem.

The purpose of this section is not to list exhaustively the hundreds of innovative label constructions used today. It is to draw attention to some of the more interesting and unusual recent developments and to show the ingenuity with which label converters have solved specific end-user problems, and adapted to public concerns over health, raw materials and the environment.

"THE HUMBLE INDUSTRIAL LABEL IS THE UNSUNG HERO OF THE LABEL WORLD"

MULTI-LAYER OR BOOKLET LABELS

Originally developed to meet multi-language regulatory requirements, these labels are now used by FMCG manufacturers to inform the consumer and to present special offers. They can be foldout, fold-in, peel-off or concertina. These features can be used by brand owners to build brand loyalty. Even small containers like lipstick tubes or syringes can now be labeled with extended-text labels that meet compliance requirements for products with active ingredients.

Label converters like Schreiner Medipharm are using multi-page RFID-enabled labels for hospital use. Converters like CCL Label or J.H.Bertrand have specialty plants in several locations producing booklet and multi-layer labels for food, beverage and pharmaceutical sectors.

SMART OR INTELLIGENT LABELS

When this term was first used more than 20 years ago, the 'smartness' could only be achieved through a microchip in an RFID tag. Some tags were 'active', able to transmit and receive data, most were passive, able to receive and store only. All were too expensive for mass markets, but experts foresaw the day when the 10-cent smart label would dethrone the barcode. That did not happen. The reason is partly that barcodes are by far the cheapest option, and partly that the internet and cloud computing mean that a unique QR code, data matrix or serial number can be used to transmit, receive or store 'smartness' held at a location on the web. RFID labels are being used in several end-user sectors (e.g. for registering library books), and the recent development of mandates from major retailers like Walmart and others is furthering this boom.



This article features excerpts from the Label Academy book "Label Markets and Applications"

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drupa 2024 – A to Z preview

Over 11 days, nearly 1,500 exhibitors from 50 countries will present innovative technologies and topics that affect the printing industry now and in the future as drupa returns to Düsseldorf for the first time since 2016. The L&L team has compiled a guide to help label and packaging professionals navigate through multiple halls of the German exhibition.

A B Graphic International

Hall 16, booth D10

ABG debuts and celebrates its 70th anniversary this year. The company features the Omega SRI3 label finishing system and SR (seaming rewinder).

ABG will also have a presence on the HP stand, showcasing three additional machines: a non-stop winding (NSW) technology for the HP Indigo V12 digital press running in line; DigiLase paired with DigiJet; and the Digicon Series 3 equipped with Fast Track, specifically designed to complement the finishing needs of the HP Indigo V12 Digital Press.

Acme Rolltech

Hall 12, booth D52

India-based anilox rolls and sleeves supplier debuts. The company highlight its latest Advance Channel Engravings technology, including ACE-HEX and ACE-EL, showcasing advancements in channel engravings for enhanced printing capabilities.

Alongside ACE, the company promotes specialty aniloxes, including the AHDW and ATAC 2.0, showcasing its drive for innovation and precision.

Actega

Hall 3, booth B31

Actega presents a range of products and technologies developed for sustainablity and high-value finishing options. Actega representatives will be located on numerous partner company stands and in the Touchpoint Packaging Forum.

Actega showcases its portfolio of water-based barrier coatings, and spotlight its high-value finishing portfolio. Among the samples showcased will be examples of the effects achievable with UV coatings, metallic effects, drip-off applications and tactile haptic effects.

Actega will participate in the innovative drupa platform, Touchpoint Packaging. Paolo Grasso, sales director at Actega for Ecoleaf, will share insights about Ecoleaf digital metalization technology on Thursday, May 30, at 11.00 am CET, focusing on the technology's potential to reduce the carbon footprint of the metalization process by over 50 percent compared to traditional methods. Actega's head of sustainability, Dennis Siepmann, will also speak on the topic of Towards a More Sustainable Future on Wednesday, May 29, at 11.45 am CET.

Adphos

Hall 6, booth B50

Adphos showcases the latest application-optimized and customer-specific drying and coating technologies. The focus will be on the latest generation of aLITE drying technology, based on the aNIR concept and will be presented live by numerous adphos partners in their printing and coating machines. The company also celebrates its 30th anniversary.

Agergaard Graphic Supplies

Hall 15, booth A31

Agergaard Group shows its range of printing equipment and printing consumables, including AGSflexo end seals and doctor blades for enhanced press uptime. Matched to the respective printing application, these printing consumables have been developed to ensure optimum sealing and ink metering performance in printing and coating units.

AkeBoose offers chamber doctor blade systems, ink handling systems as well as in-line printing and marking units for repeatable printing results, ease of use and low operating costs.

EKS offers printing units for flexographic printing of web and flat substrates in rough industrial areas.

Visitors from the offset industry can discover plug and play chamber doctor blade technology for in-line coating towers paired with the LQI coating supply unit, which makes it possible to efficiently process special coatings with low volume in the loop and thus very little residual varnish in the system after application.

Visitors from the flexible packaging sector can explore the all-in-one-piece Nova TK chamber system that can be operated completely tool-free.

The Nova XLS stainless steel chamber is a rigid and surface-resistant alternative to carbon fiber chambers. For printers seeking products for smooth printing

with fast-drying water-based inks, AkeBoose offers a special chamber system setup with the ESS end seal humidification unit.

Alphasonics

Hall 6, booth B42

Alphasonics shows Alphasound and Betasound technologies designed to safely and effectively clean aniloxes, irrespective of screen count. Alphasonics systems and a range of advanced ultrasonic cleaning systems have been engineered to tackle a wide range of contaminations including ink, grease, oils and more.

Anytron

Hall 5, booth B08

Anytron introduces the extended version of its in-line digital label printer, the Any-Jet II Conveyor. This printer features fast and accurate printing, built-in laminating, precise laser cutting within the machine, and the capability to deliver full-cut stickers along the conveyor, thereby saving labor costs and time.

Anytron also shows new applications for inkjet and LED toner printers.

Arjobex – Polyart

Hall 4, booth E05

Polyart Group, a specialty coating and film manufacturer, showcases three main product lines and services focussed on sustainability.

In the digital product group, the company features its new dry toner coating for Polyart and Robuskin for graphic applications and its water-based inkjet range designed for labels (including BS5609 grade).

The group also focuses on sustainability with its new range of films: r-Polyart and r-Satinex for labels; and with its new range of papers: r-Fluolux for fluorescent papers, Fiberskin and Fiberskin Tag for graphic and labels applications.

The company also promotes PolyServices, a comprehensive set of services for coating subcontracting and bespoke technologies for papers and films.

Arrow Systems

Hall 5, booth B35

Arrow Systems, a manufacturer and distributor of digital printing technology for labels and packaging, promotes the ArrowJet Aqua series, water-based pigment inkjet technology.

The ArrowJet line features ultra-high resolutions (1,600 DPI) coupled with speeds up to 60m/min and its marketed for printing digitally with water-based pigment inks.

The compact design can include in-line priming, in-line varnish, in-line lamination and more.



One of the features at the ABG booth is the new Omega SRI3 label finishing system

Asahi Photoproducts

Hall 8b, booth A13

Asahi focuses on three main themes: sustainability, printing excellence and automation as well as digital transformation.

The company shows its AWP-DEW and AWP-CleanFlat water-wash plates that are certified Carbon Neutral in collaboration with The Carbon Trust. In addition, visitors to the Asahi stand can learn how to save up to 85 percent of wastewater by using the AWP-Loop water recycling unit.

The company also displays and introduces a full range of flexographic plates designed for printing on paper, corrugated and recycled film.

Asahi also shows automation for flexographic platemaking: CrystalCleanConnect, co-developed with Esko and Kongsberg, a system that reduces the platemaking process from 12 steps to one, reducing labor, minimizing potential for error, and resulting in a press-ready plate. An additional digital service the company offers will be through its remote technical support based on either smart glass or smartphone.

Ashe Converting Equipment

Hall 11, booth A50

Ashe Converting Equipment launches Sapphire S3 Duplex slitter rewinder developed to be a fully automated duplex or duplex turret with minimal operator involvement.

