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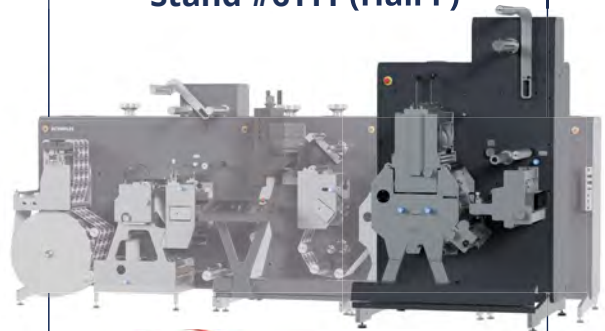
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L&L

– Meet the team

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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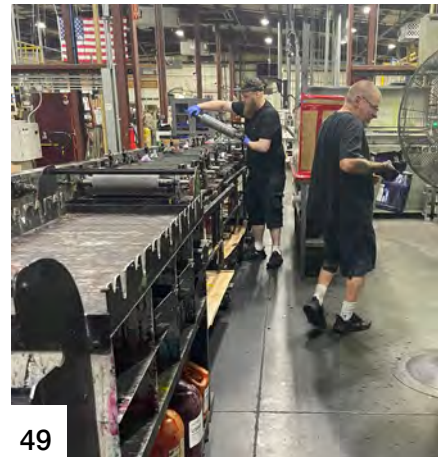
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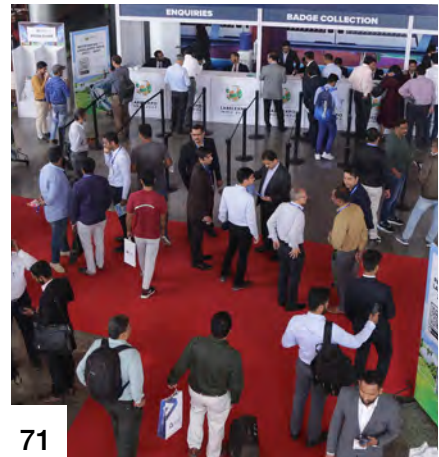
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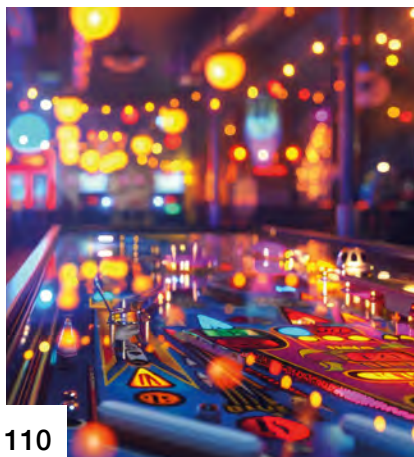
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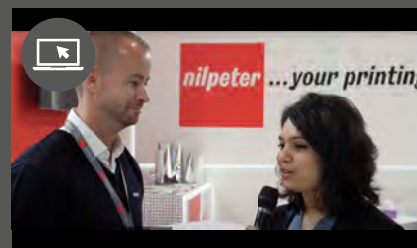
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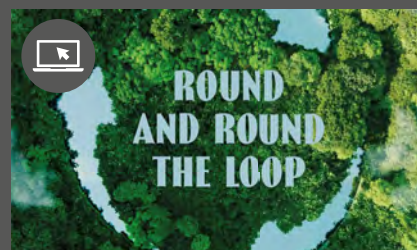
Nilpeter exhibits for the first time at GPP (video)

Akanksha Meena speaks with Martin Fjordlund Teilberg in Dubai



Read L&L Issue 2 online (magazine)

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Round and round the loop (feature)

Circular economy represents a crucial approach to sustainability



Flexible packaging (Label Academy)

The wrapper itself acts as both the packaging and the label

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L&L looks back (*L&L issue 3, 2002*)



P16 Jennifer Dochstadter visited Raflatrac's new Fletcher, North Carolina, manufacturing facility on the first anniversary of its grand opening. Despite a challenging year for the North American printing industry, Raflatrac has continued to grow and succeed. When Raflatrac's US facility opened its doors, the coating operation was running 24 hours a day, five days a week.



P30 Andy Thomas reported from Switzerland, where Permapack was field-testing the servo-driven Gallus RCS 330 press following its launch at Labelexpo in Europe and the Americas. At the time, Gallus' servo-driven offset presses were selling in increasing numbers. Almost half the Gallus TCS 250 presses sold were at offset printers, particularly in the wine labels sector.



P62 Following its takeover of Cincinnati-based Roto Press, Nilpeter showed for the first time the new FB-series press based around an enhanced Roto Press design. Andy Thomas assessed the technology and its target market during the open house event held by Nilpeter at the UK company's new purpose-built sales, service and demonstration facility near Hull in East Yorkshire.



P84 L&L team has been preparing for Labelexpo Americas 2002, the most important event in its 16-year history. Our team rounded up new products on show - everything from digital presses to the latest materials and equipment. Visitors were expected from all over the world, including Europe, Australasia and the Far East, including Japan and Korea.

Labelexpo Americas 2024 preview

Editor's note

As the industry counts down to Labelexpo Americas 2024, the Labels & Labeling team has been working hard on putting together a comprehensive event preview to help you plan your visit. This issue should be used as a guide to help you navigate the aisles of the Donald E Stephens Convention Center.

A few trends are emerging before the doors to Labelexpo Americas open this September.

RFID is advancing as a game-changing technology that all label converters can benefit from paying attention to.

Ever since Walmart and other retailers committed to RFID mandates on to most categories of products they sell, every converter in the US now needs to understand these mandates and what they mean in terms of new equipment and workflows and how RFID labels will tie into a brand's wider supply chain.

Flexible packaging is altering

“For any entrepreneurial label converter, RFID and flexible packaging represent major opportunities to expand their businesses”

the industry and, in many ways, transforming Labelexpo into a mid-web show. The US flexible packaging market represents a huge growth opportunity for the label market. The flexible packaging industry is valued at 63.46 billion USD, and is expected to grow 4.1 percent each year to 2030. Short runs are disrupting the flexible packaging industry in the same way it did with labels with the rise of challenger brands, start ups and personalized packaging.

For any entrepreneurial label converter, RFID and flexible packaging represent major opportunities to expand their businesses.

Sustainability continues to force the industry into action to develop sustainable materials

as part of a broad effort to minimize waste and improve the recyclability of labels and labeling byproducts. Overall, the label industry's commitment to sustainability is reflected on the Labelexpo show floor with the adoption of greener materials, innovative technologies, and collaborative efforts to create a more sustainable label industry.

Automation and artificial intelligence are the latest buzzwords, but we expect converters to be prepared to ask label industry suppliers what they are doing on this front, as a labor shortage wages on and AI promises to shape the future. At Labelexpo, we can expect to see AI-driven quality control, vision systems, and job planning, as well as meaningful

data collection and real-time analytics to drive manufacturing decisions.

Labelexpo, in many ways, holds a mirror for the industry's latest trends. It's the only place to see cutting-edge technology and groundbreaking products and hear market-leading insight tailored to our dynamic and ever-evolving industry.

I've said it before, but I'll say it again. There's only one place to see all this technology under one roof, and all roads lead to Chicago.

Chelsea McDougall
Group managing editor

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INX Booth #129

Installations



HP Indigo multi-unit investment All4Labels, multi-sites

The new investment is aimed at bolstering All4Labels' portfolio in the journey to better connect brands with consumers through global, digital, sustainable, just-in-time, just-in-sequence product offerings. With its multi-unit press deal, the company is expanding its digital footprint further with a significant investment that includes several units of HP Indigo V12, HP Indigo 200K and the enhanced version of the HP PageWide Advantage 2200. The deal was announced at drupa 2024, and the early units of the agreement are expected to be deployed in various geographies during the summer of 2024. See page 33 to read more about All4Labels expansion plans.

Screen Truepress Label 350UV SAI Sturdy Print, United Kingdom

The converter opted for a Screen Truepress Label 350UV SAI 7 color machine in response to the growing demand and lucrative margins within the high-end labels sector. 'With this new UV inkjet press, we were able to "future-proof" our company,' said Alex Sturdy, production manager at family-owned Sturdy Print. 'Flexo print is not always a viable option for meeting the growing demand for small print orders. At the same time, we see good opportunities in producing labels for nutrient and personal care suppliers, who often require higher-end labels. The agile and flexible nature of digital inkjet enables us to meet these requirements with much faster turnaround times.'



Lombardi Invicta i1 Li Sheng Color Printing, Taiwan

Taiwanese flexible packaging converter Li Sheng Color Printing invested in a Lombardi Converting Machinery Invicta i1 800 10-color machine with combined UV LED, traditional UV and air-drying technology. This is the first Invicta i1 to be installed in the country. 'We are excited to partner with Li Sheng Color Printing and to be a part of its continued growth and success,' said Nicola Lombardi, marketing manager at Lombardi Converting Machinery. 'The Invicta i1 800 is a testament to our commitment to innovation and excellence in the printing industry. We look forward to seeing the positive impact this advanced machine will have on Li Sheng's production capabilities and the value it will bring to its customers.'

Nilpeter FB-350

WT Nickell Label Company, United States

The Ohio-based family-owned business expanded its capabilities in the pressure-sensitive label market by adding a new Nilpeter FB-350 printing press. This acquisition marks the second FB-350 press, that WT Nickell has installed in the past three years, signifying a strong period of growth and a solid partnership with Nilpeter. With the new press, WT Nickell has seen a quality improvement that benefits its customers significantly. Rick Meyer, president and co-owner of WT Nickell Label Company, said: 'Working with Nilpeter again was an easy decision. They understand our needs and don't push unnecessary equipment on us. The local connection and support have been outstanding.'



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Hall F Stand 5601



Installations



Konica Minolta AccurioLabel 230

James Labels, United Kingdom

With 23.4m/min print speeds, and a native 1,200 x 1,200 DPI resolution, the output quality is claimed to compete favorably against other high-end digital presses which cost three to four times the price. The press can run standard 330mm width coated paper, uncoated paper and polypropylene label materials with no special pre-coating. James Labels joint managing director, Andrew James commented: 'We had been researching digital label presses for some time but kept coming back to the AccurioLabel 230. For the price and the footprint size, there isn't another press available, which gives us the high print quality and variable data facility we need. As well as selecting the most suitable press, we were also conscious of choosing a reputable and reliable supplier.'

Bobst Master M5

Tungate Group, United Kingdom

British packaging and label supplier invested in a Bobst Master M5 flexo press to enhance its narrow web production capacity, reaching significant savings in ink and energy use. The investment in the Master M5 press marks a significant milestone for Tungate Group, established in 1984. The decision to invest in the 630mm-wide flexo press with UV LED lamps for curing will enable the company to meet customer demands efficiently while driving innovation, cost control and sustainability in its operations. Kevin Paszek, managing director of Tungate Group, said: 'As a high-performing packaging and label supplier, we see a lot of challenges in the industry. For example, substrate availability and lead times, particularly on recyclable material, as well as rising business energy costs.'



Durst Tau 340 RSC, HP Indigo 200K

Bakers, United Kingdom

Brentwood-based converter sealed two major deals at drupa 2024. A new HP Indigo 200K will expand its BakPac flexible packaging division, and a new Durst Tau 340 RSC will be used for its labels division. 'We have been seriously impressed with the performance and productivity levels of the 200K that we installed in January this year,' commented Steve Baker. 'This has enabled us to go for and win larger contracts with confidence which is excellent news for our business.' At the Durst stand, Tom Baker negotiated an inkjet press. The Durst TAU 340 RSC will be Baker Labels' first investment with Durst. Tom Baker said: 'This press will take our inkjet quality to a new level. The team will be excited to get their hands on this one.'

Edale FL5

Kava, China

Announced at drupa 2024, Jiangsu-based Kava is to install a flexo-based FL5 press and servo-driven web-fed FDC-600 flatbed die-cutter, creating a fully in-line single-pass carton production system. Notably, the investment saw the first Edale machine installed in the Chinese market. Jiangua Wang, CEO of Kava, said: 'As we revealed at drupa, our decision to invest in Edale technology is driven by our need to consistently push our capabilities. We have traditionally relied exclusively on offset printing for our folding carton production, but when it became clear that we needed to expand our capacity and quality, Edale's advanced flexographic technology was the way to go. It's bringing all the best elements of flexo to carton packaging production.'



Installations



Fujifilm Jet Press FP790

Eco Flexibles, United Kingdom

Eco Flexibles, a sustainability-focused flexible packaging specialist, signed on for a second Fujifilm Jet Press FP790 inkjet digital flexible packaging press, following on from unprecedented demand from customers for the platform. The Northampton-based printing company became the first outside of Japan to install the water-based inkjet digital press, which is located at its newly opened 40,000sqft production site and headquarters. Now less than 12 months later, a second order has been placed. The press prints CMYK+WW at 50m/min, with a 1,200x1,200 DPI resolution. Two digital white channels can achieve an opacity of 55-58 percent. Handling substrates up to 790mm in width, the press is targeted at industrial-scale digital flexible packaging production.

Omet VaryFlex V2 **Ukrpol, Ukraine**

Amid a war, Ukrpol, one of Ukraine's leading printing companies, has enhanced its flexible packaging production capabilities with the installation of an Omet VaryFlex V2. Established in 1997 near Lviv, Ukrpol is one of the leading packaging specialists in Eastern Europe with continuous investments in technology and quality management. The new mid-web flexible packaging printing press features solvent-based and UV technology and can combine a wide range of printing and finishing technologies in-line. The new equipment will expand Ukrpol's production capacity and capabilities, especially in the shrink sleeve and food packaging products. It will allow the business to increase the volumes of aluminum foil production.



Domino N610i

Amherst Label, United States

US-based Amherst Label, an Inovar Packaging Group company, located in Milford, NH, has added its third Domino N610i digital UV inkjet, with the installation of the second MPS EF Symjet 'powered by Domino' hybrid press. A driving factor for adding the press was not only the need to increase capacity but the desire to expand capabilities to include printing and converting in a single pass, all in-line, while being able to add embellishments, varnishes, cold foil and more. 'With being able to print and convert in-line, we are saving a tremendous amount of time by doing the process in one step versus two steps,' commented Nye Hornor, president of Amherst Label. 'So, we have more throughput, more productivity.'

A B Graphic International rewinder **Nordvalls Etikett, Sweden**

Nordvalls, among Scandinavia's top label suppliers, has installed advanced finishing technology from A B Graphic International (ABG) with further machinery now agreed upon. The move has enabled Nordvalls to meet the increasing demands of digital printing with efficiency and speed. This enhancement involved the purchase of ABG's non-stop unwinder and rewinder systems. Designed in partnership with HP, the systems integrate seamlessly with the Nordvalls' HP Indigo V12 digital press. It features guarding and tension control to complement the press's capabilities but also to help increase overall productivity by maintaining continuous operation.

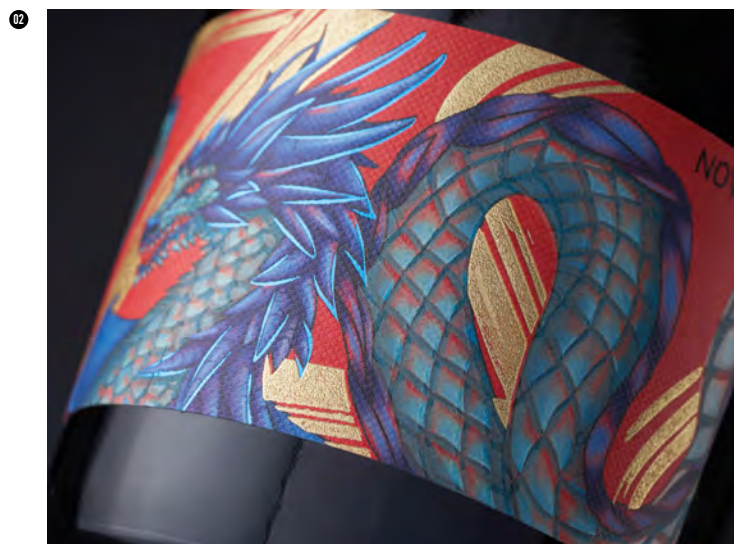
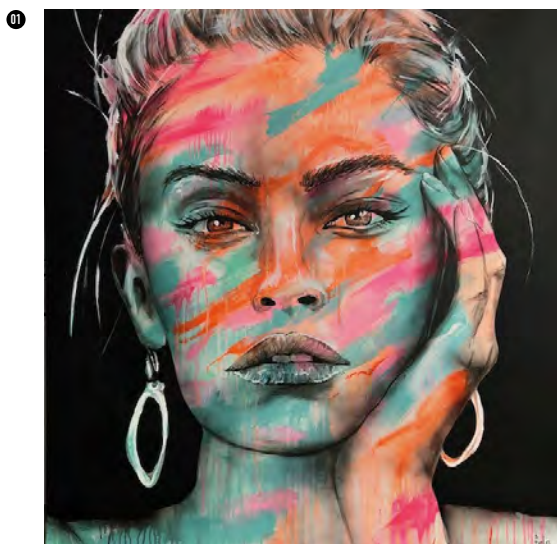




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Best in Show
Group: Printing processes
Category: Combination printing

02 Moldova for Flexlabel New Year Wine Label
Group: Marketing / end uses
Category: Self-promotional

03 Ciftsan Label and Packaging Company, Turkey for Farmasi Winter Bliss Body Mist
Group: Printing processes
Category: Screen printing

04 Pragati Pack India for Cureveda Glow Collagen Builder
Group: Printing processes
Category: Reel-fed offset lithography

05 Marzek Etiketten+Packaging, Austria for Yuzucello
Group: Marketing / end uses group
Category: Beers and spirits



06 Ciftsan Label and Packaging Company, Turkey for Okay Pure Naturals Vitamin B12 Gummies Raspberry Dietary Supplement
Group: Marketing / end uses
Category: Pharmaceutical

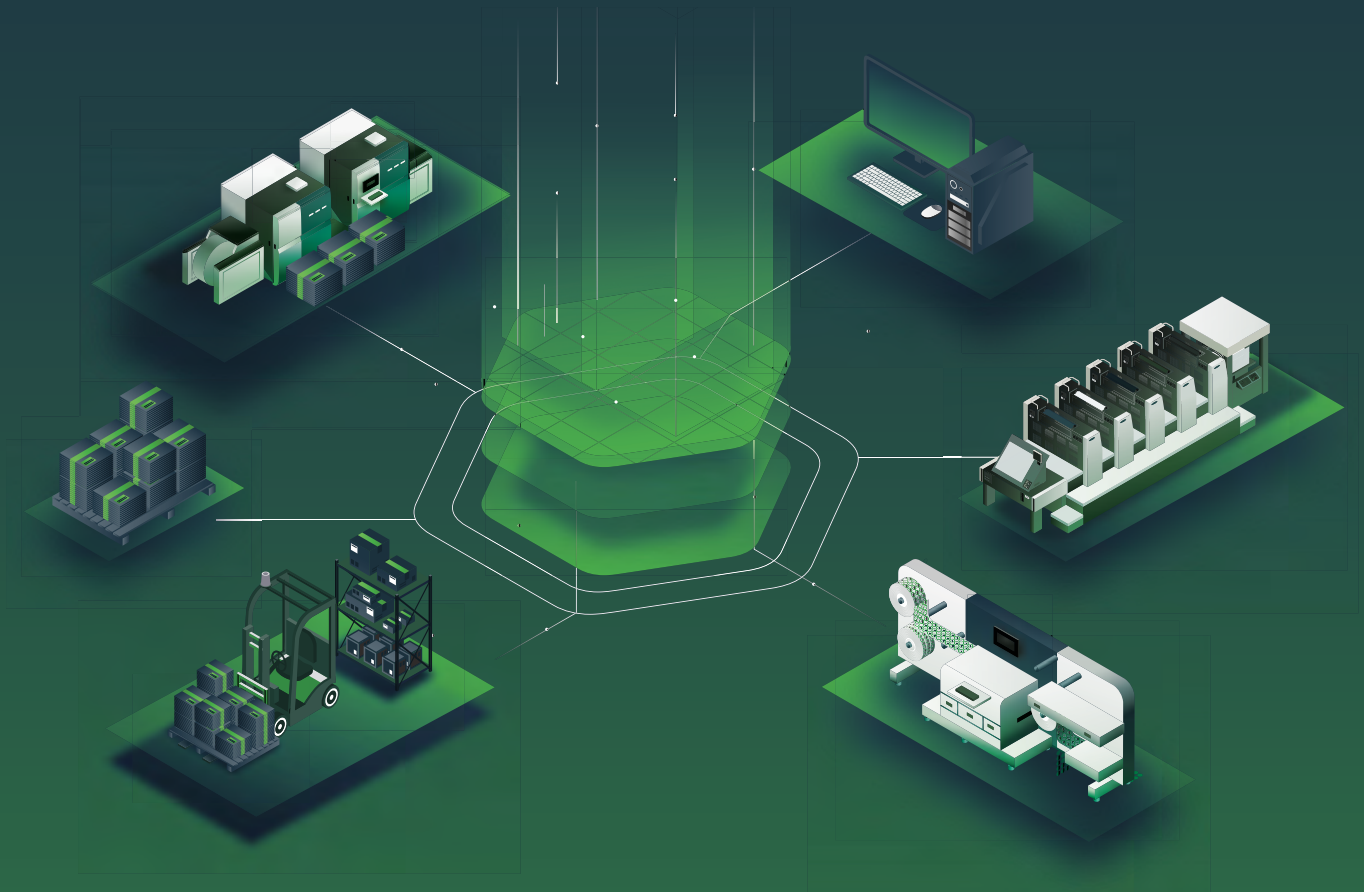
07 Lebone Paarl Labels, South Africa for Stelaris Pinot Grigio
Group: Printing processes
Category: Flexography

08 GS Labelprint, Greece for Imperial Stout
Group: Printing processes
Category: Digital

09 Seb. Wolf, Germany for Set Heinz Nikolai
Group: Marketing / end uses
Category: Sets of labels

10 Germark Spain for Pulsera Sanitaria RFID
Group: Innovation

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Andy Thomas-Emans: *Are wet glue labels ready for disruption?*

The wet glue label market is highly commoditized with limited opportunities for personalization, and one where efficiency is key. Is it ready for the level of disruption we've seen in other label technologies? Andy Thomas-Emans writes

Despite the consistently high growth of pressure-sensitive labels over the last 20 years and the recent boom in shrink sleeve labels, glue-applied labels remain the most widely used prime label technology.

Consultancy Research and Markets estimates the paper glue-applied labels segment will reach a value of USD 19.7 billion by 2030 with a CAGR of 4.5 percent year-on-year from 2013.

“It seems unlikely digital will disrupt the wet glue market in the same way as the self-adhesive and now flexible packaging sectors”

Trends towards sustainability are likely to boost wet-glue label volumes, particularly for returnable glass containers in the beverage and food industries and where brands are moving away from plastics.