For the printers of self-adhesive labels, maximum finishing efficiency can be achieved with the Opal glueless turret rewinders. The machine features a patented cut and transfer system which can apply material onto new cores at speed without the need for glue or tape and full servo control.

On display is a 540mm wide off-line machine which features automatic knife positioning. It can position 10 rotary cutters (top and bottom) in under two minutes. An automatic tail closure system is also featured on the machine.

The modular design of the Opal ISR allows the company to offer the machine in several configurations and allows users to inspect 100 percent of the print through a camera-based system.

The company also shows a 430mm wide machine featuring automatic knife positioning and duplex (two shafts) rewinding system. The camera is ergonomically mounted on the machine to ensure that any faults detected will stop prior to being slit and rewound.

AstroNova

Hall 5, booth A35

AstroNova showcases a complete line-up, from tabletop label printers to high-volume presses and a wide variety of label materials.

AV Flexologic

Hall 10, booth C10

AV Flexologic unveils RoboCell, a robotic pre-press technology comprising RoboTape for taping printing sleeves; RoboSleeve, handling taped sleeves into the plate mounters, and then delivering them to the sleeve rack; and Famm 3.0, automatically mounting multiple plates with extreme accuracy and speed.

At the AV Flexologic booth, Tech Sleeves, and Toyobo MC Corporation stands the company also introduces new pre-press mounters and equipment. Tech Sleeves will reveal the new durable printing sleeves and bridges while Toyobo will display the sustainable water-washable flexo plate Cosmolight.

Bandall

Hall 6, booth B03

Bandall promotes sustainable bundling, labeling and/or sealing, with just a strip of paper or film to save up to 80 percent of packaging material.

Bandall machines offer neat and tight bundles of any type and shape of labels. An advanced vacuum band feed-through system of the machines allows it to work quickly, flexibly and without damage to the bottom and top labels. The company offers standalone machines and state-of-the-art fully automated banding lines that can be extended with, for example, a label line and a press.


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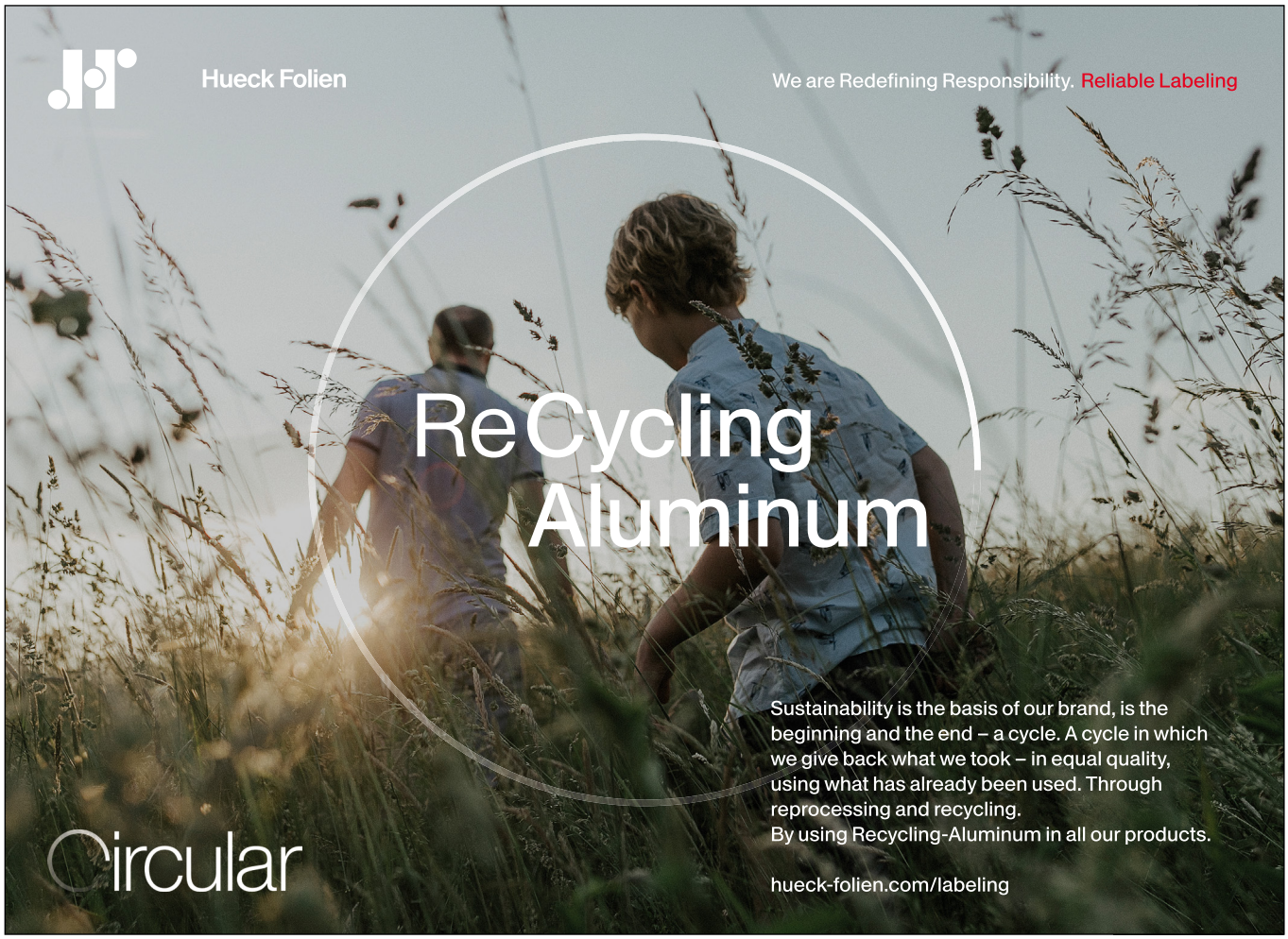
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Anytron introduces the extended version of its steady-selling in-line digital label printer, the Any-Jet II Conveyor

Bel Information Systems

Hall 7A, booth A01

Bel Information Systems showcases Overprint, its an end-to-end modular print MIS featuring an open architecture, connectivity, product customization and intuitive workflow. It is an industry-specific driven system, sharing the same environment for all segments within the carton packaging, in-mold labels, labels, flexible packaging, commercial printing, security printing and cylinder engraving.

Berhalter

Hall 11 booth D51

Swiss Die-Cutting manufacturer debuts the Swiss Die-Cutter B6, featuring the BEAMstack Robot, alongside the highly efficient Swiss Die-Cutter B4.

Paired with the BEAMstack Robot, an automated packaging system, the company demonstrates robotics to separate die-cut stacks to the desired number of pieces and automatically package them into plastic blisters or cardboard boxes.

Berhalter also showcases its IoT Service Platform, CUTcontrol, leveraging data analysis and diagnostic tools to empower users to monitor and optimize machine performance, maximize productivity and efficiency.

Blumer Maschinenbau

Hall 15, booth E20

Blumer Maschinenbau, a manufacturer of cutting, punching and banding machines for the further processing of labels, features the Atlas-1110 Double Stack, where two strips can be processed simultaneously for the first time.

Blumer also presents the AG-4220 counter-pressure die-cutter, a new technology for in-mold labels.

Visitors to the company's stand can also see a Maxi-Pack Banding module, the Atlas-40.

The company is exhibiting together with the Postpress Alliance - an association of leading print finishing companies.

Bobst

Hall 10, booth B30-1 – B30-3

In the flexible packaging space, Bobst introduces smartGRAVURE, featuring elements of automation and digitalization. It helps to overcome the important set-up time and tuning required with gravure printing, which require high level operator skills.

Also on show is the new Bobst AI-driven intelligent Metallizing Assistant representing a machine integrated process expertise for vacuum metalizing and Expertlam 900, a multi-technology coater and laminator, which is configurable in different forms.

Specifically for the labels industry, Bobst showcases a new range of Bobst Connect technologies aiming to simplify label production from pdf to print and converting. The new features allow label converters to accelerate job preparation with less dependence on operator skills, and with a more connected production floor.

In the folding carton industry, Bobst introduces the Expertcut 106 PER die-cutter, claimed to increase productivity up to 20 percent. It comes equipped with new functions, including Accuplaten, a new system that can potentially reduce the patching effort during setting and increase running speed.

Bograma

Hall 15, booth E20

Swiss machinery specialist showcases a range of equipment developed for die-cutting, kiss-cutting, creasing, perforating and embossing, offering short set-up times, die-cutting with no nicks, in-line stripping and process-optimized production.

At the joint Postpress Alliance booth, Bograma showcases technologies featuring flexibility of configuration, variety of rotary die-cutting options, integration of production processes, automated banding and placing of cut products, reduction of labor costs and increase in output.

Brotech

Hall 9, booth B20

Brotech highlights the iDM 330 Digital Embellishment System, a multifunctional machine that supports digital white, digital metal, digital varnish, variable data, barcodes/2D barcodes and braille.

The company also promotes Brotech SDF Plus, which employs a new modular and platform-based design, enabling it to switch workflow directions. The digital embellishment unit can be applied to digital white, digital metal and digital varnish.

Visitors can also see the modular design of the SDF-E Digital Label Finishing System, developed as a cost-effective and multi-functional combo. It can be expanded with a range of converting options.

Also on show is the SMS Shrink Sleeve Label Finishing System, used for seaming PVC, PET, PE, POF and other shrink film materials.

BST

Hall 10, booth C21

BST shows SmartData, a market-ready software, which can be used to centrally operate, control, analyze and optimize document production process. It integrates job data seamlessly from ERP or MIS systems.

In web guiding, BST presents a new operating concept with Commander Smart Com 100, simplifying sensor and control unit operation. Additionally, BST introduces enhanced versions of its web inspection systems, iPQ-View and ProView.

BW Converting

Hall 16, booth D20 and C21

BW Converting exhibits equipment from its Baldwin Technology, W+D and PCMC technology brands.

Baldwin Technology shows a completely redesigned LED-UV curing platform; a more powerful version of its QuadCure UV line, and an upgraded print inspection product family.

Baldwin showcases the latest generation of illumination systems and inspection cameras in a package paired with the Defender 100 percent Inspection System.

PCMC shows digitally printed flexible packaging with the ION Hybrid Digital Press, that prints up to 400ft/min, translating to an output capacity of up to 1,733sqft/min.

Also on display is the Meridian, PCMC's patented laser technology, which minimizes time, ink and waste in the anilox cleaning process. It deep cleans engravings of any line screen without increased surface temperature or hot spots.

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Canon

Hall 8b, booth B41-1 to B41-8

Canon shows the new LabelStream LS2000 digital label press for the first time outside Japan. It is designed for industrial-scale label printing and is the company's first water-based inkjet label press.

Expected to be available in the EMEA region in 2025, the device prints CMYK plus white on self-adhesive substrates, with a new ink set designed to comply with food safety standards. Visitors can see live label production on paper and film media, printing the labels on the LabelStream LS2000, which are then ready for varnishing, die-cutting and slitting on stand on a nearline converting device from Grafisk Maskinfabrik. Print samples from the Canon group company Edale FL3 flexographic label press are also available.

Thanks to its 2022 acquisition of Edale, Canon has started to establish a presence in the folding carton market and showcases an in-line folding carton production process, taking preprinted reels, embellished live on the Edale FL5 single-pass carton production line, adding either cold foil, cast, cure or varnish.

The carton will move in-line to the Edale FDC600 flatbed die-cutter for cutting, creasing, braille/embossing, and waste stripping, ultimately delivering finished carton blanks in a single pass.

Cartes

Hall 10, booth D25

Cartes shows its Gemini GE363VJL tool-free converting and embellishment line including digital printing, foiling and laser die die-cutting.

The second machine on show is the GT365 WSHJR embellishment system.

Cartes also shows its Jet D-Screen 'digital screen' unit, digital metal doming and Laser converting technology.

Chemline India

Hall 3, booth A11

Chemline showcases a wide range of adhesives and coatings for the packaging and converting industries.

Comexi

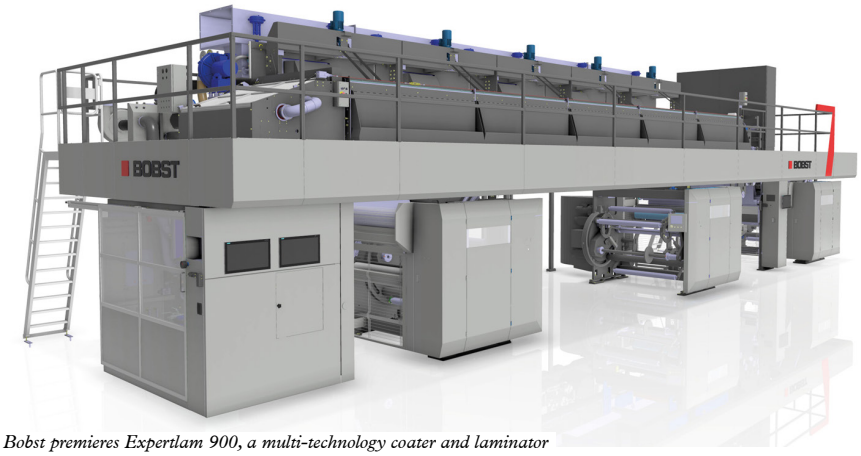
Hall 10, booth C19

Comexi premieres the new F1 Evolution press, which can print at up to 600m/min on a print width of up to 1,690mm.

It can be equipped with a robotic arm for sleeve and anilox changes, as well as other automation systems from the GeniusTech range.

Features include the Genius Board, which automatically calculates the most efficient way to carry out a job change, guiding operators step-by-step, and the new Genius Run HD system, which eliminates bouncing and barring. Comexi also shows the S2 DT slitter, equipped with dual laser heads and the new S1 DT evolution range.

The company runs two daily shows presenting all printing technologies: flexo, offset and digital.



Bobst premieres Expertlam 900, a multi-technology coater and laminator

Cosmo Films

Hall 3, booth B07

Cosmo showcases a range of thermal lamination films, including printable polyester metallized films, holography films, ID lamination, balloon films, laminating pouch films and digital lamination films. All products showcased at the stand are compatible with all types of thermal laminating machines available worldwide.

Also at the stand is the Cosmo Synthetic Paper (CSP), an alternative to traditional paper in applications where durability and longevity is important. This range, available for wide and narrow web formats, is used across several industries.

DG Press

Hall 13, booth A56
Hall 16, booth A14

DG Press showcases hybrid web offset technology with stands in halls 13 and 16.

The company also promotes its certified pre-owned options and refurbishment services in Hall 13, while new machinery is on show in Hall 16. On display are two series of hybrid web offset presses serving various markets, including flexible packaging, labels, pharma print and security print.

In the flexible packaging and label printing corner, DG press highlights its latest project for producing mono-material packaging in one pass, with industry partners, on the DG- AUXO, alongside samples of wrap-around labels, shrink sleeves, and in-mold labels.

In the security print and pharmaceutical print corner, the company promotes DG-Vision, a hybrid web offset press.

Dilli

Hall 8b, booth C11

Dilli exhibits its Neo Picasso series digital label press and wide format digital UV Inkjet printers. Neo Picasso Plus is a digital UV inkjet label press capable of printing at 600 x 1,200 DPI covering a wide range of printing widths from a minimum of 110mm to a maximum of 330mm, allowing for full color variable data printing with a user-friendly interface.

DuPont

Hall 8b, booth B13

DuPont Cyrel shows a full range of technologies for flexographic pre-press, including plates, In-the-Round (ITR) sleeves, platemaking equipment and technical support services.

Also on show is DuPont Artistri a range of digital water-based inkjet printing inks and dispersions for commercial and packaging printing delivering durability, color fastness and high image quality.

Durst Group

Hall 16, booth A41-1 to A41-2

Durst Group unveils its latest innovations, including the new KJet hybrid printing press for labels and packaging. The KJet combines dual servo flexo technology from Omet with the Durst RSCi digital print engine.