Wet glue label production is all about efficiency. This is overwhelmingly a commodity market apart from value-added niches in high-end wines and spirits, so driving down the cost of production through automation and process control is critical.

Apart from a small amount of gravure for high volume production, wet glue is overwhelmingly a sheetfed offset process followed by multiple offline decoration and converting steps.

Apart from the continued application of automation and robotization to wet glue finishing machinery, the separate process steps have remained fundamentally unchanged. Adding hot foil stamping/embossing, for example, requires a further process step and more work in progress, along with pallets of sheets waiting for their turn on multiple converting stations.

So, are there any disruptive technologies on the horizon?

drupa developments

At drupa we saw the rise of the second and third generations of digital sheetfed technology, both toner and inkjet, and the announcement of the Heidelberg-Canon partnership to transition Heidelberg to digital sheetfed production.

However, it seems unlikely digital will disrupt the wet glue market in the same way as the self-adhesive, and now, flexible packaging sectors.

Wet glue, as we have noted, is generally a highly commoditized market with limited opportunities for personalization.

In addition, offset printers are skilled at ganging multiple jobs across a sheet to produce shorter runs economically and using extended color gamut ink systems to hit Pantone colors without the need to wash up spot colors between jobs. Add to that the high levels of automation of conventional offset seen at drupa and the low cost of plates and it is difficult to see much space for digital.

What about in-line production? We can easily imagine a

combination press set up to handle multiple decoration processes in line, but what about finishing? One possibility is that labels could be sheeted and then fed into a conventional wet glue finishing line.

What about fully in-line production from print to finished bundle? Interestingly, that technology has been developed.

History lessons

In 1998, Jarvis Porter – then one of the UK's leading label converting groups – invested GBP 2.5m in a self-contained 15,000sqft unit created alongside the company's conventional label operation in Leeds to develop a fully in-line process from print and decoration to finishing and packaging of wet glue labels.

The 520mm-wide press, called GN520, was a joint development between Nilpeter and Goebel. It was made up of nine interchangeable print stations able to run offset litho, rotary screen, UV flexo, foil and embossing on any station.

The key to single-process manufacturing was a Kuglar-Womako label line specially configured for use in line with the GN520 printing press.

The web was fed out of the printing press via a turner bar into the Womako, which then slit and cross-cut the printed web into deep-piled strips, boarded top and bottom, ready for either square cutting or profile punching. Automatic waste extraction operated throughout.

Using print mark register controls, a host of previously manual operations were eliminated. Automatic waste expulsion, aeration, jogging, knocking up stacks, and guillotining were now done automatically and with startling accuracy.

Servo controls allowing cutting at 2,000cpm, or slitting of the web at plus or minus 0.1mm tolerance and a maximum mechanical speed of 200m/min was achieved.

Slitting used rotary knives, registering to the marks at 0.1mm accuracy with three rotary knives, working against a bottom knife to cross-cut a web into sheets. Up to 1,250 sheets 90mm in height, were then stacked. The strips for profile die-cutting were then transported automatically to a Blumer Atlas system for profile punching and they were then counted, batched and banded before a VCH autobox unit boxed and conveyor-delivered the final product ready for despatch.

Sadly, after three years of development work, the Jarvis Porter Group was broken up, meaning that the unit was never put into full commercial production. Nevertheless, it proved that the technology worked and there was indeed a 'better way' to manufacture wet glue labels. Perhaps there are others?



Scan the QR code to read a Labels & Labeling article on the wet glue label market





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Aligning on a strategic plan: Time well spent



Setting strategic goals is essential for any organization's success. Sales columnist Lois Ritarossi explores effective methods and best practices for establishing clear, achievable objectives that align with your company's vision and drive long-term growth.

Were approaching the last quarter of 2024. Are you reaching your strategic goals? Strategic planning comes in many flavors and there are many methodologies to create a successful plan to achieve your substantial goals.

Budget planning is not strategic planning. While many companies have some type of annual planning process to define goals and budgets, the plans are often more tactical than strategic and often define short-term goals by quarter for the next year. For example:

Sales and client service staff may know the revenue goals, yet they may not have a detailed plan to define the steps or new offerings it will take to achieve the goals.

Technical teams may have defined projects to implement but may lack the time and resources to develop new products and services.

Senior leaders typically track and review financial goals quarterly. As a consultant, I hear about quarterly successes or failures. Often the reviews are financially driven without detailed context of the strategies and steps that resulted in success or gaps in achieving the desired goals.

'Vivid Vision'

I have facilitated strategic planning workshops based on strategies from the book 'Vivid Vision' by Cameron Herold. The concept is focused on the leadership team creating a vivid vision three years into the future and aligning the entire company with the strategies to create that future.

Herold's idea is to create a vivid vision based on a big, audacious goal – something so big and different that people won't know how they're going to achieve it, or how to get there. This process can make people a bit uncomfortable. When we look at inspirational companies whose leaders made bold statements about their future products, companies like Apple, Virgin and Tesla, some people in those conference rooms must have been uncomfortable with the big ideas their leaders asked them to embrace. Aligning on a shared future empowers the teams to think differently and create new strategies for the entire company.

The effectiveness of the vivid vision strategy is the alignment and purpose it generates among the leaders and managers. I saw tactically focused production and operations managers open up and generate supportive ideas based on imagining a new future for their company and their teams. The offsite workshop provided dedicated time spent giving people space to think big, without the daily constraints of getting production out the door.

The vivid vision process then enables teams to define goals and projects that are the building blocks for the future vision. By defining smaller projects with goals, milestones and metrics, the team will create the path, though not linear, to a future state. Herold recommends quarterly reviews of vivid vision and bringing the teams together to reinforce the long-term vision and celebrate

"The vivid vision framework is based on a big, audacious goal – something so big and different that people won't know how they're going to achieve it, or how to get there"

the small wins along the way. The process of creating projects and tasks and taking small steps, with metrics, enables individuals and managers to see their future vision become reality.

Strategic thinking requires a different level of creativity and critical thinking to map out a vision for the future. Effective strategic planning requires discipline to stay on course and evaluate the metrics along the way.

How will your company need to change and evolve to remain relevant as technology and industry change? What will cause disruption for you? For your customers? What will it take to achieve success? Where will new competition come from?

Big questions that require time, commitment and creativity to boldly plan for the future.

Another bestselling book that defines approaches for deploying strategy and accountability is 'Traction, Get a Grip on Your Business', by Gino Wickman.

A commitment to strategic planning from the leadership team will enable managers to put aside daily responsibilities, pause and creatively define projects that will lead to larger goals.

Managing and measuring to a defined strategic plan is what distinguishes success.

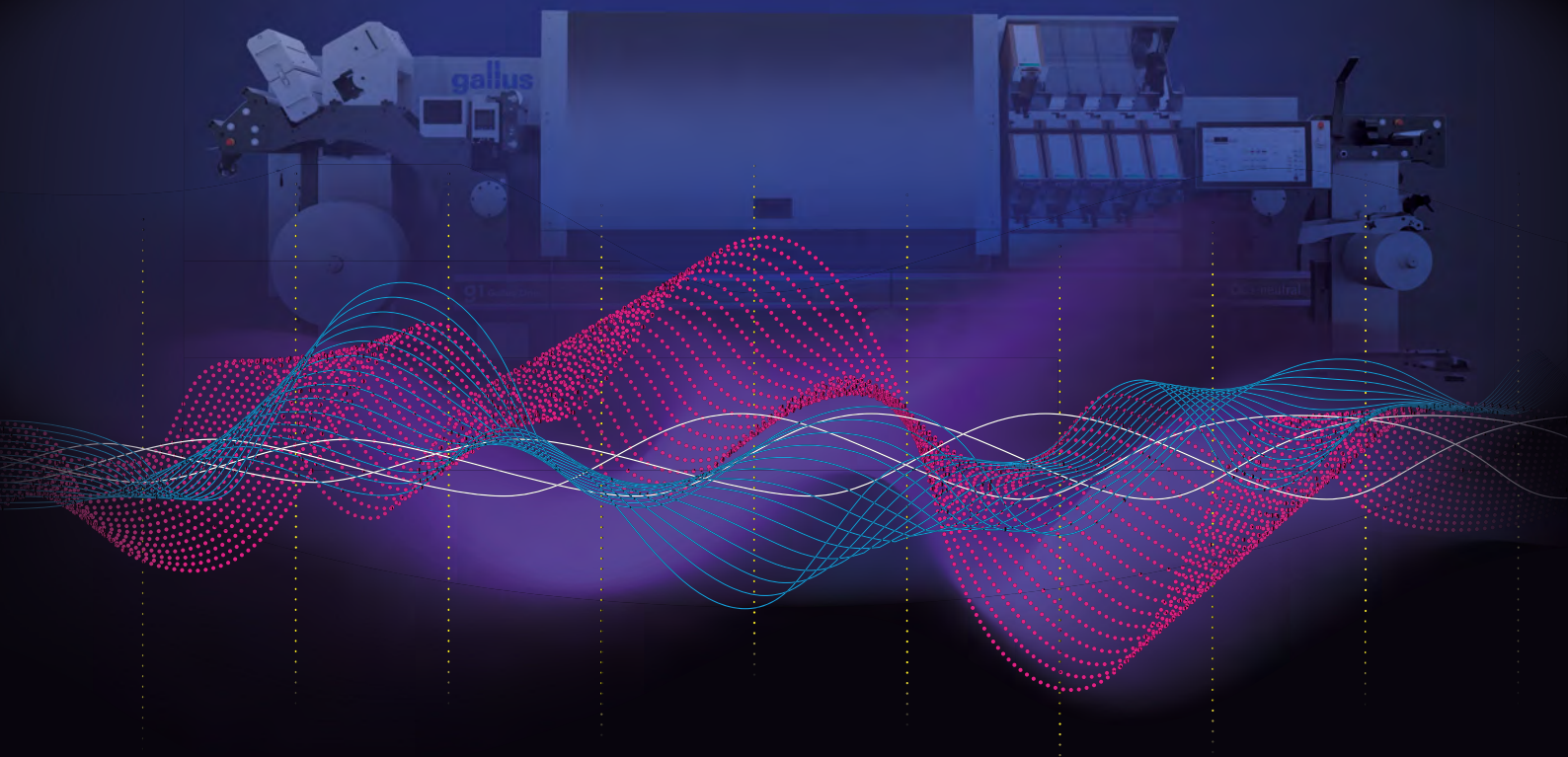
A strategic plan does not need to be a lengthy document that sits on a shelf. An effective strategic plan can be a short three-page document that clearly defines the future state and goals for each department.

Spending the time to create alignment among the entire company and having the discipline to manage a strategic plan will provide clarity, energy and passion that informs daily decisions and generates results. It's time well spent to deliver highly desired results.



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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Successful M&A playbook for label and package printing industry

In this guest opinion column, Ian Smith and Kevin Young explore the strategy for successful acquisitions

If you are considering an acquisition in the label and package printing industry, keep this essential premise in mind: the key to any successful acquisition is to buy what you want, not simply what's up for sale.

It starts with strategy.

Knowing what you should want to buy depends on your reasons for wanting to acquire. For example, let's say your business objective is to fill a capabilities gap.

If you are a **flexographic converter**, your strategy might involve acquiring a digital converter to offer customers both large runs and short, customizable runs.

An **industrial label manufacturer** might consider acquiring a screen label converter to add durable labels to its product line.

A **consumer goods-focused converter** might acquire a hot stamping and embossing converter to provide premium, luxury label options for high-end products.

In each example, the business objective of filling a capabilities gap is achieved by acquiring a relevant target company.

Once your objectives and strategy are clear, so is the sight line toward a successful acquisition. Typically, an acquirer will proceed with the steps below.

Acquisition profile

Searching for targets that meet your strategic objectives requires answering essential questions.

1. Are you looking for a business specializing in specific printing capabilities, such as 3D printing, RFID label production, offset labels, thermal transfer labels or eco-friendly label conversion?
2. Is location a concern?
3. Is technology a major consideration?
4. Are you targeting specific industries, such as logistics, retail, healthcare or manufacturing?
5. What size business?
6. Do you have a customer mix in mind?
7. Are you considering public companies or just private entities?

This targeted approach will produce a refined target list that aligns with your strategic objectives. The next phase involves prioritizing these targets using a set of defined filters.

Conduct a preliminary evaluation to shortlist your targets

"This targeted approach will produce a refined target list that aligns with your strategic objectives"

Annual and quarterly reports and company websites contain information that can help you build an overall picture of potential targets, including their office and plant locations, stated mission, culture, technology and equipment, executive profiles and even customers.

Other sources include trade and business press coverage, social media and commercial newspapers that serve the target's surrounding community.

The critical first in-person meeting

Label businesses suitable as targets in size and disposition are generally privately owned. This brings us to a fundamental need in the acquisition process. Establishing a proper relationship with the target company's owner. (Note: owner, not CEO) A decision concerning an exit strategy to sell rests with the owner. This relationship must be one that the owner perceives as not just potentially advantageous financially but also friendly and beneficial to his or her loyal employees. Recognizing the owner's involvement in the business is crucial to establishing the type of relationship that leads to an agreement.

You have only one chance to make a first impression, so find out as much as possible before you meet. Get to know your target company's history. When and how was it founded? How did it progress? Did the founder start the business in a garage and expand it to a 100,000sqft production facility? What were the significant achievements? These talking points can help facilitate a positive initial meeting and demonstrate that you appreciate their business's success and evolution. It's important to remember that when you are buying, you are selling a story, a vision of the target's strategic benefits to both your group and their business.

The letter of intent (LOI)

An acquiring company that has successfully implemented its strategy, amassed critical information and built a mutually beneficial relationship with its target company's owner will now be prepared to negotiate a letter of intent (LOI).

This decisive document captures the primary commercial elements of the impending deal. A signed LOI allows a deep dive of due diligence to commence. It also stipulates exclusivity for a defined period, often with penalties attached for non-compliance. You will not want your acquisition progress undermined by unwanted additional suitors.

Due diligence

Merger and acquisition courtships often occur over several months at the target's headquarters and plants and the acquiring business's home base. This is all part of relationship building. Your ongoing goal is to arrive at the best deal, not the fastest deal.

Think about six to 12 months and 10 to 20 meetings; you'll usually be in the right range.

Dialogue should continue during this time, and you should expect your target company to allow you to conduct an in-depth assessment of its operations.

Detailed due diligence checklists are outside the scope of this article but cover financial performance, forecasts, asset quality, competitive positioning, customer contracts, assessment of the management team, outstanding litigation, compliance track record, product road maps, technology road maps, IP and cultural fit. Successful acquirers also use due diligence to validate their post-acquisition integration plan because integration is vital to a positive outcome.

Ian Smith & Kevin Young are principals in The Portfolio Partnership, a value-creation company that scales businesses worldwide with revenue of USD 20 million to USD 1 billion organically and through M&A in the labels, print, packaging, material testing, life sciences, manufacturing and service sectors. They can be reached at ian@tppboston.com and kevin@tppboston.com or www.portfoliopartnership.com



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TLMI, Labelexpo address sustainability issues

Back by popular demand, the Ecostage at Labelexpo will tackle myths surrounding sustainable labels and packaging, TLMI's Rosalyn Bandy writes

Labelexpo's Ecostage, powered by TLMI, has an exciting lineup of speakers this year starting Tuesday, Sept 10 at 10 am. TLMI is focusing the Ecostage on the topics of redesign, reducing waste, and increasing recycling. Now, more than ever when companies know how to prioritize these things, it enables them to become part of the solution rather than remaining part of the problem.

"There is so much to see on Ecostage every hour of the day"

Some of the Ecostage speakers will cover solutions for both non-recyclable and recyclable label waste and byproducts like matrix and release liner and explore the non-landfill solutions that exist for all materials.

The Association of Plastic Recyclers will talk about how label suppliers and converters can help make plastics more recyclable through the design phase. This is a must-see presentation for members of the label industry who want to help customers reduce their upcoming Extended Producer Responsibility fees.

As recycling technology continues to make advancements, our metals, plastics and glass become more precious as the cost of materials goes up. Having a centralized recycling program in your company also helps employees become more aware of what trash they are generating and how they are disposing of it. On this topic, don't miss the 'Zero Waste to Landfill' panel of label converters. These are company leaders who have met the challenge of recycling through trial and error and have rallied their employees to get on board with the efforts. The panel will provide cost-effective, helpful hints on what to do with materials that are not recyclable, including existing options for non-landfill disposal. As we know from the waste hierarchy, landfill should be the last option after all others have been exhausted.

Also on the agenda, Wasteology Group will give details on its unique comprehensive service that not only helps companies become landfill-free but also calculates the data on the carbon impact of doing so.

No doubt companies in the label industry have concerns about the forever chemicals, or PFAS, in materials. Dr Nikola Juhasz will discuss the process of eliminating those chemicals from inks and Bryan Vickers, TLMI's policy expert, will discuss the legislation to be concerned about. Vickers will also talk about the bills in play regarding direct thermal paper and BPS.

There is so much to see on Ecostage. TLMI is bringing together leaders and experts from various disciplines to drive change and shape a sustainable tomorrow. Speakers will run every hour, on the hour, from 10 am to 3 pm on September 10 and 11.



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

Tuesday, Sept 10

- 10 am** Convergen Energy is taking all of the exhibitor label waste and converting it to fuel pellets to use in energy generation instead of coal, will explain the environmental benefits of their process. Convergen is a key player in landfill-free efforts in the Midwest.
- 11 am** TLMI's Matrix Committee will discuss research and data on what companies are currently doing and could be doing with matrix byproduct.
- 12 pm** Converter panel on becoming landfill-free. These converting companies will discuss the challenges and solutions to recycling and getting all label materials out of landfills and why that's important.
- 1 pm** Dr Nikola Juhasz, Sun Chemical's sustainability leader, will discuss PFAS and why it's critical to remove it from label materials.
- 2 pm** The Sustainable Green Printing Partnership will discuss their sustainability management certification program which is designed for the printing industry and is available to both suppliers and converters.
- 3 pm** Ruben Nance, director of the preferred design recognition program for the Association of Plastic Recyclers, will discuss the requirements for all types of labels to enable the recycling of plastic.

Wednesday, Sept 11

- 10 am** TLMI's Sustainable Resource Committee will discuss its work on providing critical resources and how-tos to help suppliers and converters get started or expand their sustainability programs.
- 11 am** TLMI's Release Liner Committee will explain how and why release liner is recyclable and how to get your customers engaged in a recycling program.
- 12 pm** Convergen Energy is taking all of the exhibitor label waste and converting it to fuel pellets to use in energy generation instead of coal, will explain the environmental benefits of their process. Convergen is a key player in landfill-free efforts in the Midwest.
- 1 pm** Wasteology Group creates and implements custom waste and recycling programs that support your company's sustainability goals. They take the data from your program and calculate Scope 1, 2, and 3 emissions to help with your ESG reporting.
- 2 pm** TLMI's Regulatory Affairs Committee, led by Bryan Vickers of Pace, will discuss current legislative concerns for the label industry such as PFAS, BPS, EPR, direct thermal printing, and other topics and what you need to know.
- 3 pm** University student panel from various schools share their insights on how to attract Gen Z to the label industry; plus, the session will provide a platform for students to learn, network and gain a deeper understanding of our industry.

Shining the light on shady packaging

In her ever-popular #shadypackaging series, branding and design columnist Vicki Strull explores the good, the bad and the ugly when it comes to brand packaging and design

I love packaging. That probably seems obvious, since I've been a packaging designer and design strategist specializing in print and packaging for almost three decades. But my obsession with packaging—the good, the bad, the absurd—goes beyond a professional relationship. I am always asking questions and sharing stories with my friends, colleagues and my package-fanatic followers. So, it was only natural that I shared online my story about being duped by a lettuce package.

I clearly remember the first time I bought this shredded iceberg for my family's taco night. I only purchased one bag, because I thought it was a full bag. However, see that wide purple band? The bag is empty above that. That is an *image* of shredded lettuce, printed on the bag and making it appear that it is filled to the very top.

Humph.

As a packaging designer, I get why Fresh Express did this. Better, more attractive shelf presence. And they did a good job of matching the *photo* of shredded lettuce to the *actual* shreds you can see at the bottom of the bag (which is clear film). But therein lies the dupe.

It's not the most egregious design manipulation that I've seen, but I wonder how this might be affecting the brand's same-store repeat sales. That metric would tell Fresh Express if it is losing trust and brand loyalty with this packaging design.

The birth of the #shadypackaging series

The overwhelming response to my lettuce story gave birth to my months-long LinkedIn series, which I call #shadypackaging. You know, the kind of packaging that intentionally misleads people into thinking something about the product that isn't true. Have you ever purchased something you thought was going to be one thing—based on the package, the image, the copy, whatever—and then you were sorely disappointed? That's shady packaging. The topic has clearly struck a nerve. One #shadypackaging post has nearly 4 million impressions, 1,000 comments, almost 10,000 reactions and hundreds of reposts. I gotta say, it feels great when you realize you're not alone in your obsession.

Following are a few more examples of #shadypackaging that garnered outrage, agreement, or in some cases, enlightened explanations.



Lettuce shreds, photo by Fresh Express

"It's not the most egregious design manipulation that I've seen, but I wonder how this might affect the brand's sales"



Colored pencils, photo by Reddit u/eva_white



Broccoli, photo by etimes.in

Shady structure

There are different types of shady packaging. The lettuce packaging is shady *printing*. For this next example, I believe it is a shady *structure*.

Consumers who bought the Crayola Colored Pencils thought the items were the length of a standard pencil because of the height of the box. When they took the pencils out of the box, they were disappointed to find that they were much shorter than expected. Was Crayola doing something sketchy here?

A lot of people said yes that this was designed to fool people. However, in the crafting community, the pro-Crayola group argued that Crayola is a children's brand, and therefore, its colored pencils are made to fit children's hands. Someone else said that the pencils are simply crayon-sized.

What do you think? I honestly cannot decide. On the one hand, the packaging looks deceptive to me; on the other hand, I understand the child-size reasoning.

Packaging illusion

For our next example, let's talk printing.

Doesn't this broccoli look fresh? I would likely purchase this item. So, what's the hitch? Look closely. This packaging has printed green stripes on the clear film, creating an optical illusion to make the broccoli look like it's a bright, crisp green. Compare the broccoli on the right of the middle seam with the broccoli on the left side, peeking through the packaging illusion. Doesn't look as attractive, does it?

One follower commented: 'Look at the seam in the zoomed-in photo, where the printed lines are not able to overlap. The broccoli looks vibrant under the stripes and graying when seen through the unprinted areas.'

Does this kind of optical illusion fair play in packaging? I don't think so. Next time you're shopping, I bet you'll notice the tangerines in orange-colored net bags, the green beans in striped bags, and many other similar shades.

When shady becomes dangerous

I suppose when you think about it, there are a lot of elements on packaging that aren't true. The Keebler Elves don't actually make the cookies. You don't actually get a toucan with your Froot Loops (too bad). But this next example seems downright dangerous.

You can see that the image on the rope packaging is a person mountain climbing



Rope photo from Memedroid John11298



Fortnum & Mason, photo by Reddit u/Aquillyne



Neocutis packaging, photo by Vicki Strull

“Mom, shady packaging alert!”

with a safety rope. However, the copy on the package says: 'Not suitable for climbing'.

What if a consumer goes by the image on this package and doesn't see the written warning? If they use this rope for climbing, they could get severely injured.

Is this shady packaging? Did the brand intentionally mislead people? I don't know. But it is a complete discrepancy of image and copy and a really poor design choice. The brand clearly didn't think this one through.

And then there's 'shrinkflation'

Another type of shady packaging falls under the category of 'shrinkflation'—reducing the size or quantity of a product while the price remains the same. I knew my series was going mainstream when my 23-year-old son opened his bag of airline chips and exclaimed: 'Are you kidding me? Mom, shady packaging alert!'

We counted: 12 chips. And not all of them were whole. Definitely not a satisfying snack.

The comments for this post were mostly humorous:

'We thought 'minis' was a reference to the chip size. Turns out it's the portion!'

'Well, it's an airline snack... they have to be careful about the cargo weight!'

'Shrinkflation' led to a conversation about another term in the industry: slack-fill. **Functional slack-fill** is good; it's the airspace left in a package to protect the product. **Non-functional slack-fill** is bad. It makes it look like you're getting more product than you are. In 2018, Kitchen Cabinet Kings tested 14 name-brand potato chips to measure the air-to-chip ratio in each bag. Then they crunched the numbers. (Sorry, I couldn't help myself.) They found that the average amount of air in chip bags is 43 percent.

Do you trust that the amount of air in your chip bag is necessary?

See if this educational comment helps you decide; I know it gave me a new

perspective: 'I was a PC [potato chip] packaging team leader at Frito Lay 13 years ago. Yes, there's a ton of air and yes, it's because of breakage. We obsessed over delivering the perfect chip. Imagine trying to take something incredibly more sensitive than paper and stuff it into cartons. Then stacking those boxes into big rigs. Then they have to go to distribution centers and onto smaller trucks and those drivers have to stock shelves. Quickly. So, you may ask, how did we know how many chips went in? It was by weight. Eight carefully calibrated hoppers with a vibrating platform on top worked together to find just the right combination of weight to drop into a bag.'

That response has given me an enormous amount of respect for fragile food packagers. Still, not everybody feels that way. A few months ago, I had to wonder if lawmakers were following my #shadypackaging series. The Shrinkflation Prevention Act was introduced on March 26, 2024.

If passed, it would prohibit corporations from deceptively decreasing the contents of their packaging without lowering the price proportionately. It will be interesting to see if this legislation goes through and has an impact on shady packaging practices.

Excessive Packaging

Next, my series led to a topic near and dear to my heart: the need for sustainability. For the series, I tagged it #excessivepackaging. Take a look at this example:

Fortnum & Mason is committed to phasing out single-use plastic; currently 76 percent of its packaging is recyclable. Truly commendable.

But...

When your business sends a 2-inch item in a 17-inch box filled with filler, something is broken in your sustainability mission. And it's hard to resist poking fun when the box boldly states that the item has been 'thoughtfully packaged' to reduce impact on the environment.

I loved this comment from a wise follower: 'This is why it is a good policy to order from your own company at least once a quarter. We were able to cut 40 percent of our packaging costs by working with the fulfillment team to identify areas to cut back on packaging size and packing.'

The other side

During my series, I realized I had neglected one of my absolute favorite categories. So I started #positivepackaging to highlight some of the great design and execution out there.

This product package from Neocutis is particularly outstanding because it's so unusual in the cosmetic industry. Typically, when a bottle of cream or lotion is empty, I have to cut it open to extract the remaining product. (Who else does this?) However, when I cut open this eye cream, I was notably surprised by what I found: an empty interior container.

That's right, empty. No spatula is needed to dig out any remaining cream. The brand created a product package that extracts all of the product for you, so you get every last drop that you've paid for. I'll definitely be purchasing this again. And isn't that the goal brands should consider with their packaging?

For customers to purchase their products over and over again? It reminds me of that phrase my grandfather used to say: 'The best customer is the repeat customer'. This eye cream's #positivepackaging, along with the quality of the product itself, has made me a loyal customer.

Brands, if you're listening, will you be known for your #shadypackaging, #excessivepackaging or #positivepackaging? Because even though we've been told not to, customers definitely judge a book (a bag, a box) by its cover.



If you've got a story to share about shady, excessive or positive packaging, I'd love to hear it. Follow me and comment @ [linkedin.com/in/vickistrull](https://www.linkedin.com/in/vickistrull)

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All4Labels enters new era of digital transformation

At this year's drupa the group revealed that it was expanding its digital footprint with a significant investment in several HP machines

Under the leadership of its new CEO, All4Labels is pushing toward the factory of the future not only in terms of digital printing, but interconnection, automation and sustainability of all production processes. Piotr Wnuk reports

This year's edition of drupa was long awaited by print professionals hungry for insights into the latest print and converting trends and technologies. When the show finally returned to Düsseldorf for the first time since 2016, it did not disappoint. The organizers reported 170,000 trade visitors from 174 countries and a record number of deals signed on the show floor.

One of those deals that gathered significant interest was the announcement that All4Labels Packaging Group was expanding its digital footprint with a major investment in HP technology, including several HP Indigo V12, HP Indigo 200K digital presses and the enhanced version of the HP PageWide Advantage 2200. The first machines will be deployed across several geographies in the next few months.

'All4Labels values its longstanding partnership with HP, which extends beyond products and services by encompassing the entire global industry ecosystem,' explains Günther Weymans, CEO at All4Labels Group. 'We appreciate HP's continued commitment to be technology leaders in machines, inks, software solutions, data analysis capabilities and disruptive innovation. This cooperation adds significant value to our business and underscores our shared commitment to delivering excellence across the entire value chain.'

Weymans took over as CEO of the All4Group from Paloma Alonso in June this year after he served four years as chief operating officer. In that role, Weymans supported the transformation of All4Labels into a billion EUR sales company with 56 sites and more than 6,000 employees worldwide. Now he will lead the business into a new digital era.

The group's recent investment goes beyond digital printing, envisioning the factory of the future as interconnected, smart, automated and entirely digitized.

Sustainable digital future

'Interconnection and automation are two of the main drivers for the packaging industry of the future,' states Guido Iannone, chief sales officer at All4Labels. 'Digitalization not only impacts the printing, which can be faster, more flexible, more sustainable and open to a wider range of customization and serialized options, but it also empowers factories and improves efficiency when it permeates all processes, from data collection to supply chain management, to a predictive analysis of brand owners' future needs.'

Sustainability and digitization go hand in hand and are core concepts for All4Labels. The company believes the latest investment in its hybrid and digital fleet fits perfectly into that strategy.

Initial results from the HP Indigo V12 beta testing show a



Star Portfolio enhances design, lowers CO2 emissions and enables opportunities to improve reuse and recycling

"Interconnection and automation are two of the main drivers for the packaging industry of the future"

reduction in energy use of between 25-40 percent compared to existing printing technologies, with comparable reductions in CO2 emissions.

'The V12 press is manufactured to be CO2 neutral and will be powered by 100 percent renewable energy at All4Labels,' says Jens Nilsson, All4Labels' chief operating officer. 'And it will also produce our innovative and sustainable Star Portfolio. This will significantly contribute to our activities to continue decarbonizing the entire value chain.'

Nilsson also sees digital transformation as a 'continuous accelerator' for health and safety at the workplace – 'turning visible certain invisible risks, eliminating repetitive and hazardous tasks, and, for environmental protection, eliminating physical sources of CO2 emissions like printing plates. It promotes the active engagement of our employees who can now proactively and rationally steer production performance towards a much more sustainable direction.

'Under our 3Ps sustainable business model, we care about "Products, Planet and People". To us, caring about our people sustainability-wise means putting health and safety at the core of our activities, as we already did several years ago.

'We have been able to implement enormous improvements and significantly reduce incident rates, which is now positioning

our company among the leaders in our industry.'

Sustainable portfolio

This year All4Labels expanded its sustainable Star Portfolio with StarDirect technology. The StarDirect 'no label' look product significantly reduces plastic and waste by eliminating printing substrates. It opens major new decoration opportunities, especially in wine and spirits, personal and home care, beer and beverages, and food – importantly, including products that do not currently use labels.

Guido Iannone says that market demand is expected to be high, and All4Labels is expanding StarDirect production across multiple sites throughout Europe including Spain, Italy and Germany. In parallel a global market strategy has been developed to serve global customers using its strategic network of production sites based in Mexico, as well as in the Central and South Americas region.

'We act as a global hub for innovation,' says Iannone. 'All4Labels devotes an enormous amount of time and resources to creating genuinely unmatched label solutions, by finding new ways to use printing technologies that ensure sustainability gains. StarDirect is an exciting new development that has now successfully completed its testing phase and is already available to our customers.'

StarDirect is suitable for glass, plastic, and aluminum containers. Special linear applicators and rotary applicator modules have been developed and work is underway to increase application speeds.

Comments Chen Yan, All4Labels head of StarDirect: 'Our StarDirect portfolio offers two major benefits. First, its sheer design flexibility surpasses screen printing, because it can accommodate a wide array of color schemes, finishes and customizations. Second, it meets sustainability requirements by reducing plastic use and waste compared with conventional solutions, promotes reuse and recycling opportunities and lowers CO2.'

The group is determined to continue investing in R&D to develop and deploy technologies contributing towards a circular economy, and proactively contributes to industry key initiatives like HolyGrail 2.0, Celab, Petcore and RecyClass.

'When we speak about sustainability, I like to look at metrics and concrete progress,' states Gabriela Neves Ferri, vice president of global R&D and sustainability at All4Labels. 'The urgency of addressing climate change has led us to undertake ambitious projects and achieve significant reduction of CO2 emissions inside our operations in the last four years. At the same time, we are striving for an additional 40 percent reduction in carbon emissions compared with 2020 by embracing the latest printing technologies and renewable energy.'

'Over the next years, we will continue decarbonizing our global operations further and we will also contribute to the decarbonization of the entire value chain. Our Center of Excellence (CoE) in Salerno is developing various initiatives all focusing especially on recyclability and recycled content.'



Günther Weymans has taken the reigns of the group in June 2024 by stepping up to the CEO role

"I am looking forward to leading an energized committed management team into the next phase of growth-enhancing our digital leadership and creating sustainable solutions for our customers"



Scan the code to learn more about All4Labels



ETI Converting opens European HQ in Spain

ETI Converting, a manufacturer of equipment for label printers and converters, has opened its new European headquarters in Getaria, Spain, marking a significant milestone in the company's global expansion and commitment to serving the European market.

The opening event brought together a distinguished group of guests, including suppliers, collaborators, existing clients, and potential customers eager to get a first-hand look at ETI's industry-leading technology.

The program started with a presentation by Maxime Bayzelon, president of ETI Converting, who provided an overview of the company's history and the strategic vision behind the European expansion.

This was followed by speeches from Jokín Iruretagoiena, general manager for Europe, and Szymon Ignarski, business



development manager for Europe, who outlined ETI's technologies.

'The grand opening of our European headquarters in Spain marks another pivotal moment in ETI Converting's global growth strategy,' said Bayzelon. 'This new initiative strengthens our commitment to providing exceptional service and support to our European customers. By fostering closer collaboration and streamlining

operations, we are confident that this expansion will empower us to deliver even greater value and innovation to the European label printing market.'

During the opening event, the company ran a live demonstration of Cohesio, a 26in (670-mm) web printing, coating, and converting machine. The demonstration showcased its ability to produce linerless labels and laminates with an easy machine setup change.

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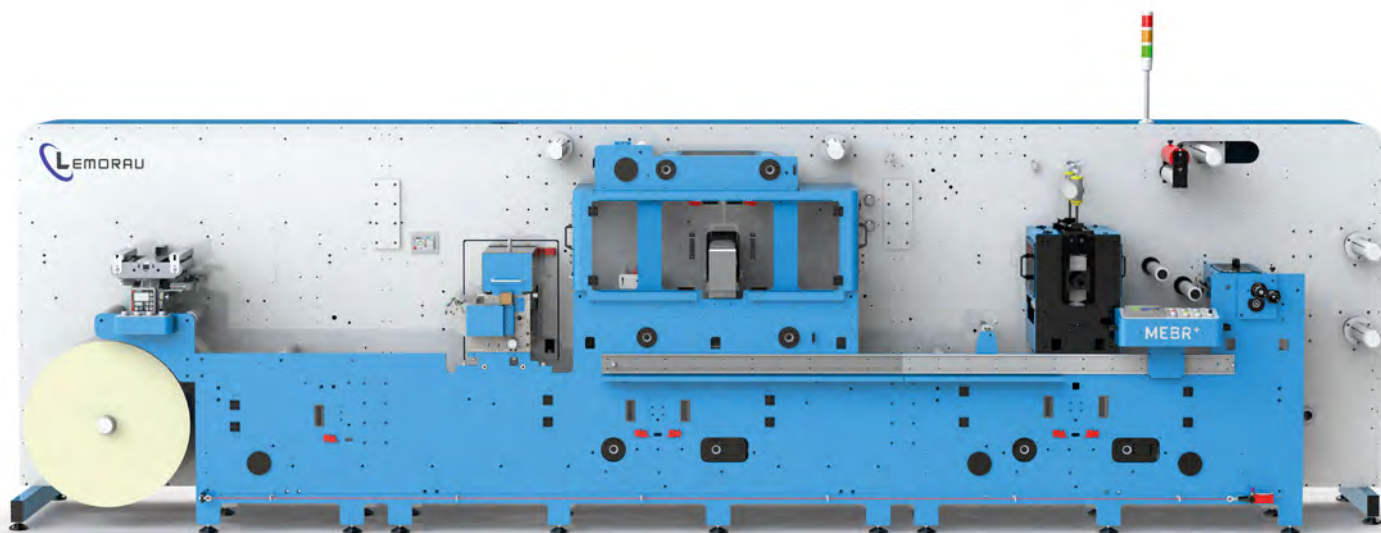
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Digital metal adds value at Tipografia Valdostana

Italian sheetfed converter Tipografia Valdostana can now proof metalized labels printed on its Heidelberg press using the Kurz Digital Metal system. Andy Thomas-Emans reports

Tipografia Valdostana is a sheetfed label and package printing house based in the stunning Aosta Valley on the Alpine border with France. Founded in 1896 as an in-house printer to the Catholic church, Tipografia Valdostana remains a family-owned business – still with its own internal publishing house.

Managing director Paolo Perrin worked at Tipografia Valdostana from the age of 20 and inherited the company from his uncle, a priest, in 1996. When L&L visited the company, Perrin's son Sebastiano was running the Heidelberg press and was heavily involved in all aspects of production.

After taking over his uncle's business, Perrin set about diversifying Tipografia Valdostana from religious and commercial publishing into packaging.

Tipografia Valdostana sells to a wide range of commercial markets including high-quality 'coffee table' books, catalogs, brochures, diaries, magazines, calendars and posters.

In the packaging space, it prints and converts a wide range of high-quality wet-glue labels, mainly for wine and food applications. Labels account for around 5 percent of the company's business, with most packaging work going to folding cartons and preprint tube laminates.

The centerpiece of Tipografia Valdostana's production facility is a highly automated Heidelberg Speedmaster XL 106-6L press. 'The automated plate mounting alone led to a 30 percent reduction in makeready time compared to manual mounting,' recalls Perrin. The press can be run from any point across a network.'

The Speedmaster XL 106-6L is fitted with in-line die-cutting for adhesive labels and a Foilstar in-line cold foil lamination unit.

'The advantage of Foilstar compared to traditional hot foiling is that lamination takes place in-line. It can be extended to the entire surface of the sheet and can be overprinted, obtaining an infinite range of metallic shades on paper with absolute registration accuracy,' says Perrin.

Proofing metallic print

Perrin has worked closely with foil supplier Kurz to develop a process that allows brands to visualize multi-color foiled prints before committing to full-scale production runs.

Upstairs in the design department sits a Kurz DM-Smartliner digital foiling machine, which produces test prints and mock-ups using Kurz's Digital Metal system.

The DM-Smartliner is a SRA3 format foil transfer system, which uses toner-based inks (or electro-inks) as an adhesive in place of UV-cured adhesives.

Tipografia Valdostana uses a Heidelberg Versafire CMYK toner press to print the 'target' image with a black toner. The sheet is then transferred to the DM-Smartliner where it is heated to the point where the toner becomes tacky, and the foil will adhere. The Digital Metal metallization is transferred by the DM-Smartliner by a removable PET carrier.

Consistent temperature is critical to the final result with Kurz's transfer on toner process. The roller that presses the foil onto the substrate is heated and has an intricate IR heating system as well as edge zone heating. The heating system ensures temperature



L-R Marco Gaviglio, Luxoro business manager; Sebastiano and Paolo Perrin, Valdostana; Andy Thomas-Emans.

"The DM-Smartliner allows us to achieve exactly the same metallic shades as on the offset press. This is an amazing service to offer brand owners"

consistency over the entire surface of the stamping roller during the whole process. Accurate surface temperature is key to the high quality of the decoration.

A wide range of DM-compliant foils are offered by Kurz, including digital metal shades, diffraction and holographic foils, all of which can be over-printed.

This dry metallization process does not require further adhesives or drying/curing units and greatly simplifies the deinking and recycling process.

After the foil has been applied, the sheet is re-registered through the Versafire and overprinted to achieve multiple metallic shades.

This whole process is calibrated to the Heidelberg Speedmaster and in-line Foilstar unit, which guarantees a match between the metallic proof signed off by the customer and the actual production run on the Heidelberg press. The DM-Smartliner is also used to produce hyper-short runs of promotional prints.

The finished sheets are creased and cut on an x-y plotting table using a programmable stylus cutting head.

'This service allows a brand to try different variations of a design and to choose which one to take to production,' explains Paolo Perrin.

'The DM-Smartliner allows us to achieve exactly the same metallic shades as on the offset press. This is an amazing service to offer brand owners. It also means we can charge more for this value-added service. We can also use the DM liner to produce micro production runs, so it has great flexibility.'



Kurz will be demonstrating its digital metallization technology at Labelexpo Americas 2024. Scan the QR code to learn more



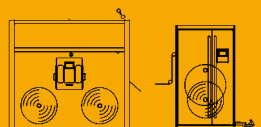
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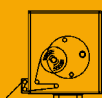
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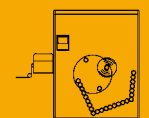
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How can the label industry attract Gen Z?

A panel at Finat's European Label Forum addressed a perennial issue facing the label industry – how to attract young talent. James Quirk summarizes the discussion

How should the label industry brand itself in today's battle for young talent? What is Gen Z looking for from their careers? And how can companies retain and develop young employees? These questions were tackled at Finat's European Label Forum 2024 in a panel discussion featuring Gen Z expert and former United Nations Youth Ambassador Laura Bas, Anastasios Politis from IC (International Circle of Educational Institutes of Graphic Media Technology and Management), and three family-run label converters: Iban Cid of Germark, Spain; Dana Kilarska of Purgina Labels in Slovakia, and Tom Baker of UK-based Baker Labels. Below are edited highlights of the panel, moderated by Finat's Bert van Loon.



Laura Bas, Gen Z expert and former United Nations Youth Ambassador

The younger generation lives a digital life. If they are interested in a certain company, they will look at the website but also on social media to make sure you have some sort of online presence there. It doesn't have to be super professional. One Gen Z trend is uploading a 'day in the life' video when you have a vacancy. You ask someone to film what their work life looks like for 60 seconds. It doesn't have to be professional: Gen Z loves authenticity. People can get an impression of what a day in the life of someone who works in the company looks like.

Young people look for places where they can learn a lot. Studies show they find being able to learn more important than earning a lot of money. When the Millennials entered the workforce, we had the banking crisis. So, they had a different starting point and had to work hard to get a job. They weren't able to have high standards. Gen Z has more options and is in a position where they can choose.

Gen Z isn't attracted by status. They want to work at a place where they can make an impact. I've heard you say that print is not a sexy industry, but I think the label industry has a lot of benefits. Talking to many of you over the past two days, I heard someone say: "What I really like about this industry is that everywhere you go, you see products you are making." This is an excellent asset to tell people: everywhere you go, you see stuff we make. There are also a lot of people who hate working in an office, who just want to work with their hands and be busy. Manufacturing is the perfect place for that.

"Gen Z isn't attracted by status. They want to work at a place they can make an impact"

Anastasios Politis, chair, International Circle

I love print. I love the machines and the inks. The smell. Everything. But how should we transfer this love that we have for this sector into something that young people can understand? In my opinion, formal education and training is not enough anymore. This is my experience from Greece and in Europe, because we all want to recruit people, and we find no one. Only yesterday, I had six requests for people to be employed in the print industry. We have no one because, for our official educational system, print media and packaging education doesn't exist. So, we have to as industries, as companies, and maybe as organizations like Finat, find new ways to recruit our people.

There have been efforts in recent decades in Europe to present the sector in a sexy way and attract young people. But we need to think differently. We see that countries where we have contacts through the International Circle, in India and Australia, and especially in the US, they promote print quite aggressively. They say: I'm in print and I'm proud.

Young people don't know about the industry, so we need to help. We had a booth at drupa and we met with a lot of young people there to introduce them to our sector. The theme of our booth was: Reinvent print education. We will hand out Labelicious leaflets because we have partnered with Finat to promote that competition. International Circle was the main exhibitor, and there were 12 other organizations alongside us including the Print Media and Engineers Association from Greece and universities from Turkey, Germany, France, Canada and the US. We introduced them to every effort that the industry undertakes to help attract young people to the sector.

We want to try to establish a strategy not only for education but also for developing people in the sector, no matter their position, so that we can develop our human capital. This is something that is easy to say and difficult to do, but at least we will try.



“When people know the industry, they love it. The label sticks people to it”

Iban Cid, managing director, Germark

Attracting young talent into the label industry is very tough. Many of our staff come from the Antoni Alguero Graphic Arts School in Barcelona, which is run by the Catalonia Graphic Arts Association, of which I used to be president and am now vice president. But even with these students, it isn't easy. They all want to work on a desk with a Mac. Great, but what can you do with the Mac? In real life, the economy is moving with industry, machines, shop floors – yes, with Macs as well. But you need some skills too.

Print, as an industry, is not sexy. Why not? No one wants to get their hands dirty with ink. But packaging is sexy. You sell your brand, your company. You can take photos of the packaging for Instagram. This is the stuff which attracts people, not the shop floor. If we show potential recruits around the company, we show them the digital presses. If you want to attract people, it is better to show them nice, clean things.

Staff retention is a challenge. We suffer at Germark because the big converter groups take our staff. It's one thing to advertise on LinkedIn, but going directly to other companies' staff is not a fair way to recruit people. In my father's time, the converters met and agreed not to do this. But nowadays, this is happening again with the big printing groups.