EMT International

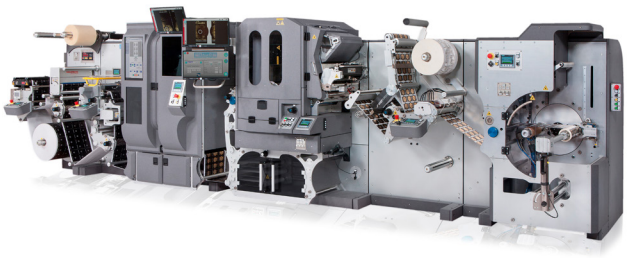
Hall 6, booth A42

EMT presents its Chameleon digital web finishing portfolio (roll-to-roll, roll-to-stack, roll-to-fold and variable lane finishing) and web transport technologies for offset, flexo and digital inkjet in addition to its STC PRO line of customizable precision components including core shafts, chucks/adapters, punches and dies.

The company also highlights the Rotocontrol EMT range of label printing and finishing equipment, including booklet and extended content labels, digital hybrid presses and inspection slitter rewinders.



Canon shows the new LabelStream LS2000 digital label press, for the first time outside Japan



Cartes will promote Gemini configured as GE363VJL to offer complete converting and high-end embellishments with no tools required

Enfocus

Hall 8b, booth A12

Enfocus joins the teams from Esko, X-Rite and Pantone for an Innovation Lab including a new AI-assisted decision-making tool for upstream packaging project specifications. Additionally, Pantone reveals a new system allowing designers to use colors in their artwork with colors that are on trend and resonant with target customers.

Epson

Hall 5, booth D20

Epson showcases its latest industrial printhead, the D3000, designed for both aqueous and UV ink applications. This is a high speed, single-pass, 1,200 DPI resolution head with nozzle-level re-circulation tailored to a range of applications such as flexible and corrugated packaging, folding cartons, labels, textiles and décor.

Esko

Hall 8b, booth A12

Esko unveils sCloud, a new cloud-native platform that includes computing, data sharing and artificial intelligence functions.

All existing Esko applications - from ArtPro+, ArtiosCAD, and Phoenix through to Cape Pack and Automation Engine - connect to the new platform, giving stakeholders in the value chain 24/7 real-time access to live data and common resources.

Esko also introduces the CDI Crystal 'Quartz Edition', adding to the family of CDI Crystal XPS plate imaging and exposing solutions.

Within the AVT family of automatic inspection systems, Esko introduces the Varnish Inspection Module for Esko AVT Helios. As an add-on module to the Helios system, the Varnish Inspection Module enables viewing and inspection of varnish and coating on various printed substrates simultaneously with print inspection. The module detects issues such as varnish misregister, partial and full starvation simultaneously with print defect detection.

ETI Converting Equipment

Hall 11, booth C71

Visitors can take a firsthand look at pressure-sensitive laminates, linerless and specialty labels produced with ETI's Cohesio, LinerO, as well as Acuro coating and lamination systems.

EyeC

Hall 3, booth A101

EyeC demonstrates the EyeC ProofRunner Web, installed on the Bobcat S rewinder from French machine supplier DCM. This in-line inspection system guarantees 100 percent print inspection for labels and flexible packaging with web widths of up to 1,700mm.

The company also promotes a new, AI-based defect classification option for the entire EyeC ProofRunner line, demonstrated for the first time. EyeC shows the scanner-based EyeC Proofiler DT line with scan formats up to 4x3 ft, as well as demos of the EyeC Proofiler Graphic artwork proofreading software.

FAG Graphic Systems

Hall 9, booth D30

The company showcases an upgraded FAG FluoSP Spectro, a spectrophotometer designed to control invisible fluorescent, inks used in anti-counterfeiting applications.

Also on show is the FAG Flex4 Pro, a flexo plate reader combined with the new FAG Relix4 for controlling flexo plate production.

Flint Group

Hall 11, booth A01-A02

Flint Group showcases the dual-curing EkoCure ink series, which eases the transition from traditional UV to UV LED curing. Narrow web printers can learn about the Evolution De-inking Primer and Caustic-Resistant Overprint Varnish (OPV) designed to enhance sustainability in packaging and to improve material yield during the recycling process. EkoCure Ancora, a food-contact material (FCM) certified ink technology with dual curing capabilities is also highlighted at the exhibition. Furthermore, for digital label printing, the company presents a range of DigiCoat varnishes to complement various digital printing techniques. Flexible packaging printers can explore the OneCode solvent-based inks and varnishes.

Fujifilm

Hall 8b, booth A02-A06

The company promotes its Jet Press FP790 water-based inkjet press for the flexible packaging market.

First announced in 2021 with commercial availability formally announced in 2023, the Jet Press FP790 enables short-run flexible packaging printing at speeds of up to 50m/min on film substrates of up to a maximum width of 790mm with a resolution of 1,200 x 1,200 DPI.

In addition to CMYK print heads, it is equipped with two sets of white print heads, improving white opacity and enhancing color saturation of the ink. It can also apply primer to the substrate before printing, providing high ink adhesion.

Gallus

Hall 1, booth B30

At the Heidelberg booth, Gallus promotes its highly automated Gallus One digital label press, claimed to have the most competitive total cost of ownership in the digital label printing industry.

The company showcases this machine with extended functionalities, including a flexo printing station and a semi-rotary die-cutter.

GEW

Hall 16, booth E01

GEW highlights its ArcLED technology, with UV Arc and quickly interchangeable UV LED lampheads. ArcLED capability is available with almost every type of GEW system installation and across a broad range of applications.

With ArcLED, both Arc and LED cassettes are compatible with the same power supply and fit in the same housing. GEW's Rhino power control system automatically recognizes the lamp type and switches the power supply accordingly.

ArcLED enables the customer to buy any combination of Arc and LED, which can be later fully upgraded to LED with minimal disruption.

GlobalVision

Hall 8b, booth C32

GlobalVision features products and services that fulfill proofreading and quality assurance requirements for regulated industries, including braille height inspection, print inspection, text inspection, barcode inspection, Cloud PDF and Proof inspection, counting systems for inserts, cartons and vials, as well as integration with Esko Automation Engines and Esko WebCenter Digital Inspection.

HanGlory Group

Hall 8B, booth B30

HanGlory introduces its LabStar 330S hybrid label press.

Henkel Adhesive Technologies

Hall 3, booth B31

Henkel showcases adhesives and coatings that help to decrease carbon footprint and enable recyclable packaging. On display is Aquence PS 3017 RE, a water-based acrylic pressure-sensitive adhesive designed for the olefinic filmic labels used for wash-off PET bottles.

The new adhesive offers excellent wash-off efficiency, even at 65 degree Celsius for PE facestock, ensuring that labels can be easily separated from bottles using less energy, while also increasing the purity and the value of recycled PET.

Aquence PS 3017 RE received the CHI Certificate confirming that the adhesive does not negatively impact on the recycling path for transparent PET bottles when used in combination with a PO label.

Hönle Group

Hall 16, booth D12

The newly-formed curing business unit of Dr Hönle showcases an extensive product portfolio, including LED-UV as well as conventional UV, inertUV and IR systems.

New in the portfolio is the LED Powerline LC HV for fast and energy-efficient curing of printing inks and varnishes. The water-cooled and variable LED-UV curing device can be used for pinning and final curing in almost any printing application: whether paper or film, whether web-shaped or 3D. The modular design allows for easy length adjustment to the application and enables variable format shutdown, resulting in significant energy savings.

HP

Hall 17, booth A01 to A01-6

HP announces the commercial availability of the HP Indigo V12 Digital Press following successful beta site installations including US-based Brook + Whittle and others. The V12 leverages new LEPx technology capable of replacing two flexo presses and is the fastest narrow web digital press on the market. HP also introduces the new generation B2 presses: the HP Indigo 120K Digital Press and the HP Indigo 18K Digital Press. HP will also introduce a new A3 sheet-fed press, the HP Indigo 7K Secure Digital Press.

In addition HP showcases the Indigo 35K HD digital press, the second-generation press for folding cartons.

The company announces its PrintOS Production Beat Support for analog printing and finishing equipment, allowing HP customers to monitor their entire production floor, not only the HP presses, capturing data in real time from analog equipment.

HP also launches the HP Indigo PQ Maestro, an intelligent start-of-day wizard that optimizes press performance, along with Autonomous Mobile Robots (AMRs).