Competing with the big groups is hard because they have



a lot of resources. But the advantage we have as a smaller company is that we take care of our people. At bigger companies, you are just a number. We have had cases where an employee has left for a larger firm, seeing the difference in how they are treated and returned to us.

When people know the industry, they love it. The label sticks people to it. However, the first challenge is to get them to see the industry. I don't know how we can overcome this issue.

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Finat keynotes address global markets, sustainability

Former prime minister of Belgium Guy Verhofstadt had a stark message for attendees of the European Label Forum, hosted by Finat.

'The world of today and the next decade will be a brutal competition in every field between the world's biggest nations – economically, militarily, technologically,' he warned, adding the risk of violence, isolationism and deglobalization places all global economies at risk.

The annual meeting of the European self-adhesive label association hosted 280 visitors from 24 countries in Athens in May.

During his address, Verhofstadt advocated for a stronger and more integrated European Union.

'The risk in this new world is of violence – a military risk. A world in which war has returned,' he says. 'After decades of globalization of the world economy, now there is a risk of deglobalization, an unraveling of economic ties. Countries want control over their own supply chains.'

Speaking on the label supply chain, AWA Alexander Watson Associates analyst Anum Javed Beg presented the findings from Finat's latest Radar Report along with Finat managing director Jules Lejeune.

'Last year was the worst nightmare for label stock demand since we started recording the numbers in the early 2000s,' Lejeune says. 'The impact of destocking was more than 2 billion sqm of lost label production.'

This represented a 25.8 percent decline from the previous year, down to levels not seen since 2013, Lejeune reported. This decline is widely seen as a direct result of Covid-induced supply chain issues, further exacerbated by the Finnish paper mills strike in early 2022. In return, label converters responded by stockpiling label materials but were soon met with rising interest rates and high inflation that deflated consumer demand. All of that meant it took longer for the labelstock to make its way through the system.

While the industry recovers from the 'perfect storm,' and labelstock demand rebounds, sustainability is again top of mind for many brands and label buyers and converters.

Speaking on a panel with fellow converters, MCC CEO Hassan Rmaile noted this trend, saying CPGs are waking up and learning quickly the impact a label has on a package's overall recyclability.

'The global packaging industry is worth 1 trillion USD, with labels around 40 billion USD of that,' he says. 'The label is a small percentage of the overall package, so it is often lower on the brand's priority list. But it has the biggest impact on sustainability and shelf impact.'

In addition to the conference program, the ELF featured 35 exhibitors and various networking activities. The annual event returns to Amsterdam on May 21-23, 2025.

By Chelsea McDougall



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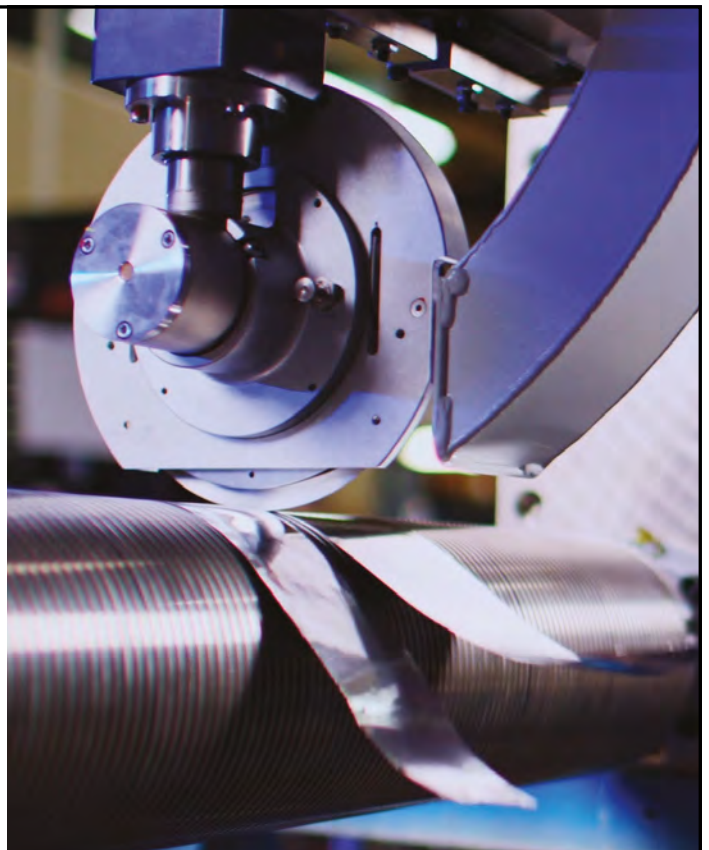
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Dana Kilarska, managing director, Purgina Labels

We recruit young staff from high school or printing college, offering them work experience and training and then try to keep the best ones in the company. The culture and brand of the company is critical. Luckily, we have a lot of people locally in Bratislava and even from other regions of Slovakia contacting us and asking to work with us. But we carefully choose the people we think will fit our



culture. This is really important. We try to explain why we are doing what we are doing, how we are doing it, and we try to understand the person before they enter the business.

Sometimes schools visit our site and we explain the reality of working at a label printing operation. We are very open: we tell the truth about the long hours, hard work and short breaks.

We find that our young employees are often keen to learn new things and to experience working in different departments within the company.

When employees are recruited from a bigger, more corporate company, it can be difficult because of the different cultures. They will behave differently from people who are used to working at a family-run business of 50 people – we have entirely different habits.

We know who we compete with to recruit staff – Slovakia is a small market. But we have great experience and people often approach us because they want to work here.

Tom Baker, finance and development, Baker Labels

We push the cultural side of things very hard. We've been pushing wellbeing and training for a long time. We like to offer stuff outside of the day-to-day. You're going to spend a lot of your time at work, so you might as well enjoy it. We've put in a gym and a bar. We offer free counseling sessions with a third party. We have mental health workplace champions.

People want to understand their opportunities and what their path could look like. We've developed a training system so that we can give people plans. We can say: over the next three months this is what we want you to learn. These are the goals. It's something outside their day-to-day and gives a bit more purpose. We'll also set someone a task and let them crack on with it and see what comes back. People are good at learning and pushing themselves, and it builds the proper habits.

I think we need to shift how we look at the industry, especially for our generation. In a digital environment, you just press print and it comes out. My dad was gobsmacked the first day with a digital press. But we've grown up knowing that. So it's more about pushing forward systems that support it.

Some of our staff who have ended

up doing really well came in thinking 'this is a temporary job'. But they start to see there is a lot more to this than just print. It's not just a label. There are opportunities to work with software systems, automation, AI.

We've not had so many problems with people leaving. Sometimes it comes down to money and that's it. But that's not usually the case for the younger generation. I think because we can offer a nice working environment, people who do leave will sometimes come back, and we have staff who bring family members in because it's a nice workplace.



“This industry is more than just print. It's not just a label. There are opportunities to work with software systems, automation, AI”

AI takes center stage

Artificial Intelligence was undoubtedly the hottest topic at this year's European Label Forum, hosted by Finat in Athens, Greece from May 22-24.

Setting the scene was Katie King, an AI expert, published author and keynote speaker. She focused her keynote on the impact of artificial intelligence will have on various industries, and explored how it can radically revolutionize the label industry.

She underscored how AI is becoming an integral part of business operations across the board – from finance to marketing, machine learning to recruitment.

'This is the defining technology of our generation,' King says, adding that AI tools are not replacing jobs, but enhancing them. 'These tools are allies, and the ones that don't adapt and use these tools will be the ones that will be left behind. I believe these tools are making us more strategic.'

King also explored the ethical considerations for implementing AI in businesses and emphasized the need to avoid biases, which often arise from flawed data.

Looking ahead, King predicted that AI would become more embedded in everyday life, enhancing various business functions, and improving productivity.

King will bring a similar message to Labelexpo Americas, where she will speak as part of a keynote address during a breakfast networking event on Sept 10.

By Chelsea McDougall



Finat's European Label Forum will be hosted May 21-23, in Amsterdam. Scan the QR code for more information





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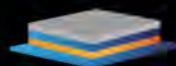
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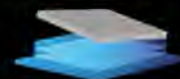
Advantages of mono-material labelstock compared to conventional labelstock

Conventional labelstock



Ink layer is difficult to remove, and different materials are present so recycling efficiency decreases.

Mono-material labelstock



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Vollherbst's next chapter

The recent investment in a Gallus press rounds off the German converter's machine park, helping to empower brands with customized labels. Piotr Wnuk reports

German converter Vollherbst was established by Franz Anton Vollherbst, who in 1921 expanded the book bindery founded by his father and grandfather. In 1950, Franz Vollherbst became the family's second generation to lead the printing business, transforming it into a successful medium-sized company.

Dr Franz-Josef Vollherbst, the third generation, took over in 1984. His vision was to expand the business by bridging marketing, design and printing. In 2011 he brought his son Stefan and in 2014 Matthias, on board to manage the company, and in 2020, he handed over the reins to Matthias. The fourth generation is committed to pursuing holistic, sustainable excellence as their corporate goal.

Today, the company's creative experts collaborate with clients to develop authentic, strong brands with labels to match, working on thousands of projects across various industries worldwide.

Their work has received numerous accolades. The company was included in the list of the 100 most innovative medium-sized businesses in Germany in the 2021 Top 100 competition and was named the winner in the sustainability category of the 2020 Printer of the Year competition.

'Our ultimate goal is to elevate our clients' brand values,' notes Matthias Vollherbst. 'This is not a one-size-fits-all exercise. It requires listening to the people involved in brand building closely, understanding their goals and strategies, and finding ways to support them. Being their partners-in-crime, developing customized solutions for them, and excellently executing them, while meeting their budget targets, too. Our strategy is to hold this philosophy and these values high, in an ever-changing world that pushes for less complexity, lower costs, and higher standardization.'

Strategic support from innovation partners

One of the secrets to success in the labeling industry is being at the forefront. The company recognizes the power of strong partnerships in achieving success.

More than two decades after Vollherbst made its first investment in a Gallus TCS 250 in 2001, followed by a second and third TCS 250 in 2005 and 2008, the company has chosen Gallus once again and recently invested in the Gallus RCS 430, impressed with its capabilities.



Shortly before the pandemic hit the world, Matthias Vollherbst took over the shares in the business

The Gallus RCS 430 is proving to be the perfect match for Vollherbst's expertise, particularly in the production of highly decorated labels for the wine, spirits, gourmet and creative sectors. From vibrant, color-intensive labels to intricate and sophisticated designs, the RCS 430 enables Vollherbst to meet and exceed its customers' diverse requirements with precision and finesse.

'One of our machines has passed its zenith and needed to be replaced. A one-for-one replacement did not make sense for us, as the machine no longer fitted in with our strategy and positioning,' says Matthias Vollherbst. 'Our company stands for cutting-edge quality in print and finishing. We realized that we did not want to compromise on quality. Productivity and automation were also top priorities. Furthermore, we wanted a machine that fits into our existing production and supplier environment. Gallus RCS turned out to be the perfect match that ticked all our boxes.'

The new RCS rounded off Vollherbst's machine park in terms of volume in the upper print run range. The company equipped the machine to achieve the quality of highly refined jobs without making any compromises.

'Gallus has been by our side for decades and through all the times we have always had strategic discussions about technologies, innovation, and the right interface between the Gallus and the Vollherbst world,' adds Matthias Vollherbst. 'With Ferdinand Ruesch still as the representative and Dario Urbinati as its CEO, the company has authentic, experienced and consistent personalities that match well with the people and

"We will be an international hidden champion expanding its global footprint. Most of all, we will be remembering our roots and staying down to earth. Same as today, but different"

philosophy at Vollherbst.

'We have been using Gallus TCS equipment since we started printing PSL labels many decades ago and have discussed investing in an RCS with Gallus for the last 10 years at least,' he continues. 'When we came up with the project at the beginning of 2024, we did not need to test or challenge Gallus. We had mature, very constructive and deep talks with the management and sales team. They listened to us and came up with customized technology for us. No exhausting politics, no comprehensive sales pitches. Just solutions to our challenges.'

'I'm proud to say that Gallus and Vollherbst share the same core values, based on trust, reliability and partnership – and are equally committed to delivering nothing but the highest quality. These kinds of synergies form the ideal basis for a fruitful and productive partnership,' adds Dario Urbinati.

'From a Gallus perspective, providing solid, tailored advice and counsel to our partners is always a top priority. We discuss and evaluate, in-depth, what each business might need – today and tomorrow – and provide suggestions based on transparent metrics. These considerations will always involve the actual hardware needs and service requests, but also elements of the business model that might factor into the investment decision. In our experience, having such open and honest discussions is the most productive way of finding the best possible solutions for our customers that will work for their business in the longer term.'

Its modern machine park helps Vollherbst to print four million labels for around 20,000 different brands annually,



Dr Franz-Josef Vollherbst, the third generation, took over the business in 1984, bringing Matthias and Stefan on board to manage the company 30 years later



Volcanic stone from a German winery was integrated into a label as a core brand element

“Our company stands for cutting-edge quality in print and finishing”

but Matthias Vollherbst is convinced that it's his team making a difference, his people are the core of the company's strategy. 'Technology is there to help us do that job properly,' he says.

Innovation doesn't end

Storytelling is key to consumers continuing to follow a brand.

Now Vollherbst Labels has taken the storytelling element a step further: by incorporating tactile or aromatic elements from nature into the labels.

The company's craftLABEL allows producers to incorporate actual raw materials, like a particular vineyard's soil or the fynbos aromas of the South African Western Cape.

'The ideas and possibilities are as limitless as the stories found in a brand's history,' says Matthias Vollherbst. 'The storytelling element is a crucial part of an individual's purchase decision, and materials or aromas are incorporated into labels for a truly transcendent customer experience. We have incorporated volcanic stone from the Kaiserstuhl region into a label for vines that grow on that exact stones and also printed slate onto a label for a wine maker who has chosen slate as a core brand element for his wines.'

Each craftLABEL project requires extensive testing to determine the best mixing ratio, as ingredients must be visible and perceptible to the consumer. The production of craftLABEL has been developed based on conventional printing methods and can be combined with almost all types of paper and color combinations.

'craftLABEL is maybe the most traditional and non-digital of our label innovations of the last years. It is so simple, yet so smart and serves all needs a premium brand must achieve in today's world: unique, authentic, sustainable, and affordable. We have just won another German sustainability award for this innovation.'

The company is busy innovating the traditional capsules for wines and sparkling wines by developing a pure paper-based technology that the team wants to print on its label printing presses.

'It is a fascinating project that has gained a lot of interest and has massive potential,' remarks Matthias Vollherbst. 'Projects like this one are great, but they are only the tip of the iceberg. Underneath lies a gathering of initiatives and measures that are optimizing our operations, making us more sustainable every day by reducing water usage, raising awareness, training our people how to save energy while cooling down their workspaces in summer, working on more efficient transport routes by optimizing production planning with the support of technology - in our sustainability strategy, too.'

Giving talent space to grow

Matthias Vollherbst used to be heavily involved in Finat's Young Professionals Network focusing on developing young talents and promoting successful career paths in the printing industry. However, shortly before the pandemic hit the world, he took over the shares in the business and understandably his focus has shifted slightly.

'Being a senior leader in the industry now, I can only motivate the next generation to disrupt and innovate our industry. It desperately needs to surpass old traditions and stand for more dynamic, innovative solutions.'

'Attracting new talent is, for me, a question of corporate culture and leadership. You can run sexy campaigns, name things fancy and give your employees free drinks. In the end, you need a management that is appreciative, supportive and willing to let their staff, particularly youngsters, grow,' states Matthias Vollherbst. 'Personally, I have always been somebody who hands over a lot of responsibility to my team - even if it means that I must step aside in a project or on a whole area of the business.'

'I am proud that the first talent I recruited at Vollherbst, Theresa, has joined our management board this year. These are important signs to other young talents in a company: you get the chance, and we will allow you to grow. I have seen a lot of talents coming to the industry, but many of them left because they did not get the space to grow.'

So, what does the next chapter look like for Vollherbst? Matthias' vision is to be the leading label printing company for ambitious and demanding brand owners, constantly innovating printing processes and label finishes. Just as important: reaching this as an owner-managed company with a focus on people and values.

'We will continue empowering some of the most successful brands with customized #wowlabels. We will be running the most productive production site in our niche. We will be an international hidden champion expanding its global footprint. Most of all we will be remembering our roots, staying down to earth. Same as today, but different.'



Scan the QR code to learn more about Vollherbst and its latest projects



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Etirama opens European demo center

The Brazilian press manufacturer is ramping up its presence in Europe with a new demo center, sales office and network of distributors. James Quirk reports

Brazilian press manufacturer Etirama has opened a demo center in Kohlberg, near Stuttgart in southern Germany, as it increases its focus on the European market.

The move follows the establishment of a sales and service office in Lisbon, Portugal, in August 2022, and the recent appointments of new distributors across the continent. The press manufacturer has established Etirama Europe as a partner to its Brazilian counterpart, focused on the marketing, commercial and after-sales management of the brand in Europe, and this European operation has attracted investment from MPS co-founder and advisory board member Bert van den Brink.

The demo center, recently inaugurated with an open house event, is a partnership with Etiflex, which is based in Kohlberg and is Etirama's new distributor in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. The site houses an 8-color Etirama SPS3 flexo press, which the manufacturer launched last year at Labelexpo Europe.

'Europe has understood Etirama's product proposal: a machine with great performance and functionality, with international-standard components and an incredible price,' says Etirama CEO Ronnie Schröter. 'This is the perfect combination for a quick return on investment. We believe that European label converters are a very important audience for our machines.'

Open house

Etirama's new showroom in Kohlberg was inaugurated with an open house in June. Around 60 people were in attendance, including label converters from Germany, Greece, Asia and the Middle East, alongside staff from Etirama and Etiflex, Etirama's distributors in Greece, Spain, Portugal and the United Arab Emirates, and supplier partners such as ABC, BST, COE, Flint Group and Kocher + Beck.

Visitors watched demonstrations of Etirama's SPS3 modular flexo press. The servo-driven SPS3, which has a 350mm web width, can be equipped with up to 10-colors and includes options such as cold foil, delam/relam, lamination, sheeter and turn bar for reverse printing.

An electronic pre-register system facilitates the production of small and medium-sized jobs with a quick and economical setup. The press can run at speeds of up to 150m/min, allowing it also to handle long runs effectively.

The press features Industry 4.0 connectivity, with remote technical assistance and the ability to provide information about its production in real-time.

The machine is part of Etirama's Global Series press line, launched in 2020 as part of a strategy to consolidate the company's brand around the world. The Global Series range standardizes Etirama's machines on a single platform with components made by international partners.

Etirama has installed 10 modular presses in Europe since their launch, though the company has a legacy installation base of much older CI flexo machines on the continent which numbers in the triple digits.

But it is the new modular press line, of which the SPS3 is the newest machine, which Schröter believes has great potential in the European market. 'Etirama is the market leader in Latin America



L-R: Bart van den Brink, Etirama CEO Ronnie Schröter and CFO Thomas Schröter

"We believe that European label converters are a very important audience for our machines"

and in order to continue growing in the market, we decided in 2020 to expand our operations in Europe,' he explains.

'Etirama machines are simple to operate and inexpensive and easy to maintain. The press is economical to set up and stable during production. The price is very attractive, with a quick return on investment. We think it could be the machine with the best payback on the market. So, it's a great option for a recovering European market.'

'Etirama is one of the few companies in the segment dedicated exclusively to this profile of machine. At a time when the world is more dynamic and constantly changing, the Etirama machine is a low-risk investment with a quick return.'

'So, with the focus on strengthening the brand on the continent and attracting customers who do not yet know the brand, we decided to have a demonstration machine for customers to discover and test.'

The press in the showroom is available for demonstrations, and then will be sold and replaced by new models sent by Etirama, says Schröter. 'This ensures that the market has the opportunity to learn about different models and configurations from time to time.'

Schröter is enthused by Bert van den Brink's involvement in the project. 'Bert purchased shares in Etirama Europe, which manages the operations in Europe, and contributes as an advisor, sharing his market know-how,' he says. 'We believe that this alliance with Bert is an important step towards strengthening the brand in Europe with solidity and speed.'

Further European distributors will be named by Etirama in the coming months, according to Schröter. Aside from Etiflex handling Germany, Austria and Switzerland, deals are in place with agents covering Portugal, Spain, Greece and Turkey.



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Mark Andy appoints new CEO to lead company to growth

Mark Andy appointed Duane Pekar as its new CEO earlier this year. In this exclusive interview, he sits down with Chelsea McDougall for a look at what's in store for the flexo and digital press manufacturer

Mark Andy's new CEO, Duane Pekar, has joined the company at an interesting time.

The label industry still reeling after several years of supply chain disruptions, rising costs of raw materials, excess inventory and a labor shortage that is looking more systemic every day.

Pekar, however, is no stranger to leading organizations through periods of transformation.

As he gets to know Mark Andy, its customers and the industry as a whole, he is committed to leading the company with a customer-centric approach that extends beyond just selling capital equipment.

'If you're not focused on your customers, at some point, you're going to wake up and find out that you don't have any customers,' he tells L&L.

Since he started at Mark Andy earlier this year, Pekar has been on a whirlwind tour visiting Mark Andy's facilities in the US and abroad, as well as touring converter customers' facilities to help him understand the label industry.

'It's just so exciting to visit with our customers, to learn how they make a living, how our customers support their customers, and what Mark Andy can do to help them all,' Pekar says.

'I'm starting with our customers and understanding what Mark Andy already does well, what we're not doing well, and most importantly, what we need to focus on to help them.

He continues: 'We really are consultants to our customers, which means we focus on their needs, not just what we want to sell and that's really the approach we've taken, and that's Mark Andy has been so successful.

Labelexpo debut

Pekar joins as the company looks to make a splash at Labelexpo Americas this fall, where the St Louis, Missouri-based company will exhibit on its home turf.

Mark Andy will bring five printing presses to Labelexpo, including the launch of its new P Series S9 for label and flexible packaging markets. This new press features flexo sleeve technology in 22in and 26in web widths.

Mark Andy will also showcase a 2200



Mark Andy CEO Duane Pekar

"The future of the industry may not be only in pressure-sensitive labels"

flexo press featuring a mounted Domino iQ-R digital engine.

The company will also bring a Digital Pro Max press with Konica Minolta digital engine and its Digital series HD hybrid press.

A Mark Andy Pro Series press will be featured in the Domino booth. The Pro Series is fully servo-driven and will integrate Domino's K600i and K300 high-speed monochrome variable data printing technology. This collaboration between Mark Andy, Domino and Konica Minolta is clear evidence of what Pekar believes is central to the company's success: its partnerships.

Under Pekar, the company will continue to be 'a leading industry integrator' of both digital and flexo technology because, as the way he sees it, there's room for both technologies on any shop floor.

'We are really doubling down on digital and flexo innovation,' he says. 'We absolutely believe that there's a future for both. Hybrid is the sweet spot in the middle, and we plan to play in all of those areas because that's what our customers need.'