Hybrid Software Group

The company showcases Packz, which combines automation and dedicated pre-press tools including editing and quality assurance, with a PDF editor that makes designs ready for print, whatever the printing process.

Also on show is CloudFlow, a modular workflow suite for file processing, asset management, soft proofing and workflow automation. It is a web-based application platform specifically designed for packaging graphics with support for PDF, color separation, overlay, screening and proofing.

Hybrid Software promotes its MyCloudFlow workflow system, benefiting from the power of CloudFlow in a SaaS offering, fully operated and managed by Hybrid Software.

Visitors can also see iC3D package design software which helps users generate live 3D virtual models on the fly.

INX International Ink

Hall 3, booth E83

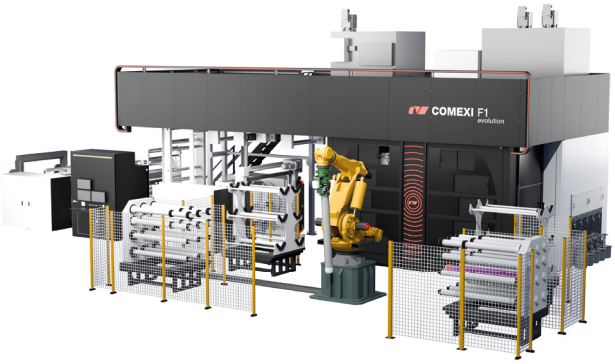
INX presents a broad range of inks, coatings and color management technologies.

INX showcases technology for making it easier to recycle products and promotes the development of circular economies, including the improved functional barriers that enable the use of mono material structures; the use of color-fast washable inks such as the Genesis GS series inks that are easily removed in the recycling process; and inks and coatings that are designed to be highly robust for multiple re-use and returnable applications.

Isra Vision

Hall 10, booth A28

Isra Vision presents developments from its range of in-line



Comexi premieres the F1 Evolution and showcases its range of flexo printers



Dilli exhibits digital label press, Neo Picasso series

KURZ

rethink what's possible.

"With pride we use this mentality to take the possibilities of embellishment to the next level."

Markus Hoffmann
Member of the Management Board



Hall 3
E 71

drupa

Find out more

inspection for the printing and packaging industry.

The company presents a new version of PrintSTAR Evo for inspecting flexible packaging, featuring the new 'Static Code Reading' function checking the legibility of barcodes and QR codes.

PrintSTAR Evo's enhanced camera technology ensures better detection of typical printing errors such as splashes and spots, missing ink, register errors, streaks and drags as well as dirt. The system also still includes a 'MultiView' mode, in which multiple camera banks simultaneously carry out inspection tasks.

IST Metz

Hall 1, booth A24 to A24-1

IST Metz celebrates the instalation of 100,000th curing device (UV, UV LED and Excimer).

On display are UV lamps and UV LED systems, thermal drying technologies and excimer systems. The HotSwap product concept is also a focal point, offering more flexibility for switching on narrow web presses between mercury and UV-LED lamps.

The product presentation is rounded off by the UV Analyzer measuring device. The combination of UV app (compatible with Android and iOS), measuring strips and Analyzer Stick offers a handy tool for quality assurance and documentation of common UV and LED systems.

Jurmet

Hall 11, booth D32

Jurmet presents a new model of its compact duplex slitter Winder3. It includes a shaftless unwinding station, an automatic knife positioning system, a maximum rewinding diameter of 800mm (31.5in), a pushing bar for finished reels, automatic core positioning system using a laser beam and a splicing table.

The company also showcases Master3 for slitting a range of flexible materials with precise tension control and automatic knife setting and laser beam-controlled core positioning. The machine can incorporate a range of external devices including a punching unit, inspection solutions or an inkjet station.



HP also announces the commercial availability of the HP Indigo V12 Digital Press following highly successful beta site installations

Katun

Hall 5, booth A36

The Katun Digital Printing Solutions (KDPS) division promotes the use of sustainable water-based pigment inks for the label and flexible packaging market. The company showcases several different machines.

KDPS has partnered with Arrow Systems to demonstrate the capabilities of the Arrowjet roll-to-roll printing machine and finishing equipment.

Kocher + Beck

Hall 1, booth A24

Kocher+Beck partners with IST Metz to present the latest developments in embossing and cutting technologies, from precision in-line offset cutting to intricate in-line offset embossing.

The company showcases its collaboration with IST Metz and Heidelberg to offer a comprehensive range of technologies including UV curing on state-of-the-art presses.

Konica Minolta

Hall 8b, booth A40-1 to A40-6

The company showcases 20 European premieres, offering the biggest live demonstrations of its machines ever shown.

Among the highlights are completely automated production lines driven by AI, a state-of-the-art webshop and never-before-seen use of robotics– including major advances in remote service engineering.

Labels and packaging systems incorporating digital embellishment are in the spotlight.

Kurz

Hall 3, booth E71

Kurz presents a wide range of finishing products and technologies from hot stamping, cold transfer, to digital printing.



GEW highlight its ArcLED technology, with UV Arc and UV LED lampheads that can be simply and quickly interchanged on a press

Kurz subsidiaries Steinemann DPE, MPrint Hinderer + Mühlich (H+M), and Kurz Digital Solutions also join in with live demonstrations.

On display is DM-Maxliner 3D, one of the fastest machines for haptic digital embellishment, UV spot and relief varnishing.

The company also reveals the DM-Maxliner 2D for digital metallization on a variety of substrates, as well as the MPrint 4C inkjet printing unit for late-stage customization.

Visitors can also discover new products and unique finishes like the achromatic and luxurious Kurz Silver Line with security options rounding off the portfolio.

Lemu Group

Hall 11, booth B04

LemuGroup shows a wide range of equipment for paper bags, envelopes and label insertion applications. On top of the e-Comm 3 paper bag and envelope machine, the company also shows LI 220 RFID smart label inserter, equipped with delam-relam system for accurate insertion of smart inlays.

Lundberg Tech

Hall 11, booth D66

Lundberg Tech displays a selection of waste handling technologies, including the new SheetCutter. It comes in 1100 and 1650 models and is designed to cut materials from paper to plastic skeletons and matrixes.

With a cutting width of up to 1650 mm, the SheetCutter features a modular Granulator rotor/fixed knife system, with each module measuring 275 mm, making it suitable for wide rigid materials.

Martin Automatic

Hall 11, booth D69

Martin Automatic exhibits its MBS automatic unwind butt/splicer and an LRD automatic rewinder.

The MBS is designed for non-stop unwinding in label converting, flexible packaging, light paperboard, pouch, and bag production and with specialty performance webs like filter media and resilient non-woven webs, as used in the construction industries.

The LRD is Martin's two-spindle non-stop rewinder for label, flexible packaging, pouch, and bag production and use with



Konica Minolta showcases 20 European premieres, pioneering digital transformation and live demonstrations of the biggest machines it has ever shown

many other specialty webs for narrow to mid-web processes. Its design allows production versatility that includes slitting, winding, and roll handling, with automatic roll unloading – no carts or operator intervention.

Miraclon

Hall 15, booth F50

Miraclon previews the next generation Flexcel NX Plate and Flexcel NX Ultra Plate, LED-optimized plate technologies that offer even cleaner printing for greater efficiency and sustainability benefits.

Nicely Machinery Development

Hall 12, booth E41

Nicely showcases slitter-rewinder technologies for applications including sustainable papers, labels, pharma-related materials and technical film packaging.

The EG-8002 on show is a model engineered to cater to a wide range of slitting applications, including large-format label materials (PSA), film, and composite paperboard food packaging. It accommodates roller widths up to 2,600mm, with a maximum roll of 1,200mm diameter and speeds of up to 88 m/min.

Also on show is the EG-7009, a model developed especially for pharmaceutical materials. It is a duplex shaft slitter rewinder. While it offers a smaller roll diameter (900mm) it maintains operational speeds of up to 600 m/min.

Omet

Hall 10, booth B10

Omet presents the mid-web Varyflex V4 UV offset press in widths 670mm (26in) and 850mm (33in), featuring a newly designed accessible offset print unit. The use of lightweight sleeves and the availability of a Revolver Cart for sleeve replacement are part of the so-called Easy Sleeve Format Change patented by Omet.