On the road

Pekar spent years honing his expertise in operational efficiency, strategic planning and business development. His most recent role is working with private equity firms to lead complex organizations through periods of transformation. Pekar started his career at General Motors and has worked at other Fortune 500 firms like Carrier Corporation, United Technologies and Honeywell, where he honed his expertise in operational efficiency, strategic planning and business development.

Pekar looks to spearhead Mark Andy's strategic initiatives to enhance its product portfolio, expand its global footprint and strengthen its market position in North America.

'Mark Andy enjoys a real leadership position in the flexo and the hybrid press space in North America and it's an enviable position to be in,' he says. 'We have a strong reputation for highly reliable products, technical support and services. Mark Andy presses are workhorse machines at the heart of many label operations.'

Pekar is focused on leveraging Mark Andy's packaging experts as more label converters are expanding into other print markets, like flexible packaging, in-mold and shrink sleeves. Pekar is looking at what that means for how Mark Andy machines are deployed. In the immediate term, it means presses, like its new P Series S9, are getting wider.

'The future of the industry may not be only in pressure-sensitive labels,' Pekar says. 'The trend of shorter runs benefits the narrow web converter, as wide web converters are finding their runs getting shorter, and they're looking at 23in or 26in flexo presses that can be more efficient on flexible packaging or folding cartons.'

He continues: 'We may not be printing the same things on Mark Andy flexo presses five or 10 years from now, but I'm pretty sure there are going to be flexo presses around.'



Mark Andy is bringing five machines to Labelexpo Americas 2024. Scan the QR code to learn more



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KDV Label leverages automation advantage

Wisconsin-based label converter has built a business model around productivity. Now KDV Label has added capacity with digital technology as it celebrates 50 years in business. Chelsea McDougall reports

Watching a job change at KDV Label is like watching a well-choreographed dance.

A rail-mounted tool table sweeps in along a built-in track on the floor, carrying all the tools needed for the next job. Two press operators are manning the press, but for this job change, additional team members are brought in from finishing and part washing to assist. Each team member knows their place and their role, with each person moving seamlessly through the process.

This writer is not watching a ballet performance but rather a job change at a label production facility in Waukesha, Wisconsin – the capital of the US dairy industry – at a leading converter for dairy products.

It's this detailed choreography that allows KDV Label operators to change over a flexo press in minutes.

This choreography was no accident. It was this model of efficiency that made KDV one of the best-managed companies in North America.

And it has the hardware to prove it.

The company was recently awarded a Eugene Singer Award from TLMI in the medium-sized company category. The Eugene Singer Awards are based on various metrics, showcasing KDV's overall financial performance and operational management and recognizing the best-performing TLMI converter members. It was KDV's first such award.

One that was 50 years in the making.

Rich history

KDV Label celebrates 50 years in business in 2024. The company was started in 1974 by Karen and Dick Vaughn. The KDV origin

"We can't run faster tomorrow to make up for a bad day today"

story is one that many label converters can tell – it's a story that begins in the family garage.

Karen and Dick ran the company successfully until their son, Shane Vaughn, took over operations in 1996. Shane led the company as it grew more than four-fold during his tenure.

The company was purchased in 2021 by Mason Wells, a Milwaukee-based private equity firm that owns or has owned major US packaging and converter groups such as AWT Labels & Packaging and Identco.

Shane Vaughn eventually retired from the family business in April 2023, and Walz took the top leadership position.

Today KDV Label is a USD 65M company, with aggressive plans to double its size over the next five years.

In 2016, KDV acquired iGraphics in Loveland, Colorado, and later, in 2023, acquired Selective Label in Sugar Grove, Illinois, expanding its footprint to three locations serving the entire US.

The aggressive growth plans are bolstered by Keith Walz at the helm as president and CEO, alongside Mike Brucher, president of Selective Label, Darrell O'Brien, VP of sales, and Ken Robinson, VP of operations. The executive team also includes additions from marketing, finance and sales.

Equipment

KDV Label has 21 flexo presses and four digital presses. Its newest flexo is a Mark Andy P7 press was installed three years ago. The majority of the presses have multiple installations of the same make and web width to run the same products when the company needs flexibility in its schedule or for redundancy. Thirteen turret rewinders from Martin Automatic and KTI are essential for keeping the presses moving.

KDV has moved away from a single-operator model and now operates each press as a team, so when it's time for a press changeover, at least four individuals are there to help change inks, mount plates, mount dies, get the press in register and away they go.

'Now it's about managing a team rather than managing a press,' says Walz.

KDV is a leading producer of beverage labels and has built a business model based on efficiency. More than 1 million labels are printed at KDV each hour, and over 15,000 SKUs are actively managed. Keeping the presses running efficiently is critical to the company's success.

As Robinson puts it: 'We can't run faster tomorrow to make up for a bad day today.'

Efficiency may be the current name of the game at KDV, but

Gary Morrison joins KDV Label

KDV Label has appointed Gary Morrison as senior vice president of sales and marketing.

Morrison brings over two decades of experience and a track record of driving sales growth and profitability through team leadership, account management and customer engagement in the print industry.

Morrison was formerly a regional director of sales at Multi-Color Corporation, where he built teams that cultivated customer loyalty by serving the food and beverage markets and driving portfolio growth. His entrepreneurial style and collaborative manner consistently exceed the organization's and customers' performance goals.

As senior vice president of sales and marketing, Morrison will lead the sales and marketing teams, foster client relationships, and identify new market opportunities to drive revenue growth.



digital is its future.

Earlier this year, KDV installed the latest digital equipment from Durst, with nearline and finishing units from Grafotronic.

KDV's Durst Tau RSCi is a 17-inch, UV inkjet printer designed for mid- to long-run jobs. Additionally, KDV sees the opportunity to run short-run jobs more economically. The machine is equipped with a chill roller and jumbo winders to sustain quality at high speeds.

'We were looking for a high-speed digital press to fit with the production efficiencies we've developed over the past five decades,' says Robinson. 'The Durst RSCi checked all the boxes and not only fits but enhances our production model and the way we can serve customers.'

Walz adds: 'We did a vast assessment. We asked the press to do a lot, and we needed the speed and color consistency that was offered by Durst.'

'The quality of these machines is mind-numbing,' Walz continues. 'We've had no issues whatsoever, and already about 5 percent of our business is going through these machines.'

'We naturally feel that the market is going in this direction. In today's world where inventory is a bad word, and marketing departments are relying on versioning and short runs, this just gives us another leg of flexibility and allows us to penetrate other markets that demand high-quality enhanced labels.'

"In today's world where inventory is a bad word, and marketing departments are relying on versioning and short runs, this just gives us another leg of flexibility"

KDV Label has the equipment and the team, and under new leadership, it has been focusing more on another critical component: data.

The company uses EFI Radius to schedule jobs and collect data from nearly every facet of the business, guiding decisions, analyzing quality and performance and monitoring downtime.

'We now have a better understanding of our business than we've had before and we have the data to back it up,' Walz says.

Business model

One of KDV's larger end markets is the dairy industry, but it also participates in other verticals, primarily the beverage, household, personal care and automotive markets.

The dairy industry is traditionally marked by high volumes, high mix quick turn labels that are moving through the KDV facility daily. Not to mention, these labels often must withstand harsh environments that are often cold and wet and labels that are being asked to stretch and not to wrinkle.

'We have highly automated production lines and have invested a significant amount of capital to ensure our production process is the most effective and efficient,' Walz says. 'In the dairy industry, you have to be fast and furious, and that takes a lot of effort.'

Sustainability is another key aspect of the company's success.

KDV joined the Association of Plastic Recyclers in July 2023. APR is a US-based international non-profit, and the only North American organization focused exclusively on improving recycling for plastics. APR member companies are committed to the success of recycling existing plastic into new material to reduce landfilling, plastic pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.

KDV also uses Convergen to recycle its waste matrix that is converted to energy (see boxout).

Over its 50 years, the company quietly built its dairy empire in Wisconsin, all while becoming a leader in sustainability, winning awards, and keeping its customers coming back for more. Recently, the company wants to shout its good news from the rooftop.

'We were flying under the radar for many years,' says O'Brien, the company's VP of sales. 'Nobody knew how good we are. Now we have serious marketing, so our customers and potential customers know how good we are. We are the second largest dairy label producer in the country, and it's not just because I'm the greatest dairy salesman in the US,' he says, laughing. 'It's because we have the right equipment, right leadership, the right team.'

'When we identified and targeted the dairy market in the 1990s, we designed the production powerhouse necessary to support it,' says O'Brien, the company's longtime sales VP. 'We trained our people, built the system, and invested in the equipment needed to provide the level of service and consistency necessary to succeed. In doing so, we set a new standard for that industry.'

'As we move forward and grow the business, we will replicate our world-class service and production capabilities for new customers in new markets.'



Scan the QR code to learn more about KDV Label



Convergen, Labelexpo, TLMI, RES partner on waste collection at Labelexpo Americas

Labelexpo Americas has partnered with Convergen Energy, TLMI and Rosemont Exposition Services on a label waste sustainability program.

The program – free for participating exhibitors – is aimed at saving any printed label materials, that would otherwise be going to landfill, at Labelexpo Americas 2024. The show takes place from Sept 10-12 at the

Donald E Stephens Convention Center, in Rosemont, Illinois.

Convergen Energy has been providing sustainable alternatives to landfilling for non-recyclable industrial by-products for the past 15 years. Over this timeframe, the company has diverted more than 700,000 tons of non-recyclable materials away from landfills.

Convergen uses these materials to produce a renewable fuel that is used in solid fuel boilers to displace fossil fuels.

Convergen will be collecting pressure-sensitive label stock, flexible packaging, shrink or wrap-around material metalized PET, release liners and matrix waste.

For more information, visit www.labelexpo-americas.com.

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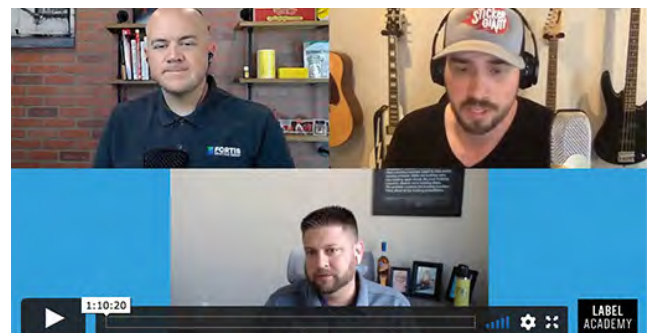
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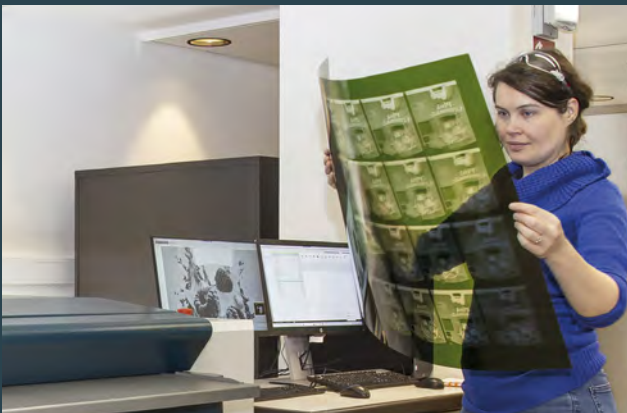
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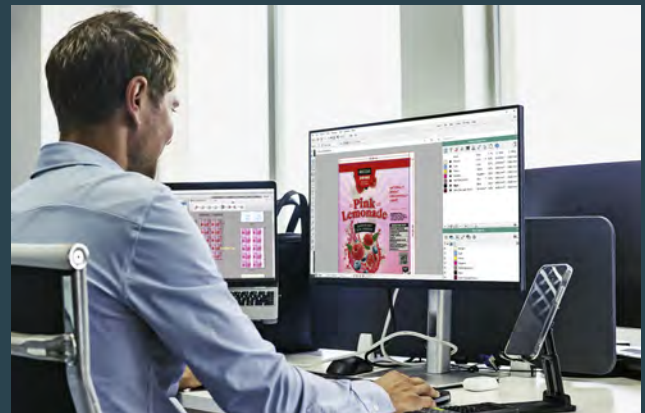
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RRD supports veterans with dedicated hiring initiative

RR Donnelley & Sons Company (RRD) says the common denominator to its innovation is, and always has been, extraordinary people. The company now helps veterans to find their feet back in the civilian world. Piotr Wnuk reports

RRD has long recognized that its innovation is driven by extraordinary people. Founded by Richard Robert Donnelley in 1864, RRD began as a local print operation in Chicago and has since grown to serve 18,000 clients, including 92 percent of the Fortune 100.

As the company celebrates its 160th anniversary, it reflects on a legacy of innovation and excellence, with a mission to transform customer touchpoints into meaningful moments of impact.

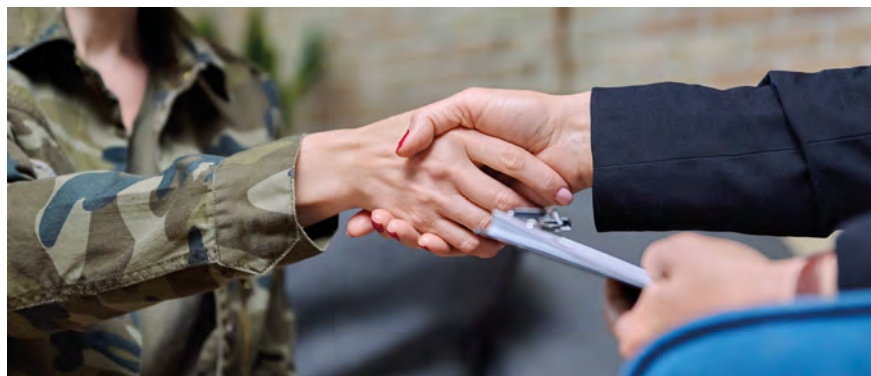
'The word "excellence" is found in both our anniversary celebration tagline and our refreshed company values,' says Deb Steiner, executive vice president and chief administrative officer at RRD. 'To us at RRD, we strive for excellence in order to be a vital partner to our clients, and we're fostering a culture and attracting talent with that shared value in mind. Through recruitment efforts and partnering with veteran organizations, we see firsthand the immense value veterans bring to an organization.'

In 2023, facing a global shortage of skilled workforce affecting the printing and packaging industries, RRD's human resources team began brainstorming ways to attract new talent, with an emphasis on military veterans.

'RRD values the strong work ethic, diligence and structure veterans bring to an environment and we wanted to present more opportunities for them to transition into - and succeed in - the civilian workforce,' notes Mark Brothers, senior vice president of human resources. 'RRD recognizes the challenge veterans face when trying to identify how their military experience and skills translate into civilian jobs. Thus came the idea to associate military job codes with every open, hourly job role at RRD.'

Military job codes, often referred to as Military Occupational Specialties (MOS) in the US Army and Marine Corps, Air Force Specialty Codes (AFSC) in the Air Force, and Ratings or Navy Enlisted Classifications (NEC) in the Navy, are alphanumeric codes used to identify specific job roles and duties within the military.

Each job is assigned a specific code, which may include a combination of numbers and letters. For example, a 68W



"Through recruitment efforts and partnering with veteran organizations, we see firsthand the immense value veterans bring to an organization"

in the Army is a Health Care Specialist (Combat Medic).

Melissa Bourdage, regional human resources manager at RRD and US Marine veteran, led the manual process of assigning applicable military codes to each open role in RRD's recruiting database. As far as RRD knows, there is no database to source this type of information from, so having a veteran familiar with the codes was critical to kickstart this initiative. The military job codes have been live on RRD's hourly job postings since January 2024.

This intensive process for RRD's HR team has received support from veterans around the company, including Lisa Pruett, RRD president for the packaging and labels segment and US Army veteran.

'I have to brag about the HR team at RR Donnelley. As a company, we are hyper-focused on hiring veterans. But it can be tough for transitioning veterans to translate what they did in the military to the civilian world. Even the words used to describe the same thing can be different,' comments Pruett. 'For every posted job opening, they have listed the closest match military job codes to help bridge this gap.

So, for instance, a 91X transitioning from the Army will know that our maintenance mechanic job is aligned with their military occupation. The amount of work to get this done was a heavy lift. But think about the results! We now have a common language.'

Pruett took her excitement to LinkedIn, where her post garnered significant interest and appreciation from veterans themselves.

'This is game-changing for so many veterans. As a Navy cook, it was easier to translate my experience to civilian life, but many [jobs] don't translate so easily. I'm proud to work for a company that's willing to go the extra mile in this regard,' writes Paul Lochner, events manager at RRD.

The campaign has also garnered interest from other HR professionals who seek to implement similar job coding in their own recruitment efforts.

The recruitment campaign is still in its infancy, but RRD hopes to expand it further by incorporating military job codes into all salaried positions. This effort highlights RRD's commitment to leveraging the unique skills and experiences of veterans, helping them find their place in the civilian workforce while driving the company's mission of innovation and excellence forward.

As RRD continues to celebrate its 160th anniversary, it looks to the future with the same commitment to excellence that has defined its past, supported by the people who make it all possible.



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Catapult Print maximizes profitability with Nilpeter

The industry disruptor, Catapult Print, just saw its best quarter yet and is on track to hit USD 60M in July. Christine Won reports

Six years since its founding, Catapult Print has seen explosive growth and is on track to hit 60 million USD this summer.

True to its name, the custom label printer catapulted onto the scene in April 2018, when founder and chairman Mark Cook launched his dream from the ground up in Orlando, Florida.

A soccer injury took Mark Cook out of the sports world, landing him in the printing world after asking his brother Ash Cook for a job at the print company he was working at.

So, Mark Cook started out packing boxes. However, he quickly rose through the ranks from finishing to press operator to sales, becoming a shareholder in eight years.

In 2013, he joined Equator Design, a global packaging design agency, and after its sale to SGK in 2017, branched out on his own to address the quality and service issues in the US print industry.

Labeled a startup then without a single customer, Catapult Print has become one of the industry leaders in just six years, achieving a record number of sales in the Q1 2024.

Since January, the converter has sold over 513 million labels, up 45.8 percent from the same period last year. That's 52 million feet of labels in the first four months of the year, also up 16.6 percent from Q1 2023.

The company started with the mentality, 'If we build it, they will come,' according to co-founder and CEO Lewis Cook.

Shaking up a 'stale' industry

'The market is very stale and needs disrupting,' Lewis Cook says.

'Many printers are still doing the same thing they've been doing for 30 years, and Catapult is challenging the status quo.'

From the beginning, Catapult sought to be different. With a bold emphasis on four principles – quality, price, service and lead times – it achieved a record sales increase of 32.4 percent with a total of 8,300 SKUs dispatched this past quarter.

In Q1 2024, Catapult fulfilled 99 percent of orders on time with an average lead time of 5.3 days and 21 percent of orders within just two days.

In particular, the Cooks call out 'old technology, manual processes and a lack of transparency' industry-wide that impedes its outlook. It's time, they urge, for the industry as a whole to reflect the modern day of transparent data and instant access.

Boasting organic growth, Catapult has onboarded 55 new customers in 2023 alone. '[This] shows we are doing something right,' Mark Cook says. 'Our passion to create a customer-focused business that is truly changing and disrupting the industry is key to our success.'

Understanding the audience

Clearly, the Cooks understand their audience, their needs and their wants, and make sure to deliver.

'Every new customer I speak to has two priorities: lead time and price,' Mark Cook says. 'That's why we built the business, to offer something unique and different. I'm blown away every day at what we've created with technology, automation, systems and data that give customers everything: better costs, better quality, better lead times and better service. You truly have to see it to believe it.'

Catapult's formula for success seems simple enough but impossible to do: giving customers what they want – higher quality,



Catapult Print co-CEO Lewis Cook at Nilpeter's open house in April

"Many printers are still doing the same thing they've been doing for 30 years, and Catapult is challenging the status quo"

lower prices, better service and shorter lead times.

'We have created a unique model that enables us to offer customers significantly shorter lead times and lower prices by digitalizing the flexo process,' Lewis Cook says.

Catapult is leveraging the latest technology, automating manual, time-consuming tasks, and developing bespoke systems to manage workflow and create an agile production environment. Using live data also allows the converter to continuously improve.

Crystal, Catapult's purpose-built platform, serves as an in-house system and is utilized internally and externally. The client portal provides real-time data on all aspects of its projects, artworks, orders and inventory, providing full visibility of each job.

'We've lean engineered the entire process, from order to dispatch, to help us become quicker and slicker than any of our competitors, which means we are more responsive and more cost-effective than any other flexo supplier,' Lewis Cook says. In numbers, that means 30 different jobs in a 12-hour period on one press. 'If you think conventional, that would be impossible in any normal business.'

Now the USD 55M business with over 100 employees worldwide is on track to hit USD 60M in July. Catapult's best quarter yet is the fruition of its service-driven, lean production model as it gains traction across the pressure-sensitive and linerless label sectors.

To spur that momentum at the start of the year, Catapult installed the first Nilpeter FA-26 press in the US, its eighth FA-line press but the first in 26-inch web width that will take production wider and faster. 'This is the most automated flexo on the market,' Lewis Cook says. 'We believe in these presses.'

And they're not afraid to share their secret sauce for success because Catapult is already eyeing another 26in press for its next phase of growth.



Scan the QR code to read more about Catapult Print in Labels & Labeling



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Crane Consumables plans expansion after years of growth

Crane Consumables in Ohio has been steadily building and growing its niche market of blank labels for the value-added reseller network. Christine Won reports

“I saw an opportunity to improve, to be a little more customer-responsive”

How many companies have culture officers? How many of those culture officers are canine? At Crane Consumables, three: Charlie Crane, Sherman Crane and Archie Crane. With tail wags, happy barks and even tricks for treats, the pups take their job very seriously.

The Cranes, father-and-son Rod and Robert Crane who helm the business, credit the pups with brightening faces and enlivening the workspace to support their high employee retention rate amid a nationwide labor crisis: over 50 percent of the workforce has been with the converter for over five years.

Rod Crane understands the importance of company culture, as well as employee and customer satisfaction. He has built his company around three key principles: loyalty, integrity and gratitude.

History

Crane Consumables, a label manufacturer based in Monroe, Ohio, specializes in barcode labels for the value-added reseller (VAR) market.

Founded in 2007, the family-owned and operated converter has seen double-digit growth every year and currently has 60 employees. Soon after its founding, the company faced the Great Recession of 2008, but was able to absorb the hit and not only survive but grow.

Now the 40,000sqft facility near Cincinnati houses 15 flexo presses. The company has digital on its radar and plans to open a second facility in Q3 this year.

Founder Rod Crane hails from a business marketing background and previously worked in the labels division at Intermec, since acquired by Honeywell.

‘I saw an opportunity to improve, to be a little more customer-responsive,’ he says. ‘I got tired of building for the big guy, so decided to get it right and do it ourselves. We started from nothing to where we are today.’