OneVision Software

Hall 8A, booth A40

OneVision demonstrates its software live showcasing functions such as automated print form generation, imposition, nesting, step and repeat, tiling, bleed generation and cut line management.

Pantec

Hall 3, booth D02

Pantec showcases its broad portfolio of embellishment technologies ranging from narrow to wide web. On show is the Rhino flatbed embossing system suitable for enhancing labels and flexible packaging.

Pantec also presents the Cheetah N rotary embellishment system applying individual 3D images to shrink sleeves. They are applied by heat and pressure from a carrier film, with speeds of up to 20 images per second, imitating a three-dimensional effect which is not possible using conventional embossing.

Plockmatic Group

Hall 8B, booth A41-1 to A41-2

The company launches three new label cutting technologies designed for custom finished labels.

The ColorCut LC330, is a compact automatic label sheet cutter perfect for unattended operation. It includes a 150-sheet auto feeder capable of handling sheet labels up to 330mm wide x 483mm long and is suitable for all common label sizes, delivering up to 800mm/s cutting speed and a maximum force of 500g of pressure.

The ColorCut's Professional series LC700 Pro label cutter is an automatic sheet label cutter for high-volume label producers. It is simple to use, provides high-speed precision cutting of up to 1,200mm/s and up to 760g of pressure.

The flagship model on show, the LCF700 Pro, is a versatile hybrid label cutter. It takes 330mm width rolls with a maximum outer diameter 350mm and includes a laminating station to apply laminates before cutting.

Postpress Alliance

Hall 15, booth E20

The Postpress Alliance, comprising baumannperfecta, Bograma, H+H, Hohner, MBO, and Wohlenberg, alongside co-exhibitors Blumer Maschinenbau AG, NBS AG, and the financial service provider PEAC Solutions occupy nearly 1,300 square meters of space as they unite under the theme 'Better together. One vision - infinite Solutions'.

Prati

Hall 16, booth A42

Prati spotlights the DigiCompact converting and finishing line for self-adhesive labels and digitally printed flexible packaging that, in a compact design, can process a wide range of materials and perform a variety of finishing and embellishing processes.

It can convert and finish materials between 12 and 350 microns, switching from self-adhesive paper and plastic labels to heat-shrink and wrap-around labels, with either reel-to-reel, reel-to-sheet or reel-to-label processing. The machine is available in three widths - 370, 400 and 450mm - with working speeds in semi-rotary mode up to 70m/min, and in rotary mode up to 200m/min.

Radix

Hall 7A, booth D21

The company showcases upgrades to its OnPrintShop software package, featuring real-time product previews and 3D packaging design to faster quote estimates in label and packaging production. Printers can instantly generate new and unique packaging designs from scratch or use a vast library of pre-defined templates.

Re

Hall 12, booth A45

Re launches ReVision NET, a new web viewing system designed for print quality control to capture and reproduce printed details on the monitor with accurate color. Also shown are the Re web guiding system, web handling and web tension controls.

RK PrintCoat Instruments

Hall 3, booth D51

RK PrintCoat Instruments, a pre-press color communication specialist, showcases its award-winning FlexiProof 100 machine, featuring a custom-designed LED UV unit.

It is developed to enable users and producers of UV flexo inks to resolve quality control issues, color match and determine process fundamentals such as printability, gloss, scuff and chemical resistance.

RK also promotes a range of sample preparation equipment, including the VCML Pilot Coater, GP100, Esi Proof, K303s and K Hand Coater.

Sandon Global

Hall 15, booth A12

Sandon Global showcases anilox engravings helping to tackle common print challenges such as ink spitting or coatings with large particle deposits. Sandon's technical experts are on hand to explain why alternative engravings rival standard 60deg cell designs with greater precision, quality and consistency plus improved efficiencies and cost-savings.

Booth visitors can also learn more about Sandon's in-house manufacture of anilox rollers, mandrels, sleeves, and end-rings, its manufacturing processes, quality standards, unique EDT for corrosion resistance and metallurgical laboratory.

The company also participates in the Packaging Printing Technology and Innovation Tour led by Anke Frieser Tausch, technical head of the DFTA Technology Center on June 6.

Schobertechnologies

Hall 11, booth A51

Schobertechnologies showcases rotary cutting and punching machines, equipped with the latest Sinamics drives and control systems. They use an efficient energy management process, which, thanks to the coordinated elements of the drive train, leads to a gain in energy efficiency of up to 10 percent.

The company promotes the RSM410 IML/MX with Twin Spider, specially designed for high-speed cutting and stacking of in-mold labels. Its drive technology combines continuous and vector rotary cutting in an in-setting process. It offers a programmable, robot-controlled, high-speed stacking and counting system enabling stacking different products with the same print image.

The company also promotes integrated rotary processing systems for creasing, embossing, cutting, punching, transferring and sealing.

Screen

Hall 8A, booth A03

Screen displays the Truepress Label 350UV SAI S inkjet range of UV presses with a newly developed digital primer unit for label printing.

Also on show is Truepress PAC 520P, an inkjet press using water-based food compliant inks for paper packaging, helping converters and brand owners achieve their sustainability goals.

Visitors can also see the Truepress PAC 830F inkjet system for flexible packaging films and delve into the intricacies of achieving digital printing on flexible packaging using water-based food compliant inks.

The company also presents a range of label and packaging samples utilizing eco-friendly base materials, introducing sustainable and productivity-enhancing options for digital inkjet printing of small and medium lot jobs.

Seiko

Seiko Instruments' printhead division unveils its 600 DPI Acrobat RCE2560 printhead. The RCE2560 features true recirculation, isolated channel technology, and integrated waveform controllers.

With 2560 strategically distributed nozzles across four rows over a printing width of 108.3 mm, the RCE2560 delivers exceptional printing performance within a compact footprint. The recirculation system facilitates a high flow rate directly behind the nozzles, resulting in superior print quality and consistency.

One of the key highlights of the RCE2560 is its versatility, offering multiple grey levels with a drop volume range from 9 to 20 pl along with the possibility to accommodate various fluid types, including aqueous, solvent-, oil-, or UV-based inks.

Shenzen Zolo Packaging technology

Hall 3, booth E22

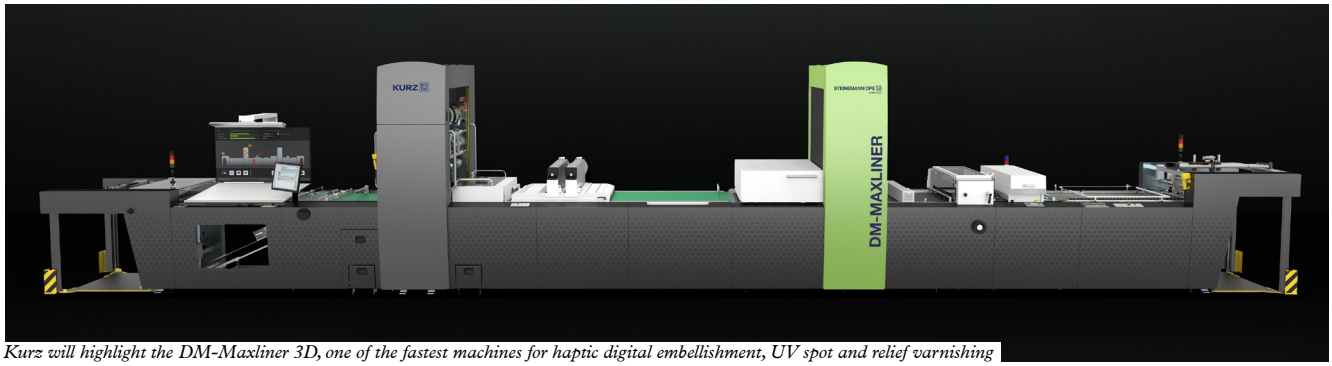
Shenzhen Zolo promotes security VOID labels and materials, tamper evident security tapes, hologram stickers, holographic film, self-destructive stickers and materials, water sensitive labels and other different types of security packing products.

Zolo showcases the latest label for anti-counterfeit and anti-theft use. Once peeled off or opened, the preset message or hidden text will be revealed on the labels, or leave residue on the application surface.