He quickly realized the value of narrowing in on a niche market: blank labels for VARs, selling only through its cultivated channel partners.

‘Consumables are products you buy and use, and buy again,’ Rod Crane says. ‘That’s what I like about it – it’s a residual business. And if you do a good job and take care of your customers, they keep coming back.’

The converter’s forte is barcode labels, across a wide spectrum of products from car engines to cryogenic freezers and healthcare test tubes, offering next-day shipping on all stock products for clients looking for off-the-shelf label sizes.

The company’s portfolio includes thermal transfer labels, thermal transfer ribbons, direct thermal labels, polyester labels, polypropylene labels, flood-coated labels and barcodes as well as printing up to two colors.

The industry saw a boom in e-commerce when the pandemic shifted consumers’ purchasing patterns, and that demand is still going strong, according to Robert Crane: ‘Everyone’s going online to shop, and these trends haven’t changed.’



The Cranes, father-and-son Rod and Robert Crane who helm the business

Automation

With a customer-centered mentality that ‘if you don’t win, we don’t win,’ Crane Consumables has focused on controlling costs through efficiencies, driven by technology and automation.

In that vein, Robert Crane visited Labelexpo Americas 2022 and Labelexpo Europe 2023 in search of the latest automation trends.

Crane uses the latest automated scheduling tool from Label Traxx, to sequence job tickets in the most efficient order.

The converter is also using AI to write marketing copy and to code building software for repetitive tasks, as well as to aggregate data and monitor inventory.

On the shop floor, the process has been ‘all but fully automated,’ with two new turrets installed at the end of May.

The company has maximized the square footage of the current facility with 15 presses and is already planning a second facility.

Its 13 and 18in presses average about 300ft to 500ft/min. Its oldest machine, a 2007 Rotoflex DLI 330, also just got its second wind, thanks to the ingenuity of the Crane engineering group.

It’s this creative culture that helps to fuel new ideas in the labeling business. Crane credits much of its success to creative employees who bring innovation to the company.

Sustainability

Sustainability is a big part of how Crane Consumables gives back. To date, about 98 percent of waste from manufacturing at the facility is recycled, from water-based inks to paper and matrix waste.

Every other week, a truckload of label matrix bales is picked up to be turned into fuel pellets and transported for recycling.

‘It is a big deal for us,’ Rod Crane says. ‘We didn’t wait for the industry; we’ve been recycling since 2010 because it is the right thing to do. Crane Consumables has been on the fast track for the last 18 years and we look forward to continued success in the years to come.’



Scan the QR code to learn more about Crane Consumables



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Nilpeter digitalizes flexo at open house

A repurposed Technology and Educational Center highlights Nilpeter's educational focus. Christine Won reports

Nilpeter hosted an open house in April at its repurposed large-scale Technology and Educational Center in Cincinnati, Ohio. Apart from spotlighting the company's entire fleet from its legacy FBs to the latest FAs, Nilpeter also showcased how it is digitalizing flexo.

The one-day event, themed 'Expanded Color Gamut', drew 150 guests and 25 tabletop exhibitors alongside presenters from Catapult Print, Flexografix, Techkon USA and Clemson University.

"We've digitalized flexo. Flexo is very compatible now with digital in regard to the setups, the wastes and the runs"

Nilpeter will launch the new FB-14 flexo press, which will also be showcased at Labelexpo Americas 2024 in September alongside an FA-26, emphasizing the efficiency gains of the conventional technology.

'We've digitalized flexo,' says Lenny DeGirolmo, president of Nilpeter USA. 'Flexo is very comparable now with digital in regard to the setups, the wastes and the runs.'

Digitalizing flexo is 80 percent about automating the pre-press process, DeGirolmo explains: 'We've automated all the moving parts within the printing process of these presses. From plate cylinders to chill rolls, side-to-side, front-to-back movement, it's all been automated.'

Expanded color gamut

In particular, the open house aimed to emphasize efficiencies to be gained by running jobs with an expanded color gamut (ECG).

Printing with expanded gamut process colors allows for a broader color gamut and typically includes CMYK plus orange, green and violet. By adding these three additional base inks into the process, converters can achieve a much closer match to traditional formulated spot ink colors as well as eliminate the need to wash up the press between jobs.

Ken Pavett, CEO and chief technical officer of Flexografix in Carol Stream, Illinois, in his presentation 'Understanding expanded color gamut: a scientific perspective', referenced the 2021 dissertation of Dr Kai Lankinen, a renowned ECG expert.

Lankinen, who previously conducted a feature on ECG at Labelexpo Europe 2023, says on his website that with ECG, converters can increase their efficiency by 30 percent and reduce their carbon footprint by 20 percent.

Minimizing or eliminating solvent use in the plate production process is a key step for many flexo printers in reducing their carbon footprint by offering a more sustainable operation and a cleaner working environment.

In his 'Evaluation of expanded gamut printing in flexography', Lankinen 'evaluates the transition from spot color printing to Expanded Gamut Printing, EGP, i.e., a multicolor process in solvent-based wide web flexography, which reduces the complexity of the printing process and produces spot color simulations in a simpler, more effective and more sustainable way.'

Despite such potential gains, however, there are some challenges to ECG acceptance, which Pavett addressed. For instance, some barriers to ECG adoption include limited reference information available, uncertainty about how to sell, or fears of reproduction and process control problems.

In his 'Printing by the numbers: maintaining perfect expanded gamut color at full press production speeds', George Adam, president of Techkon USA touched on the importance of pressroom color control with ECG and highlighted the benefits of Techkon's SpectroVision in-line color measurement system. 'It provides real-time feedback during make-ready and production to remove the guesswork for press operators with clear actionable feedback regarding color press adjustments,' he says.

Thus, ECG means fewer changeovers and more savings. 'The most important piece in production is to reduce make-ready,' Adam adds. 'Make-ready is losing money.'

Other presenters at the open house included Lewis Cook, co-founder and CEO at Catapult Print and Chip Tonkin, chair of the Department of Graphic Communications at Clemson University, who presented 'What is expanded color gamut and its benefits'.

Unparalleled transparency

At the open house, Cook's presentation, 'How catapult print uses expanded color gamut', struck a chord with the converters in the crowd. After the session, multiple printers handpicked his presentation as their key takeaway.

Cook talked about using a scientific, data-driven approach to cut lead times and maximize output.

Crystal, Catapult's purpose-built platform, serves as an in-house system and is utilized internally and externally by a majority of its clients. The client portal provides real-time data on all aspects of its projects, artworks, orders and inventory, providing full visibility of each job.

'As a data-driven company, Crystal empowers us to utilize this wealth of information to create key performance indicators (KPIs) for our clients,' Cook says. 'We can track metrics such as on-time delivery percentages and order fulfillment rates, all of which

consistently exceed industry standards. Crystal is integral to our commitment to efficiency, transparency, and exceptional service.'

Armed with the latest technologies, such as automation tools, the Orlando, Florida-based converter has sold over 513 million labels since January, up 45.8 percent from the same period last year. That's 52 million feet of labels in the first three months of the year, also up 16.6 percent from Q1 2023.

Catapult hit a sales increase of 32.4 percent with a total of 8,300 SKUs dispatched this past quarter, 1,800 across the US and Canada within two days of order. In Q1 2024, Catapult fulfilled 99 percent of orders on time with an average lead time of 5.3 days and 21 percent of orders within just two days.

With Nilpeter, Catapult has found its partner for growth: 'This is the most automated flexo on the market,' Cook says. 'We believe in these presses.'

Catapult installed the first Nilpeter FA-26 press with a die station in the US, its eighth FA-line press but the first in 26in web width that will take production wider and faster.

Kevin Kollman, president and owner of Prime Packaging based in Wood Dale, Illinois, also bought an FA-26 in December and was among the guests.

Prime Packaging, which specializes in flexible packaging, invested in the Nilpeter FA-26, a 10-color flexo to enhance the company's production capabilities and expand into new markets, such as the health and beauty sectors.

Over the years, the converter has pivoted to focus on flexible packaging, with about 70 percent of its customer base coming from the food and beverage sector servicing products such as dry seasoning pouches, roll-fed labels and shrink sleeves.

The press, running two shifts to meet increased demand since



Nilpeter open house at its repurposed large-scale Technology and Educational Center in Cincinnati, Ohio

December, represents Prime Packaging's first venture with Nilpeter, driven by a need to stay competitive in a fast-evolving market.

'Our older presses couldn't keep up with our increased customer demand and the desire to implement expanded color gamut printing capabilities,' Kollman says.

Since it went into operation, the press has been making significant strides for Prime Packaging by allowing the production of more complex images and vibrant flesh tones, comparable to that of digital and offset printing platforms.

'It's not just about meeting demand, it's about exceeding it. With features, such as sleeve-based tooling, job memory and advanced-register control, we're not just keeping pace; we're setting the pace,' Kollman adds. 'We knew that stepping up our capabilities would be good, but the performance of this new press has exceeded our expectations. We have been able to secure new

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“This is the most automated flexo on the market. We believe in these presses”

business and offer a greater quality of product to our customers.’

Kollman came to the open house in April to learn about the manufacturer’s new presses and industry trends, noting a key benefit of ECG is a fewer number of changeovers. ‘ECG saves our customers money by reducing our setup times, number of make-readies and our overall waste,’ he says.

DeGirolmo adds: ‘Our FA-26 flexo press is truly making its mark in the US, where it’s highly sought after due to its performance capabilities in flexible packaging, expanded color gamut, automation and digitalization features, all of which are essential for a modern printing facility. These were exactly the attributes Prime Packaging was looking for, and it’s gratifying to see the press proving its worth from day one at their location.’

Educational focus

The repurposed 75,000sqft facility, now the company’s largest technological center worldwide complete with a machine shop, has broadened its focus beyond manufacturing to include a demo floor to showcase its revamped ‘Future of flexo’ portfolio.

The move comes as the company pivots to spotlight its education component.

‘Nilpeter is focusing more on educating customers and teaching them different ways to do things than just worrying about selling a piece of steel,’ DeGirolmo says. ‘Because if customers are not

successful, we’re not successful.’

At the open house, attendees got a first tour of the Ohio facility. The demo floor includes the company’s FA-17, FA-26, FB-350, digital rewinders and a hybrid, and the new FB-14.

‘With three production sites across Denmark, US and India, the first question clients often ask is: where is this press manufactured,’ says Tom Clawson, Nilpeter senior sales consultant. According to Clawson, FA-26s are manufactured in Denmark, FBs in India and FA-17s in Europe or the US, depending on production and configuration.

‘There is a lot of talk in the flexo industry today about automation,’ Clawson says. At the forefront of the pack are the Nilpeter FAs, he says, calling the presses ‘the most advanced flexo in the world.’

What makes the Nilpeter FAs so advanced? ‘The secret is in the chill rolls,’ he says. ‘We make it ourselves for a reason.’

Behind the scenes on the shop floor in Ohio, lights-out manufacturing is further automating the process with programmed robots finishing making parts after the workers go home.

Exhibitors included Actega North America, BST North America, CTS Industries, Daetwyler USA, Danko Industries, Flexo Wash, Flexographic Technical Association, GEW, Label Traxx, Lundberg Tech, Provident, RotoMetrics, Siegwirk and Univac Foils.

‘The open house was a great success,’ DeGirolmo says. ‘People are saying it was one of the best events they attended and walking away with new knowledge.’



See how industry disruptor Catapult Print is maximizing efficiency with Nilpeter issue on page 55





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Eticom sees success with flex pack expansion

Mexican label converter Eticom's move into flexible packaging production five years ago has transformed its business. James Quirk reports

Many a label converter has moved into flexible packaging in recent years as a way to diversify their product offering, but few have done so more successfully than Mexico-based Eticom. Five years since making the move, flexible packaging represents 30 percent of its business and will likely reach parity with its label production 'in the medium term', the company believes.

Eticom, founded in 2000, moved into flexible packaging production in 2019. 'We were already running digital presses from HP Indigo for label production, and HP themselves considered us a good candidate to move into flexible packaging. They encouraged us,' explains Sergio Ramirez, Eticom's general manager, who oversees the company's flexible packaging operation. 'We already understood the digital technology and processes. We had experience printing complicated labels for markets such as wine and artisanal beer.'

'Some of our customers were also beginning to request flexible packaging. They were happy with the service and quality of the labels we were providing them and motivated us to expand our offering. We thought it would be a simple transition to a larger format, but of course, later we realized that there are many more layers to flexible packaging production than we first thought.'

Eticom invested in an HP Indigo 20000 digital press and Karlville's Pack Ready thermal lamination and pouch-making equipment. Stand-up pouches became the main focus, and as well as serving existing customers, Eticom found itself branching into new sectors. 'Much of the work is for markets we were already serving because a lot of the momentum came from existing customers,' says Sergio Ramirez. 'But there are also new markets that have opened because of being able to offer flexible packaging, such as nutraceuticals, with protein powders becoming a key application. This is an example of a market that we couldn't have reached with labels.'

'Coffee is another sector that previously we barely served, but we now have many coffee producers as customers. This is despite our equipment not being particularly specialized for producing traditional bags for coffee. Some of our



Eticom was founded by (L-R) siblings Francisco Ramirez, Jesus Ramirez (current CEO), Hugo Ramirez, Luis Ramirez and Irma Ramirez (not pictured)

"HP considered us a good candidate to move into flexible packaging. They encouraged us"

new investments will help us to serve this market even better because it's a big industry in Mexico with a lot of local producers.'

Today, Eticom produces flexible packaging on three printing lines: the initial HP Indigo 20000 has been augmented by subsequent investments in an HP Indigo 25K and a 200K, the digital press manufacturer's newest machine dedicated to flexible packaging production. The Karlville equipment, meanwhile, will soon be joined by a solventless laminator from Comexi – a deal finalized recently at drupa.

'It has been an adventure over these past five years,' says Sergio Ramirez. 'It has gone well. Flexible packaging already represents around 30 percent of our business. Many customers and many applications have been migrating from labels. We still have a lot of room for growth. In another five years, perhaps it will be the same size as our label business.'

The success of Eticom's foray into digital flexible packaging production means it is now considering increasing its capacity further with the addition of different processes, says Sergio Ramirez: 'Because of this trend we have seen with flexible packaging, and what it has represented for our customers and our sales, we might move out of digital-only production and think about wider web flexo. We have made great progress with digital printing,

but at some point, we are going to have to complement it with other technologies to be able to handle longer runs.'

The new investment in an SL2 solventless laminator from Comexi is another step towards increasing flexible packaging capacity.

While laminate films are sourced from large global suppliers Nobelus and Taghleef, Eticom's flexible packaging materials mainly come from local manufacturers who usually sell by the ton to wide web converters printing on flexo, offset or gravure presses. This means that adapting and preparing the materials for printing on the HP Indigo presses has been a challenge, according to Carlos Ramirez, head of digital production and Sergio's brother. 'The new Comexi machine will allow us to create our own materials,' he says. 'We can print, laminate and make the pouch – we'll have every aspect of flexible packaging production in our power. It will help to reduce our costs and increase our speed to market.'

Growth

Eticom's recent growth, in no small part down to its flexible packaging move, led it to relocate to a new 14,000sqm factory two years ago – four times larger than its previous site. It houses both label and flexible packaging production. A second site in Monterrey is dedicated exclusively



L-R: Hugo Ramirez, operations director; Carlos Ramirez, head of digital production; Martin Rodriguez, engineering director

“Flexible packaging already represents around 30 percent of our business”

to label printing, though will likely add equipment for flexible packaging production in the future.

In Monterrey, label printing takes place on flexo and digital presses and the site accounts for much of the 15-20 percent of overall production that Eticom exports to the United States, where the CBD market is one of the converter's fastest-growing.

Elsewhere, the company runs seven sales offices scattered across Mexico – in Tampico, Monterrey, Guadalajara, Querétaro, Puebla, Mérida and Durango – as well as two in the US opened four years ago, in Dallas and Houston. It employs around 200 people across all its sites.

Eticom, a family-run business, was founded in 2000 by Jesus Ramirez, the current CEO, and his four siblings, Francisco, Luis, Hugo and Irma. The five sibling founders still run the business today, while Sergio and Carlos Ramirez, general manager and digital production manager respectively, are two of four second-generation family members working at the company.

The company began printing labels on a Mark Andy 830 flexo press before adding further machines from the US press manufacturer as well as Gallus and Aquaflex.

By the time Eticom began to invest in digital presses, it was running 12 flexo machines.

Digital investment for label production began in 2012. The company has used all of HP Indigo's digital label presses since then, and today runs a fleet of 6k machines. These are complemented by a Xeikon toner press at the site in Monterrey, while a deal was recently struck at drupa for the installation of a Xeikon Panther, Eticom's first inkjet press.

'As our first inkjet machine, it will help us to get involved with a new digital printing technology,' says Carlos Ramirez. 'We like the visibility and the shine that inkjet can achieve just purely through the inks, without the need for additional finishing. The quality is very good. It is not suitable for all our work, but it's a complementary technology.'

Eticom also runs Nilpeter FA flexo presses and continues to invest in conventional printing technology, recently ordering a second MO offset press from the Danish manufacturer. Today the company runs more than 25 production lines in total, across digital, flexo and offset, and produces work for a wide range of sectors, including food and beverage, liquors, cosmetics, home and personal care, automotive and pharmaceutical, among others.

'We continue to invest in all areas of the business,' says Sergio Ramirez, 'because fortunately we are seeing growth everywhere.'



L-R: Carlos Ramirez, head of digital production, and Sergio Ramirez, general manager

Embellishment has been another key area of investment in recent years. Eticom has a long-standing relationship with GM and runs six of the Danish finishing equipment manufacturer's machines. The company runs further converting equipment from ABG, Brotech and Golden Laser.

Sergio Ramirez credits two GM hot stamping machines for Eticom's success in gaining an important foothold in the local tequila, craft beer and wine markets: 'We installed them around seven years ago and they had a huge impact in opening up markets for labels with high-quality embellishments.' Carlos Ramirez adds: 'As production manager, I can say that GM is very reliable and is always innovating. We have known each other for many years and they understand our business perfectly.'

Mexican market

Like many converters in Mexico, Eticom has benefited from the 'nearshoring' trend which has seen companies in the US, for example, seek to streamline their supply chains after disruption during the pandemic. Mexico has seen an influx of companies setting up in the country, looking to serve the US market with products that need to be labeled before export. Meanwhile, certain end-user sectors such as tequila have been growing strongly. A government mandate for health warnings on packaging further stimulated the local label sector, which then benefited again when the requirement was scrapped. The Mexican peso's increasingly favorable exchange rate with the US dollar has been a further boon to business.

'Eticom has seen double-digit growth over the last two years,' says Sergio Ramirez. 'I would imagine that it's not just us, but also many of our competitors who have been experiencing the same market conditions.'

Increasing numbers of these competitors, of course, belong to multinational converting groups, but Ramirez points out that usually, they arrive in Mexico to serve the large global brands they sell to elsewhere.

'We have talked internally about whether in the future it would be better to be part of a bigger group. However, the companies they are selling to are often multinational brands. We can offer the same quality of technology, and can quickly and efficiently serve those big brands that are left to one side by the bigger groups, but there are also many, many companies in Mexico that don't fit that profile and who are therefore not served by the bigger groups, and this represents a big opportunity for a company such as Eticom. We've invested a lot into the business, but we remain a local company.'



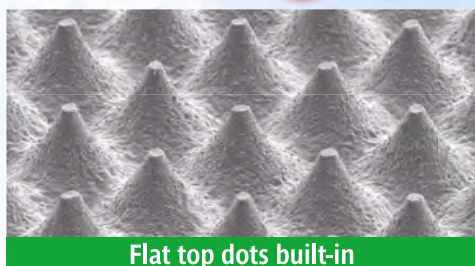
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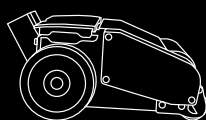
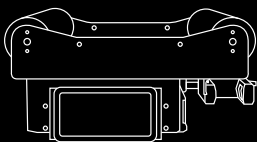
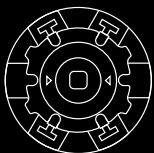
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Lombardi installs first Invicta i2 in India

Ahmedabad, India-based Prakash Printers and Coaters has become the first company in the country to install a Lombardi Invicta i2 press. The installation represents the debut of the Lombardi i2 press in Asia and the Middle East, Akanksha Meena and Piotr Wnuk report

Prakash Printers and Coaters, originally known as Thakur Printers, has been operating in the packaging industry since 1975. Thakurdas J Shivilani, founded the business by trading labels – purchasing them in Mumbai and selling them in Ahmedabad. Today his son, Prakash Shivilani, serves as director oversees sales and marketing, while Mayur Shivilani manages finance, purchasing and export sales. The converter delivers products to a range of brands in diverse segments spanning food, FMCG, cosmetics and industrial. The company is reportedly doubling its capacity every year.

L&L spoke with Mayur Shivilani, who says that when Prakash Printers and Coaters first started manufacturing in-house, it began with screen printing in a 300sqft space on the first floor of the family's residence. Over time, the converter upgraded its equipment and now boasts seven printing lines – one Etirama installed in 2005, one Multitec Ecoflex 330 mm added in 2007 and five Lombardi presses with the first Synchroline 430 mm press installed in 2017.

The facility also includes four coating lines for release and specialty coatings, a hotmelt coating line that operates at 400m/min, and several finishing machines including die-cutters and slitter rewinders.

'We produce our release paper and label stock in-house, supplying only printed



(L-R) Alberto Redaelli, head sales at Lombardi Converting Machinery; Prakash Shivilani, director of Prakash Printers and Coaters; Claudio Lombardi, president of Lombardi Converting Machinery; Ranesh Bajaj, director of Vinsak

“With our new line, production is faster than ever”

labels as finished goods. We focus on adding value to the paper we produce rather than selling raw materials. We also manufacture metalized transfer paper in-house,' adds Shivilani.

In addition to self-adhesive labels, the product line features PVC shrink sleeves, in-mold labels, BOPP wrap-around labels, and flexible laminates. The converter also performs a significant amount of confidential job work for fellow printers in the industry.

Prakash Printers and Coaters'

manufacturing facility now spans 550,000sqft, with 100,000sqft currently in use. An additional 60,000sqft is under construction and expected to be completed by April 2025, leaving ample space for future development.

Expanding flexible packaging production

Over the past three years, the company's focus has been on flexible packaging, which now accounts for almost 50 percent of its business. A significant portion of this involves jobs for other converters

Vinsak Group acquires Rotatek Spain

Vinsak Group has acquired Rotatek Spain, a Europe-based manufacturer of printing web presses for labels, flexible packaging, folding cartons, security printing, commercial printing and pharmaceutical inserts. The acquisition was completed in July 2023. The acquired company is now known as Rotatek Printing & Packaging Technologies SL and is run out of Vinsak's Dubai operation.

The Vinsak Group was associated with Rotatek from 1996 to 2013 for India, the Middle East and Africa and then again from 2020 onwards. Vinsak has sold more than 100 Rotatek presses including complicated configurations.