Sistrade

Hall 7A, booth A02

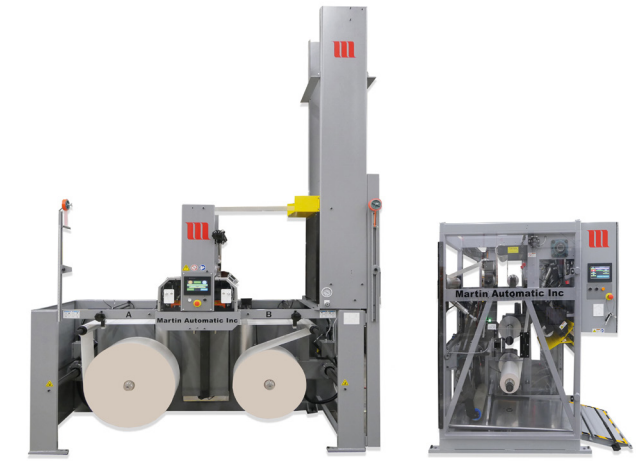
Sistrade unveils its latest software emphasizing the importance of process definition in the printing industry. The company showcases the new features in version 12.15. Called the technical data sheet (TDS), this feature allows products to be defined based on their production process flow including all the technical details for each process step.



Kurz will highlight the DM-Maxliner 3D, one of the fastest machines for haptic digital embellishment, UV spot and relief varnishing



Omet presents the mid-web Varyflex V4 UV offset press combining the advantages of Varyflex presses with powerful offset technology



The MBS shown at drupa will be delivered to Desmedt Labels in Belgium after the trade fair closes



Prati highlights DigiCompact, a converting and finishing line for self-adhesive labels and digitally printed flexible packaging



Screen displays Truepress Label 350UV SAI S inkjet range of UV presses with a newly developed digital primer unit for label printing

Taghleef Industries

Hall 5, booth C02

Taghleef Industries features its Derprosa brand, including the new Leather and Soft Touch 4x4 films. Leather films offer a realistic replication of genuine leather's luxurious texture, while soft touch 4x4 goes a step further by combining a luxuriously soft feel with exceptional fingerprint and scratch resistance.

Promoted at the show is Derprosa reLIFE, the range of BOPP laminated films using ISCC Plus certified resins obtained from post-consumer chemically recycled (PCR) plastic sources. Also on show is Derprosa bioBLUE, the range of BOPP laminated films using certified resins of residual vegetable origin, such as second-generation BIO feedstock (waste cooking oil).

Technotrans

Hall 1, booth B10

Technotrans premieres the alpha.c combination unit for dampening solution preparation and ink unit temperature control with the natural refrigerant R290.

Also on display is the established beta.c eco combination unit with high-precision measurement, control and dosing technology, along with effective water inlet control. In addition, technotrans showcases a resource-saving dampening solution purification system that requires no consumables.

In the offset sector, the conventional and UV ink supply is a particular focus of the exhibition, with precise measurement and dosing. In thermal management, technotrans concentrates on its new ECOtec.chiller xtend with natural refrigerant R290.

For packaging printing applications, technotrans presents integrated cooling systems for UV drying units.

Tecnau

Hall 8A, booth B41

Tecnau highlights finishing equipment helping converters on their digital journey, adding new applications, reducing cost with automation and boosting productivity thanks to systems connectivity and KPI control.

There are 15 pieces of equipment on display, seven in its booth and eight in partner stands, including the new Revolution 50, RoboTEC and TecnauConnect software with enhanced connectivity, production monitoring, and performance improvement across Tecnau portfolio.

Teknova

Hall 4, booth B41

Teknova promotes water-based varnishes and water-based flexo ink for various applications. The company also highlights products from the range of manufacturers it represents such as Baldwin, tesa, marks.3zet, Samoa Group Betz, Cheshire Anilox, IST-UV, LeadEdge and HB Fuller.

MDC DOCTOR BLADES

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Daetwyler
SwissTec

Theurer
Hall 9, booth D06
The company presents its C3.2020 ERP/MIS software with templates for label printing, folding carton and flexible packaging - including extrusion. As a browser-based version, C3 Mobile enables viewing of the C3 client on the move with a smartphone or tablet.

Toyo Ink
Hall 8A, booth C01
Toyo Ink Europe Specialty Chemicals showcases an updated lineup of inkjet inks and its expanding manufacturing footprint and capabilities.

The group features its inkjet ink portfolio including water-based, UV and UV LED inks for the packaging market, particularly for labels.

The group also provides a preview of its next-generation inkjet systems and processes with the lowest possible environmental impact. This includes advanced UV LED and low-energy-drying, water-based technology.

Tresu
Hall 10 / booth B21
Tresu presents the next generation automation system for the Tresu Flexo Innovator printing press and an off-line Tresu iCoat II sheet fed coater for digital printing as well as the new Tresu InkFlex ink supply system. The company also presents modular service concepts and genuine spare parts.

Troika Systems
Hall 6 Stand B48
Troika Systems showcases AniCAM HD Plus, MagneCAM HD Plus and SurfaceCAM HD, covering key areas including accurate 3D anilox measurement and cylinder and plate inspection, as well as addressing sustainability goals.

Uflex
Hall 9, boothC30
Flexible packaging provider displays a CI flexo press along with the Combi laminator. Alongside printing equipment, the other businesses areas of Uflex, including holography, packaging films and chemicals, will also be promoted.

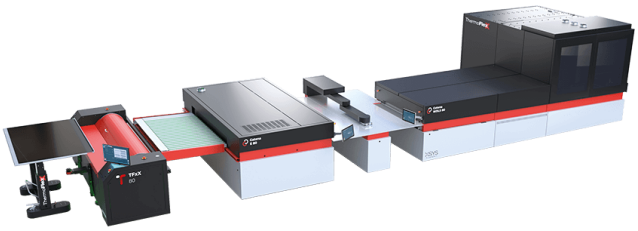
Univacco
Hall 3, booth A33
Univacco, highlights various decorative and functional films which cover hot stamping, cold transfer, holographic transfer, and digital transfer systems. Its sustainable films are on display including the r-Lite series and Zero Virgin Plastic Carrier, along with its innovative methods for transforming used film into valuable recyclable materials. Attendees can see live hot stamping demonstrations using the Gietz FSA 870 Compact machine.

X-Rite Pantone
Hall 8b, booth A12
X-Rite unveils Autura Ink, a cloud-based ink formulation software package leveraging X-Rite's InkFormulation software, streamlining all aspects of formulation, storage, approval, retrieval, and quality control for offset, flexo, gravure and screen-printing inks. With integrated BestMatch technology and the ability to better manage assortments, Autura Ink helps drive efficiency and reduce waste.

X-Rite also announces expanded capabilities for the PantoneLIVE digital color library suite. Private Library Manager targets packaging brands striving for meticulous color uniformity across their products and communications. With the new ability to add custom brand colors to the PantoneLIVE ecosystem, brands can leverage pure spectral values throughout the production process to reproduce brand colors on a variety of substrates using various printing technologies and ink types.



Xeikon debuts the PX3300HD, a 1,200 DPI digital, 5-color machine offering a 330mm printing width and speeds up to 70m/min


Xsys runs live demos of the award-winning ThermoFlexX Catena+ fully automated plate processing line

Xeikon
Hall 11, booth A01-A02
Xeikon is showcasing its world premiere – the Xeikon PX3300HD, a 1,200 DPI digital 5-color machine offering a 330mm printing width and speeds up to 70m/min, even with high opacity white. It utilizes a new PX-Cure LED HD ink series, to ensure high-quality curing. In the flexible packaging section, the company showcases its Xeikon Titon technology, which ensures food safety even when printing on paper-based flexible packaging, meeting stringent requirements for temperature, chemical and mechanical resistance within these applications.

Xsys
Hall 8B, booth A30
Xsys launches a range of new technologies, including the nyloflex eco series, Catena ProServX, and new pre-press software.

Other highlights include live demos of the award-winning ThermoFlexX Catena+ fully automated plate processing line, Woodpecker surface screening patterns for improved quality and reduced ink usage, as well as the expansive portfolio of rotec precision-engineered sleeves and adapters for process optimization.

The nyloflex eco series helps converters reduce their environmental impact.

The company also spotlights the recently launched nyloflex FTV plate, an LED-optimized, inherent flat-top dot plate, engineered specifically for the high-quality flexible packaging market.

Xsys also launches Catena ProServX, a cloud-based, real-time equipment monitoring tool for proactive maintenance and quality control.

Scan the QR code for more information, including floor maps available on the drupa website



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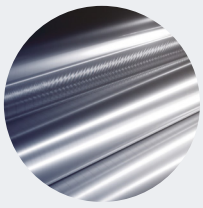
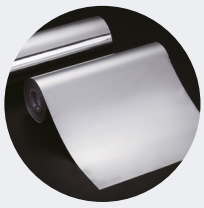
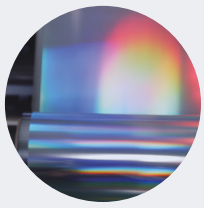


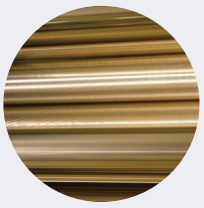
Sheet-fed Offset Cold Foil



Narrow-web Cold Foil



Holographic Foil



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Products require labeling

Information printed on labels provides the conditions for correct distribution, traceability, smooth workflows and economic calculability. Printing operations are individual. Print volumes and widths are directives, so are label sizes and print image quality. cab offers solutions in printing, dispensing and applying labels, with or without liner material.

Fully automatic printing and applying

When applying printed labels onto goods, industrial companies demand equipment capable of high processing speeds. Processing variable data and goods succeeding each other at short intervals on a conveyor each play a role. Whether goods are in motion or at rest at the time of label transfer is another factor, so is the direction from which the labels are applied.

cab print and apply systems have proven their worth in this respect. **SQUIX** print units, but in particular **HERMES Q**, can be added by applicators. Depending on an operation, labels may be pressed onto goods, rolled on along a belt or blown onto a surface from a distance by compressed air. Labels can as well be wrapped around cylindrical items, attached to lab samples, or applied as flags to cables. cab has just developed a table tray for depositing printed labels. These may be picked up by a robot, for example. In cases of an operation changing, the applicator can be replaced. The modular concept is worldwide due to standardization. Adding an UHF RFID read/write module and a RFID antenna to a printer enables Smart Label operations.

cab Produkttechnik GmbH & Co KG
Wilhelm-Schickard-Str. 14
76131 Karlsruhe, Germany
info@cab.de, **www.cab.de**



Smart, highly flexible, future-proof

cab print and apply systems are designed for a wide range of operations, highly adaptable and integrable to automation plants. All necessary interfaces, Industry 4.0 protocols included, are provided for this purpose. cab has digitally modeled an interface that enables cab equipment be used immediately in automation and robotics solutions. cab printers, or print and apply systems, are therefore integrated to the development software of a German startup company. They thus comply with other modules of the marketplace kit. Individual integration to process technology requires minimum effort.

Label trends: RFID Revolution

The RFID market is projected to reach 40.9 billion USD by 2032. This promising market is being propelled by several key factors and the label industry is crucial for successful deployment.

Current:
15.8 billion USD

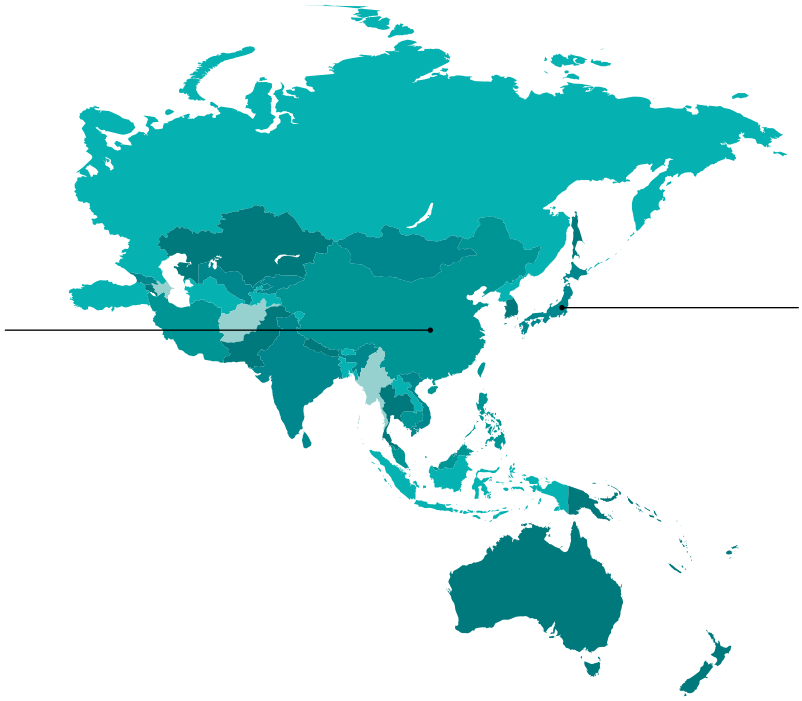
By 2032:
40.9 billion USD

CAGR:
11.1 percent

Growth attributed to:

- Increased demand for logistics and supply chain applications
- Enhancing productivity
- Increasing inventory management
- Availability of affordable RFID solutions
- Growing number of government and brand initiatives

Highest CAGR: Asia-Pacific



Due to availability of low-cost RFID tags in China and rising healthcare and logistics applications

Fastest growing market in the region: Japan

Largest Applications:

- Logistics
- Retail
- Security & Access control
- Agriculture
- Defense

Source: Markets and Markets

Label SOCIETY

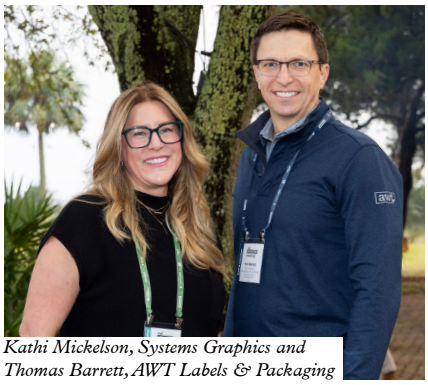
The TLMI Converter Meeting was hosted in Sea Island, Georgia from March 3-5



Marco Acevedo, Precision AirConvey and Timothy Bohlke, Resource Label Group



Matthew Misterka, American Label Products; John and Kimberly Crosby, Grand Rapids Label



Kathi Mickelson, Systems Graphics and Thomas Barrett, AWT Labels & Packaging



Kristen Shields, Graymills; Mark and Margie Glendenning, Inland Labels and Packaging; Patrick Potter, Flexo Wash



Doug Bartlett, All Printing Resources; John Signet from ID Imagess; Esteban Garcia, Cerm



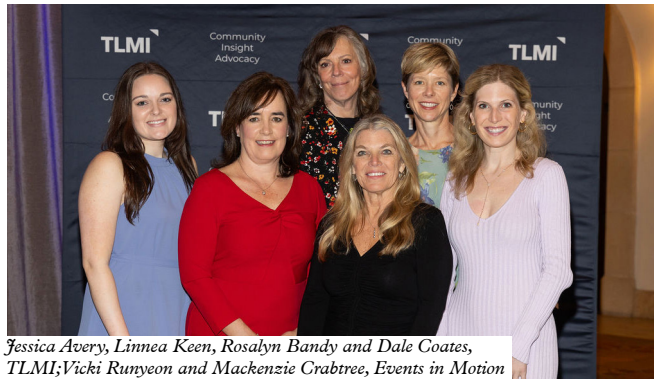
Jeff and Ginny Dowd, Belmark



Cindy White, Channeled Resources; Jennye Sott, Berry Global; Calvin Frost, Chnneled Resources



Andy Staib and Hannah Staib, DWS Printing Associates Awt



Jessica Avery, Linnea Keen, Rosalyn Bandy and Dale Coates, TLMI;Vicki Runyeon and Mackenzie Crabtree, Events in Motion



Michelle Zeller, Thomas Barrett, Bruce Hanson and Charlie MacLean, AWT Labels & Packaging

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