Ranesh Bajaj, director of Vinsak, says: 'For instance, we sold a machine with 17 units which included offset, flexo, digital, screen printing, die-cutting and sheeting units all in one line to produce high-security products. This press was 120ft long and improved the productivity by five times and reduced production costs of the product by 40 percent.'

Around 50 of the Rotatek machines sold by Vinsak are still operational in India.

In 2023, Rotatek was owned by a PE firm from Spain that was able to run it commercially but not invest in R&D, new software and production methods. In

July 2023, the Vinsak Group acquired the production unit, the patents, technical knowledge and the team of Rotatek.

Bajaj adds: 'We are proud that we absorbed all the employees and did not make even one person redundant. We are delighted that the core technical team of Rotatek is intact offering their experience and technical knowledge to the world. They are also successfully supporting more than 1800 machines around the world including some which are up to 30 years old.'

Since then, Vinsak has been working to integrate the company into the group's business policies, ethics and ethos.

in the industry, who previously relied on conventional gravure printing with cylinder-based systems.

'Since our process is cylinder-less and uses flexo polymer plates – costing less than 50 percent of traditional cylinders—fixed costs are greatly reduced. We have received numerous inquiries for short runs, often with more SKUs but smaller total job volumes. When looking for a new press, CI flexo was an option. We chose not to use solvent inks due to environmental concerns. Similarly, gravure printing was not considered for the same reason. We have always been committed to avoiding solvent inks to protect both the environment and our workers' health,' Shivlani explains.

The Invicta i2 stood out with its lower fixed costs for printing plates and cylinders, small footprint, minimal job changeover time, minimal setup waste, speed of up to 300 m/min, and web width of 880mm. It also offers value-added enhancements such as cold foiling and cast and cure.

'Additionally, due to our requirement for a wider web width, our options were a bit limited. We considered several reputable names, but having worked with the brand on the previous four installations gave Lombardi a clear edge. They were always a great choice. The new press offers double the web size and double the speed, effectively quadrupling the production capacity of a single press,' Shivlani says.

The press investment was finalized in September 2023 at Labelexpo Europe 2023, and the installation was completed by June 2024. With the increased output, the converter anticipates a growth of 25 percent in the first year after installation.

Feedback from the converter's press operators has been outstanding. 'They have never seen a machine like this before,' Shivlani remarks.

Prakash Printers and Coaters can now serve its customers with a wider web width with the new press. For example, in flexible packaging, the converter previously could handle up to 2kg of flexible packages, it can now print up to 30kg of flexible packaging.

'With our new line, production is faster than ever. We're excited to connect with new customers who previously couldn't fit within our capabilities due to our former printing width limit of 530mm. Now, we can accommodate up to 880mm,' he notes.

This machine has been specially designed for Prakash Printers and Coaters to meet its specific job requirements.

'The Invicta i2 represents the pinnacle of Lombardi Converting Machinery's commitment to providing cutting-edge flexible packaging solutions,' adds Nicola Lombardi, marketing manager at Lombardi Converting Machinery. 'Lombardi Converting Machinery is capable of offering



The press investment was finalized at Labelexpo Europe 2023

“The new press offers double the web size and double the speed, effectively quadrupling the production capacity of a single press”

solutions for all ranges of printing needs, from labels to flexible packaging, with print widths ranging from 330 to 1100mm.'

In February 2024 the Italian manufacturer established a speed record running the Invicta i2 at 300m/min.

'The machine achieved the speed effortlessly with perfect register accuracy, printing seven colors on 12-micron thickness PE material, running at 300mmin,' adds Nicola Lombardi. 'Our journey to develop the Invicta i2 was driven by our success with the fully servo-driven Synchroline model, which has been an outstanding platform for the narrow web market. With the Invicta i2, we aimed to create an entirely new platform to address the specific demands of the mid-web printing market.

'In an industry where some unsupported film jobs are typically run using digital printing technology, we believed that modern flexo printing could be highly competitive. The Invicta i2 provides superb print quality at lower costs, making it particularly advantageous for longer runs.'

Adds Shivlani, 'Lombardi has always been incredibly supportive, and the entire Vinsak and Lombardi team has been enthusiastic and dedicated to delivering excellence on every project. A key figure in all our deals has been Ranesh Bajaj from Vinsak. Our growth has been supported by Ranesh Bajaj, Mohan Pailwan, vice president of Vinsak, and the entire Vinsak team. They have consistently been our technology partners in every installation, and we look forward to many more successful collaborations in the future. Looking ahead, after the i2, the next

step will likely be around 1,100mm with the latest technological advancements.'

He adds that this installation marks the beginning of a new era in the Indian printing and packaging industry, especially in terms of in-line flexo printing. 'A decade ago, label presses were never wide web, and flexible packaging jobs were primarily printed on gravure machines.'

Massimo Lombardi, general manager of Lombardi Converting Machinery in Italy, says India has always been a key market with a special focus, and Prakash Printers is the company's key customer, consistently driving innovation.

'Lombardi's commitment to developing new technology is the response to the evolving needs of customers such as Prakash Printers.'

Mohan Pailwan, vice president of Vinsak India, adds: 'Prakash Printers hold a very special place in our company's heart. They continually challenge us with new converting solutions they require, propelling us to innovate faster and stay ahead of the curve. This drive to find cost-effective and sustainable solutions for them is what fuels our partnership.'

The converter has a whole new set of product lines in the pipeline, with discussions underway with leading supplier groups.



Lombardi will promote its machines at Labelexpo Americas 2024 in Chicago, while Vinsak will exhibit at Labelexpo India 2024 in Nov 14-17 in Delhi NCR

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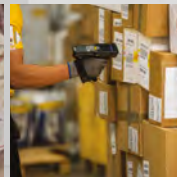
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Labelexpo India 2024 returns with largest edition yet

Labelexpo India returns to India Expo Centre & Mart, Greater Noida, Delhi NCR from Nov 14 - 17, 2024 under the theme 'Assemble the perfect print'. Akanksha Meena reports

Labelexpo India 2024 is set to be the largest edition yet with this year's show securing 8,000sqm of floorspace, an increase of 20 percent from the 2022 edition.

Over 250 exhibitors will be participating, including HP and Technova, UV Graphic, Avery Dennison, Multitec, Monotech Systems, RK Label Printing Machinery, Jindal SMI, Vinsak, Weldon, Domino, Konica Minolta and Maxcess.

Suppliers exhibiting for the first time include Cosmo Films, Siegwark, The Printer House, Rasik Products, Rational Business Corporation and Xsys.

Visitors will witness the latest developments in both label and flexible packaging technology.

TechNova Imaging Systems is set to make a significant impact at Labelexpo India 2024 with its presence at two stands. At the first stand, the company partners with HP to showcase live demonstrations of the HP Indigo 6K digital press. Visitors will experience a digital supermarket, featuring real-life labeling and packaging applications, highlighting the capabilities of digital print technology.

At the second stand, TechNova presents an extensive range of flexographic technologies. Key highlights include AEP grade and BFTK grade solvent-wash flexo plates, and water-wash CleanFlat flexo plates from Asahi. Additionally, the newly launched DWF95DG and DWS73DY grade letterpress plates from Toray will be featured. The stand will also display Toray's GB grade waterless offset plates, a diverse range of UV flexo and special Pantone shades inks and varnishes from SakataINX and essential flexo chemicals, such as UV wash and anilox cleaning products. Furthermore, TechNova will exhibit a range of flexo CTP systems and advanced packaging software from Esko.

Amit Khurana, CEO, TechNova Imaging Systems, says: 'At Labelexpo India 2024, visitors can expect to see groundbreaking advancements that are shaping the future of the labeling and packaging industry. The focus will be on sustainable solutions, with an emphasis on eco-friendly materials and processes. Digital transformation will be another key trend, as companies continue to adopt cutting-edge digital printing technologies to enhance efficiency and customization. Additionally, there will be significant innovations in flexographic printing, highlighting the latest in solvent-wash and water-wash flexo plates. We are excited to showcase these trends and demonstrate how TechNova's comprehensive range of products can help businesses stay ahead in this rapidly evolving market.'

Harveer Sahni, chairman of Weldon Celloplast, comments: 'Labelexpo India is the showcase of India's evolving label industry. The event was earlier just a show where global equipment was displayed to reach out to India's label converters. In the last few years, it has transformed to become a global arena where the Indian capital equipment, tooling and consumable suppliers are rubbing shoulders with the best in the world to display their technical prowess.'

"Labelexpo India 2024 will be an exciting showcase of how digital printing and embellishment solutions are revolutionizing the label and packaging industry"

'It is a must-visit show for the label fraternity. Weldon Celloplast will welcome converters to its stand at Labelexpo India showcasing an array of its offerings that include high-end label printing and converting machines, finishing and embellishing machines as well as a range of ancillary equipment.'

Label Planet Group will showcase the Weigang servo sleeve flexo press under the Global Graphics brand, while under Intergraphic, Orthotec screen and embellishment machine and Pulisi UV inkjet digital press will be displayed.

Tej Prakash Jain, managing director of Monotech Systems, adds: 'The trends at this year's Labelexpo India are set to spotlight the transformative potential of digital labels and packaging. Visitors will have the opportunity to explore a diverse array of narrow format solutions, with print widths of 17in and 20in on display, showcasing the latest advancements in digital printing technology.'

'By leveraging digital printing technology, companies can produce high-quality labels with variable data printing, enabling customization at scale. This capability is particularly valuable for brands looking to engage consumers with personalized experiences and limited-edition products.'

Jain highlights that the show will focus on digital embellishment, converting and finishing technologies, emphasizing digital embellishment's innovative approach to enhancing labels' visual and tactile appeal.

Special effects such as metallic foils, embossing and spot varnishes will trend as brand owners seek more from their labels and packaging. Visitors will be able to compare digital with analog decoration technologies.

'Labelexpo India 2024 will be an exciting showcase of how digital printing and embellishment solutions are revolutionizing the label and packaging industry. Industry professionals, converters and brand owners will find valuable insights and innovative solutions that can help them stay ahead in a competitive market, driving both efficiency and creativity in their production processes,' he concludes.



Scan the QR code to learn more about Labelexpo India 2024



The Polilux logo, featuring the word "polilux" in a bold, dark blue sans-serif font. A small red dot is positioned above the letter "i".

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A black plastic bucket with a white lid and a white handle. The Polilux logo is printed on the front, along with the text "polilux" and "100% made in Turkey".

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BOPP CO.

A white plastic container with a white lid. The Polilux logo is printed on the front, along with the text "polilux" and "100% made in Turkey".

Leading
PRODUCT

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.

The Polilux logo, featuring the word "polilux" in a bold, dark blue sans-serif font. A small red dot is positioned above the letter "i".

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Manipal Group grows in Nigeria

Manipal International Press, a leading self-adhesive label printer in Nigeria and a subsidiary of Manipal Group India, is set on a course of expansion and diversification. Andy Thomas-Emans reports

Manipal International Press claims to be the leader in Nigeria's self-adhesive label printing industry, fully leveraging the benefits of being part of a multi-national group that reaches across to Kenya and India.

Manipal Technologies Limited (MTL), based in Manipal, India, was started in 1941 as Manipal Power Press offering print services to banks. The company developed into one of the top general printers in India offering services and products such as security printing, self-adhesive labels, books, bank cards and stationery.

Today the Manipal Group in India is involved in print and digital media and software development across a range of sectors including educational Institutions and hospitals and includes packaging companies based in Ahmedabad and Chennai.

By 2008 Manipal was ready to expand into Africa and founded a plant in Nairobi, the capital city of Kenya. An important part of that growing business was supplying labels to multinational customers in Nigeria.

The logistics challenges involved in shipping labels from East to West Africa led Manipal to establish a subsidiary plant in Lagos, Nigeria in November 2013, with operations starting in September 2014 with two narrow web 8-color flexo presses. This proved to be a key moment in the development of an indigenous label industry in Nigeria.

Comments BT Patil, CEO of Manipal International Press: 'Before we came to Nigeria, most multinational and major local companies were importing labels from India, China and the Middle East as there was no confidence in the Nigerian label Industry.

'The customers started believing only when we opened our plant in Lagos and demonstrated our facilities. Gradually people started developing labels with us as well as other local label printers and stopped importing.'

Press fleet

In 2018, Manipal International Press, Lagos, started a period of expansion by adding two more flexo printing lines. Later in 2020 one of these presses was replaced with a wider web, 10-color automated flexo press. This was followed by another 8-color press a year later. The installed production capacity was increased from 500,000sqm to 1,500,000sqm of labels printed in a month.

Along with these top-line flexo presses, Manipal has installed a range of slitting, counting and inspection machines. Manipal also has a customized finishing machine incorporating a facility to print variable QR codes and numbering.

There is a system in place to carry out 100 percent inspection of finished rolls by a QA/QC team to check the proper winding and print-related defects.

The biggest market for Manipal is the spirits sector, contributing 30 percent of the company's business and mostly fulfilled with local Nigerian brands. This is followed by lubricants at 20-25 percent, pharmaceuticals at 20 percent, then cosmetics, health and homecare, food and beverages.

Challenges

One of the key challenges facing Nigerian label converters is the long lead time and unpredictable costs of procuring self-adhesive materials, inks, tooling and other consumables, which must be imported mainly from China, India and Europe. This is where Manipal has a great advantage, leveraging its multi-national group assets.



(L-R) Adewale Adesanya, Zakirudeen Oladotun, Andy Thomas-Emans, Tim Gordon, BT Patil, Madinat Adigun Oladotun

"We get our raw materials ordered centrally through the regional headquarters in Kenya and stock of raw materials is our strength"

Patil explains: 'We get our raw materials ordered centrally through the regional headquarters in Kenya and stock of raw materials is our strength. We keep three to four months of stock through a regular ordering process, which makes us the strongest label printer in Nigeria.

'Manipal being an esteemed customer to its suppliers is enjoying the assurance of continuity of raw materials supply even when the international supply chain breaks down. In case of emergencies, Manipal air lifts raw material consignments at an extra cost to meet customer's requirements.'

Manipal runs its Lagos plant on a gas-powered generator and has a standby diesel generator of the required capacity. 'It is important to maintain the generators in good working condition always,' says Patil.

The future

Manipal's Lagos operation has proven a remarkable success. Starting out as a 600sqm facility in 2014, the packed production floor has expanded to a size of 2,000sqm today. There is no better measure of that success than the 20-25 percent year-on-year growth registered by Manipal since its inception.

The next stage is the construction of new warehouses on recently acquired land close to the existing production facility. Manipal has plans to diversify its operations at the new facility.

This will be an exciting new chapter in the development of Manipal International Press in Nigeria which L&L will be sure to track in the coming years.



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Sign & Seal continues digital wine labeling journey

South African converter expands its machine park with the Screen Truepress Label 350UV SAI-S press to meet the growing demand for customization and flexibility from its clients. Piotr Wnuk reports

From humble beginnings in 2006, Sign & Seal Labels has demonstrated that organic growth through continuous improvement has been a cornerstone of its success. The company serves several market verticals including fast-moving consumer goods, food, beverage, pharmaceuticals, chemicals and cosmetics. However, wine labeling constitutes approximately 60 percent of its output.

In 2018, Sign & Seal received three silver awards and one achiever award at the prestigious GAPP Awards, organized by the South African graphics and packaging industry magazine. Two years later, the company achieved ISO 9001:2015 and FSC accreditation, and, to top it all, a silver award in the Gold Pack Awards.

'Our company was born out of a vision deeply rooted in family principles. The initial team, a close-knit group of just nine individuals, shared not only professional aspirations but also a commitment to shared success (of the original nine, five are still with the company),' says Christa Crous, who co-owns Sign & Seal Labels with her husband Henk. 'From these humble beginnings, the company has seen remarkable expansion. By fostering a collaborative environment and staying true to our foundational values, we have grown our team to over 50 employees. This tenfold increase in our workforce is a testament to the trust and dedication of our team members and their belief in our collective mission.'

One of the pivotal elements of such success has been a proactive approach to new technologies. Henk Crous says that one of the keys to success and staying ahead of the curve in our industry requires continual investment in cutting-edge machinery and tools.

'By doing so, we have not only enhanced our production capabilities but also ensured that our products and services remain at the forefront of innovation,' notes Henk Crous. 'The decision to focus more on digital technology has been made as customization, cost, quality and sustainability exceed traditional analog machines. This said, we believe that digital and analog technologies are interconnected and mutually dependent in various ways. To optimize the utilization of these technologies, it is important to understand their strengths and limitations. We optimize our printing technology by using modern techniques like hybrid printing, combining the benefits of both analog and digital processes. By leveraging the strengths of each technology and finding synergies between them, we utilize each technology where it excels most.'

The company currently runs a whole spectrum of technologies, which now includes two Screen machines with high speed, high quality and machine uptime of more than 90 percent. Sign & Seal Labels also operates a Konica Minolta AccurioLabel press for jobs requiring lower speeds at 20m/min with quality up to 1,200 DPI.

After 18 years of experience in the industry, Sign & Seal is continually innovating and keeping up with global trends and techniques.

'There is a strong push towards sustainable packaging, driven by environmental concerns and consumer preferences,' says Henk Crous. 'This includes the use of recycled materials, lighter bottles and alternative packaging options like cans. In our business, we decided to be a responsible supplier and are therefore FSC certified.'



L-R: Michael Aengenvoort, Rotocon group CEO; Henk and Christa Crous, owners of Sign & Seal; Reuben Naidoo, general manager at Sign & Seal and Heiden Meyer, production manager Sign & Seal celebrate the latest equipment installation

"The single biggest benefit with our digital capacity and capabilities is our responsiveness and flexibility that goes with it"

The global sustainability drive and growing brand owner demand for FSC-certified paper-based products encouraged the team to apply for FSC accreditation at the same time as the ISO 9001 certification.

According to Henk Crous, it wasn't difficult to achieve because of the procedural and process frameworks already in place for the ISO quality management system.

Henk Crous adds that consumers are also increasingly looking for premium and authentic wine experiences.

'This trend is leading to the growth of boutique and artisanal wine brands that emphasize unique stories and limited production runs,' he says. 'We believe that a label sells the brand – the responsibility is on us as a supplier to advise our customers on what embellishments, colors and design is needed to let their brand differentiate from their competitors.'

Aware of the need to elevate its game in a market where customization, shorter runs, and flexibility are increasingly demanded by wine producers, the company recognized the imperative to embrace digital innovation. This strategic move was essential to maintaining a competitive edge in the wine labeling market.

Digital expansion

As part of its vision and strategy, the company planned to invest more in the digital side of the business to achieve lower waste levels, minimized setup time, ease of operation, consistency, security and a quicker ready-make process.

'We went through a thorough process of investigating and eliminating digital presses before we decided to invest in our first

Screen 6-color machine,' notes Christa Crous. 'The decision to invest in the newer Screen 7-color machine was a no-brainer.'

The newly installed Screen Label 350UV SAI-S 7-color press significantly expands the color gamut in label printing and supports variable data printing. This enables Sign & Seal Labels to meet the stringent requirements of the wine label industry, including security-conscious labeling for product authentication.

'The machine's variable data printing feature allows for the inclusion of minute details and text, ensuring compliance with tight regulatory requirements. The use of micro-droplets supports all major types of security printing, including QR and barcodes as well as dot codes and security tint patterns,' Henk Crous explains.

With a printing speeds of up to 60m/ min, the new press delivers consistently high print quality while maintaining cost-effectiveness.

'Its efficiency and effectiveness exceed traditional analog machines, delivering three times the productivity levels with exceptional quality and consistency,' says Henk Crous. 'With the SAI S model, the time required for preparation work has been dramatically shortened compared to an analog press. The single biggest benefit of our digital capacity and capabilities is our responsiveness and flexibility that goes with it. Customers are enabled via our quick turn-around time to make crucial business decisions without hours of inception or concept for a new product or offering.

'Technology drives creativity and diversity in our customer's product offering and we are proud to delight them with a printed label or mock-up sometimes within hours. This differentiates us from the competition, and it ultimately helps to exponentially grow our business.'

SAI refers to the press's stable operation, accurate color reproduction and integrated workflow technologies. The expanded color



From humble beginnings in 2006, Sign & Seal Labels has grown into a robust enterprise with 50 dedicated employees

“Technology drives creativity and diversity in our customer’s product offering and we are proud to delight them with a printed label or mock-up sometimes within hours”

gamut of the press allows for a wider range of color expression than was previously possible. Sign & Seal Labels expects the Screen press to also contribute to its sustainability goals.

The company acquired and installed the new Screen system in close partnership with Rotocon, Screen's agent and service provider in South Africa.

The 16-year partnership between the two companies has been instrumental in ensuring seamless integration and ongoing support for the latest technology.

Comments Michael Aengenvoort, CEO of Rotocon: 'You can buy the fastest car, but if you don't have the best driver, you won't win the race. However, with its level of expertise and experience, Henk, Christa and their team understand how to effectively utilize this technology for maximum

operator output, and to generate the most value from it.'

'We were fortunate to have Rotocon as our partner in acquiring our latest press,' says Henk Crous. 'They are not just "sellers", but real business partners; from acquiring the machine, training, continuous maintenance, checking in and providing technical assistance.'

Values drive success

Alongside its technological advancements, the company always placed a strong emphasis on the professional development of its employees.

'This focus on continuous learning has fostered a culture of excellence and adaptability within our company,' notes Christa Crous.

'Moving forward, we will continue to uphold these values, driving innovation and fostering an environment where our employees can thrive and contribute to our shared success,' states Henk Crous.

'We will continue the adoption of digital printing and integration of digital technologies across our operations. At the same time, ensuring all machines in our business are performing at maximum capacity, through employing various marketing initiatives and if this pays off, we will need to expand our physical operations again.'



Sign & Seal Labels acquired and installed the new Screen system in partnership with Rotocon, Screen's agent and service provider in South Africa



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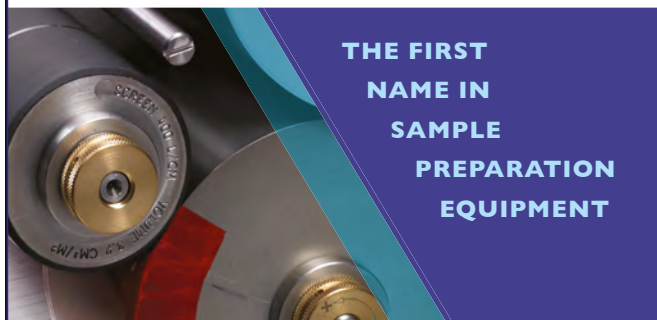


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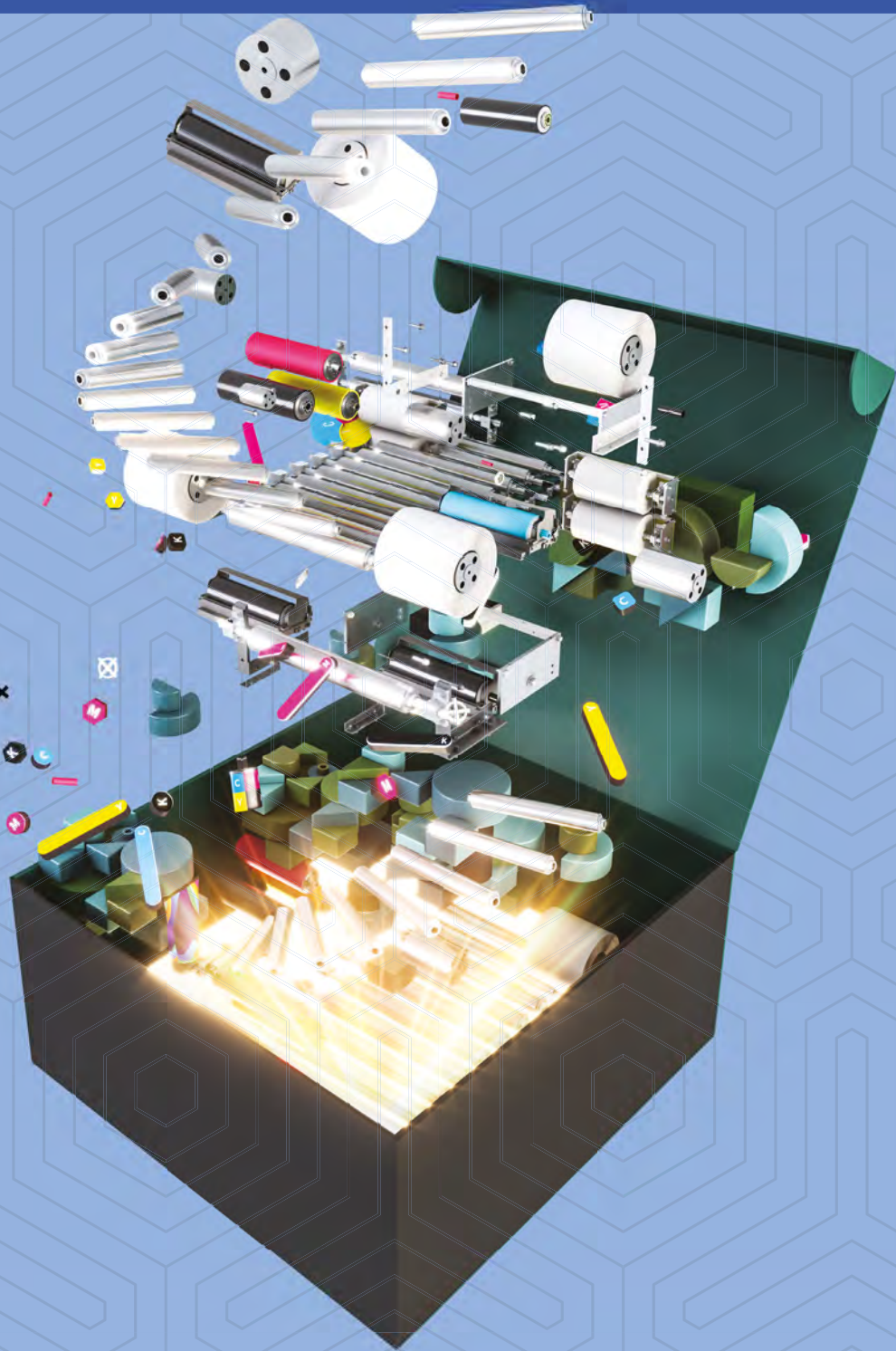
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OSP's Labelexpo debut showcases materials expertise

At Labelexpo Americas 2024 Osaka Sealing Printing Company – a leading label converter in Japan and operating through the Primark America Group in the US – launches a range of sustainable label materials. Andy Thomas-Emans reports

Founded almost a century ago, the Osaka Sealing Printing Company (OSP) is a leading company in Japan's label printing landscape. The group has 14 production sites across Japan and a major global presence, including label printing operations in China and Thailand and sales offices in North America, Australia and the Philippines.

OSP was founded in 1927 when it received its first patent for a die-cutting machine. Today the group has a turnover of 105 billion Yen (USD 650m) and 4,700 employees.

The company manufactures the full range of packaging formats – labels, folding cartons, flexible packaging and POS displays – and its own specialist labelstocks, label applicators and packaging systems, printing plates and even its letterpress presses.

OSP operates as a holding company for these multiple businesses, coordinating everything from the procurement of raw materials to the implementation of efficiency programs throughout the business units.

The focus of OSP's label and packaging printing business is food and beverage, which accounts for around 70 percent of all sales. The company claims to produce one-third of the seals and labels for the food sector manufactured in Japan.

This year, OSP Group company Primark America will exhibit at Labelexpo Americas 2024 promoting its specialist clear thermal films and repositionable labels for logistics applications, representing a major push to become a global supplier of specialist technical materials.

Sustainability focus

OSP is actively engaged in research to create 'non-polluting' products. The company is FSC and Biomass Mark certified by the Japan Organic Resources Association and has obtained ISO14001 certification.

OSP recently announced the launch of a water-based emulsion adhesive that uses more than 10 percent biomass materials. Up to now, biomass has mainly been used in the development of solvent-based and hotmelt adhesives.

'We were able to achieve adhesive properties almost equivalent to those of conventional adhesive labels that use petroleum-derived materials,' states OSP president and CEO Matsuguchi Tadashi. 'Our customers will be able to display the biomass mark on their labels to demonstrate the company's commitment to addressing environmental issues.'

OSP is now researching emulsion-based adhesives with even higher biomass content.

Earlier this year, the company launched its Dottack linerless thermal tape/label using a water-based emulsion adhesive applied in dots. The base material is thermal paper, which allows the labels to be used as both tape and labels. This versatility makes them suitable

"While most flexible packaging is printed wide-web gravure, OSP has installed digital presses for the increasing volume of short-run flexible packaging work"

for a variety of applications, such as logistics and VIP labels.

Other environmental initiatives include the Palmyashix label, a PS label paper made from palm oil production waste, and the Limex label sheet made from limestone as a base material. OSP has also commercialized a naturally translucent clear paper sticker which replaces clear film.

In addition, OSP is undertaking recycling of liner and matrix waste, including waste-to-energy capacity which can be made available to local communities. OSP is a founding member of the J-ECOL association, established to promote the effective use of resources and efforts to reduce environmental impact.

OSP prints its flexible packaging mainly on solvent gravure presses but is looking to move to water-based flexo production as a more sustainable alternative.

OSP is also looking at more sustainable materials solutions for flexible packaging. One example is the paper-based Papack packaging material, specially coated to resist water and oil and with heat-sealing properties.

'Since plastic film is not used, it has the advantages of reduced plastic usage, reduced CO2 emissions during incineration and disposal, and improved recyclability,' says Matsuguchi Tadashi.

Digital transition

OSP is progressively moving its label printing capacity from letterpress to digital - without moving to flexo.

Annually the company prints around 1.4 million jobs, or 6,000 jobs a day, of which 70 percent are for runs of 200 meters or less. Currently, 30 percent of all jobs are printed digitally, but Matsuguchi Tadashi expects this to increase.

OSP is already a major user of Epson Surepress L-4033 water-based inkjet presses. The Epson press fleet is used for all food-related label work.



OSP will exhibit for the first time at Labelexpo Americas 2024. Scan the QR code to learn more





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Takara Pac champions flexo in Japanese market

While PS labels are overwhelmingly printed by letterpress in Japan, the CEO of leading converter Takara Pac believes that situation is about to change. Andy Thomas-Emans reports

Founded in 1955 as a sales company for adhesive cellophane tape, Takara Pac is today one of Japan's leading converters of self-adhesive labels – and one of the very few to have invested in flexography in a market still dominated by letterpress.

Kunio Tsuda is president and CEO of Takara Pac and is chairman of the Flexo Technical Association of Japan (FTAJ), so he has a significant stake in encouraging the transition to flexo.

'In the 1960s my father traveled to the US where he saw firsthand the stability of the flexographic process,' recalls Tsuda. 'In 1967, we introduced Sohn flexo presses from the US for adhesive label printings ahead of other companies here. As a pioneer of flexo printing technology in Japan, we have become a core member of Flexographic Technical Association of Japan, and are working to promote flexo printing technology in Japan.'

Takara Pac was also a digital printing pioneer, installing an HP Indigo press in 2010, well ahead of the curve in Japan.

In fact, Takara Pac has led the Japanese industry forward in many areas. For example, sustainability has long been a core component of the company's culture. As far back as 2004, Takara Pac was awarded ISO14001 environmental certification, which it has maintained every year since then.

Takara Pac is one of a growing number of Japanese converters moving outside Japan. 'In 2013, looking ahead to globalizing markets, we started an overseas operation based in Thailand,' recalls Tsuda.

Factory tour

Visiting Takara Pac's main label operation in Yokohama demonstrates the key issue facing Japanese label converters: the difficulty and expense of finding factory space in densely-populated Tokyo.

Takara Pac currently operates two MPS UV-flexo presses, the most recent of which is a 10-color EFA 340 installed in 2020. 'We visited Labelexpo Europe 2019, where we had the chance to see the press in action on the MPS stand,' recalls Tsuda.

This summer, a third, 8-color MPS press will be installed and equipped with GEW's ArcLED exchangeable LED/mercury

"We have become a core member of FTA of Japan and we are working to promote flexo printing technology in Japan"



Kunio Tsuda is president and CEO of Takara Pac with 10-color MPS EFA340

Why has flexo not taken off in Japan?

Most Japanese label converters are small, family-run businesses operating in small-footprint workshops without space for in-line flexo presses. These converters also value the ability to adjust color during the press run – part of the industry's 'craft' mindset.

As president of the FTAJ, Tsuda believes this mindset is changing. 'I see interesting developments in flexo. Some Japanese press manufacturers have tried to make compact flexo presses. We see Southeast Asia is now moving to flexo, which also encourages Japanese letterpress manufacturers to switch to flexo. Flexo is the future for these companies.'

cassette system. 'We are very interested in LED because of the reduced energy consumption,' says Tsuda. 'And if all UV units are LED, we do not need to vent ozone emissions.'

In addition to the MPS presses the Yokohama facility houses 4-color and 1-color Taiyo flexo presses.

The HP Indigo WS6800 is also located in the plant alongside the flexo presses. 'This covers the small-lot market and the quality is good. It is also good for the environment with no plates and no setup waste.'

Takara Pac runs a second company in Osaka that currently uses letterpress. 'But now they are interested in flexo because it takes a long time to teach a letterpress operator about color,' says Tsuda.

Multi-layer specialist

Takara Pac specializes in high-value promotional labels, which double as point-of-sale (POS) marketing tools. These include intricate stickers-on-a-label that allow elements of the label to be removed and re-adhered; and a front label that mimics a 'lens' by printing a magnified image on the adhesive side of the back label, viewable through the 'lens' on the front. This clever promotional device can be applied to a wide range of products, from shampoos, gel products, deodorants and air fresheners to alcoholic beverages.

Takara Pac also specializes in security labels and track and trace label technology. 'Going forward, we aim to make full use of automatic recognition technologies such as barcodes, two-dimensional symbols, and IC tags, as well as information technologies such as AR, to help rationalize our customers' packaging processes from design planning to final product packaging,' says Tsuda.

Takara Pac has been building label applicators and box-sealing systems since the early 1960s. Tsuda sees this as fulfilling an important part of the customer journey from label design to final application to the product, with each stage managed and quality assured by Takara Pac.



The Japan Label Forum 2024 will be held in Tokyo October 23-25, focused on a machinery exhibition and educational sessions



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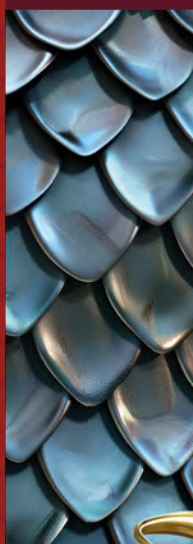
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Haiying Printing delights brands with digital flex pack expertise

After installing an HP Indigo 20000, conventional gravure converter Haiying Printing began to engage with brands to fully leverage its benefits. Yolanda Wang reports

Haiying Printing, founded in 2013, invested in the company's first HP Indigo 20000 digital press at the end of 2017. From the customization of shopping bags to flexible packaging, Haiying has explored a wide and diverse range of products on the road to developing its digital printing business.

L&L's earliest contact with Jiang Haitao, CEO of Haiying Printing, was in 2018 when the company held an Open Day after the installation of its HP Indigo 20000. After several months of equipment debugging, upgrades and sample testing, the printing performance and quality of this digital press have been widely recognized by the company's customers.

The investment in digital printing was a bold move by Haiying Printing after many years of cultivating expertise in conventional flexible packaging printing.

Flexible packaging

The company has a complete supply chain for conventional flexible package printing, including plate making, material research and production, printing, laminating, coating, pouch making and bag converting. For example, the film manufactured at Haiying's Huzhou factory reaches annual sales of nearly 1 billion RMB (USD 140,000); Haiying's Nantong flexible packaging factory produces 4.1 tons or 10,000sqm of material.

'I entered the printing industry in 2008. Before investing in digital printing equipment, I only knew gravure, offset printing and other traditional printing technologies,' Jiang Haitao tells L&L. 'With our in-depth understanding of the flexible packaging and carton businesses, we found that market demand for short orders, personalized and small batches of products was increasing, and the launch cycle of brand customers' new products and the delivery cycle of products was getting shorter and shorter. These requirements are difficult to meet with existing traditional printing equipment, or the cost will be very high.'

After a period of deep market research, Haiying Printing pivoted its investment strategy to digital printing technology. At that time there was not much use of digital printing technology for flexible packaging and there was a limited choice of equipment suppliers. After establishing contact with HP, the company spent a long time learning and understanding this new technology. In 2015, Haiying ordered an HP Indigo 20000 digital press, which was the first installation in east China.

Haiying Printing is today a recognized expert in HP Indigo 20000 technology. The press prints up to seven colors, enabling it to meet the most demanding color and quality requirements, says Jiang Haitao. 'The press has a width of 762mm and a repeat length of 1100mm, making it suitable for most flexible packaging printing sizes. The material thickness range from 10 to 400 microns is compatible with almost all standard flexible packaging substrates.'

Creative solutions

Haiying Printing found that the expansion of new business was not as easy as they had anticipated.

The first thing the company encountered was a technical problem. Digital printing is only one part of the whole flexible packaging production process. The printed roll needs to go



Chinese instant noodles brand Zhichishi

"We found that market demand for short orders, personalized and small batches of products was increasing"

through a series of follow-up processing, such as laminating, aging, slitting and filling/sealing. During these processes, adhesives, coatings and seaming conditions will affect the final quality of the flexible package. However, because the ink used in digital printing is completely different from that used in traditional printing, the post-press processing cannot completely replicate that of traditional flexible packaging.

After continuous exploration and testing, Haiying Printing finally found a set of flexible packaging post-press production processes for digital printing, and the appearance and functionality of flexible packaging and bags now meet the needs of brand owners and customers.

After solving these technical problems, Haiying Printing focused on innovation and developing application solutions to create new business. They mainly targeted the personalized, variable data, small run and multi-SKU orders market.

After several years of unremitting efforts, Haiying Printing has accumulated vast experience in helping brands innovate. To provide a better and more rapid service for brands, they established an office in Lingyi in Shanghai.

With the help of digital printing and the company's rapid response supply chain, Haiying Printing has implemented many innovative market solutions, including the rapid proofing of new products, joint-IP solutions, variable imaging and stand-out designs.

Waiting scene in a noodle restaurant

Zhichishi is a Chinese instant noodles brand. Using Collage technology, Haiying created a uniform background picture and a seed file of different diners, and then an automatic map of the diners coming and going in front of the noodle restaurant was



Tea packaging printed at Haiying



Personalised vitamin packaging

“We also discovered that packaging is not only a medium to protect products and present product information. It can be a bridge to enable brand and consumer interaction and communication and increase consumers’ loyalty to the brand”

generated. Using the HP Indigo 20000, these variable designs are printed quickly. The consumers get a visible sense of a busy noodle shop through these bag designs.

Dunhuang Silk Road scenic spots package

This package is for a local tea drink in Dunhuang, which is the center and transit point of East-West trade on the Silk Road. Haiying used automatic imaging technology to create pictures of local scenic spots. The finished packages appear to consumers as if they are traveling into different landscapes. Before consumers open the external carton packaging, they do not know which scenic spots are shown on the drinking bottles, which enhances the mystery of the ‘unexpected encounter’. It is like they are opening a closed box filled with an unknown surprise. The brand owner has also enhanced their brand recognition among consumers.

Personalized daily vitamin packaging

This is a complete package for a vitamin brand, including an external carton package and internal flexible packaging. For the users, the customized packaging shows their name, the time to take their vitamins, and an encouraging slogan. The final packaging vividly displayed the brand’s concept-‘Creating Exclusive Health for You’.

Mengniu Bing + self-made laboratory ‘super variable’ packaging

Haiying Printing worked with a brand owner at an early stage to create a ‘super variable’ packaging design. The design team used the current red color

trend for dresses, popular on social media in China, as inspiration. The brand then designed a group of variable elements, which can randomly generate personalized variable packaging images. This allows each consumer could buy a unique and exclusive pack. The new packaging combined with exposure generated by the brand’s marketing strategy on multimedia platforms such as KOL, Mingniu Bing+ increased sales by 210 percent and the brand’s ranking rose by 15 places. These case studies are displayed in Haiying Printing’s Packaging Innovation Center in Shanghai.

‘During the implementation and fulfillment of these new solutions, we realized that the application of digital printing technology needs to completely break the concept of traditional printing and build a “digital thinking way”,’ says Jiang Haitao.

‘What’s more, we should cooperate more closely with brand owners to let the seemingly impossible ideas come true. In this process, we also discovered that packaging can be a bridge to enable brand and consumer interaction and communication, and increase consumers’ loyalty to the brand.’



Digital flexible packaging will be a central theme of Labelexpo South China in December. Scan the QR code to learn more



Label Day gathers 120 industry professionals in Chengdu

Label Day, organized by Labels & Labeling China in Chengdu, Sichuan Province, attracted more than 120 representatives from industry associations, college professors, media, designers, as well as label and package converters and suppliers.

The first day of the event featured 13 presentations along with the desktop exhibition, where 21 suppliers were showcasing their latest portfolios and promoting their equipment.

The opening presentation, led by Kevin Liu, group director for Labelexpo Global Series China, highlighted global labeling and packaging trends, discussed the most important product launches at drupa 2024 and the upcoming Labelexpo Americas 2024.

Yan Fanzhen, design director at Sichuan Chuanqi, shared her perspective on the needs and expectations of brand owners for modern labels and packaging. According to Fanzhen, there is a strong demand on the market for expanded functionality, which includes marketing functions and advanced inclusion of media carriers.

Wu Hongyu, a label printing expert with over two decades of experience in the industry, shared some case studies showcasing different printing processes, materials and some creative ideas in label production. He also tried to encourage the printers to expand and diversify their businesses to include tags, cards, sealing stickers and more.

The afternoon session featured a panel discussion with Liu Linlin of Xi’an University of Technology as the host, and converter representatives from Liu Jincheng of Chengdu Megavision, Cao Xuanbin of Chongqing Zhiwei, Zhou Bin of Guizhou Yumaxian, as well as supplier representatives from HP, Jinda and Bright Ink. The session focused on competitive pricing and overseas enterprise development.

Liu Linlin, associate professor of the faculty of printing, packaging engineering and digital media technology at Xi’an University of Technology, then shared the current business challenges and advised how to successfully transform a company following the latest digital trends in the printing industry.

Lastly, Wang Jun, chairman and general manager of Sichuan Bi’anyihe, discussed how to increase profits through data management in small and medium-sized enterprises.



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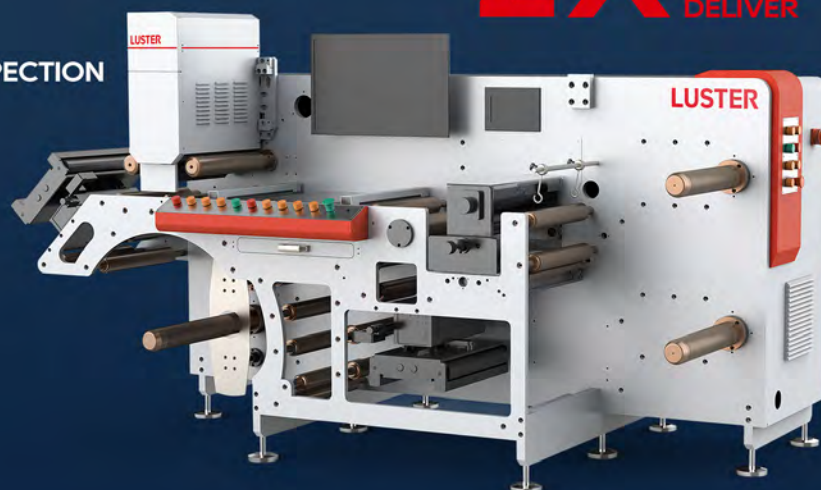


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Encouraging industrial change in northwest China

Li Xiaoling, party secretary, executive director and general manager of SAPT discusses developments in label industry trends in Shaanxi province, China. Yolanda Wang reports

Founded in November 1978, Shaanxi Academy of Printing Technology (SAPT) is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Shaanxi Science and Technology Holding Group, the only scientific and technological enterprise engaged in the research and development of printing technology in Northwest China.

SAPT occupies over 10,000sqm and has assets worth 19.5 million RMB (USD 2.68m). SAPT employs 46 staff, including 32 with college and advanced degrees, and 17 with senior professional titles. Since its establishment, SAPT has completed more than 90 scientific research projects and 41 of those projects have won provincial and ministerial science and technology progress awards.

'This year is the 46th year of the establishment of SAPT,' Xiaoling says. 'We have always been deeply engaged in the printing industry, providing scientific research and printing technology services for the whole industry. In the early years, we developed and sold offset printing plates and inks. At its high point, we employed more than 200 people.'

As the growth of the entire Chinese label industry slowed, SAPT restructured its business. In 2010 SAPT stopped selling plates and inks and looked to diversify into consultancy for print industry startups, acting as an enterprise incubator, leasing equipment and plant services and providing research and exhibition services.

'Through the expansion of these new business areas, we better understand the pain points in the development of the printing and packaging industry, especially when the entire industry is moving from a period of rapid growth to the "new normal",' Li Xiaoling says.

The growth of enterprises no longer relies simply on investment in new equipment and increasing production volume but on innovation in technology, applications and management. Converters are now thinking: how can we improve quality and efficiency, as well as reduce the cost and challenges of introducing new technologies?'

This thinking led SAPT to focus on research and development services for the printing industry, carrying out extensive cooperation with suppliers, converters and universities in this industry sector. They also take advantage of being a state-owned enterprise, which helps accelerate the appointment of professional and technical personnel to promote the transformation of the printing industry. Today SAPT is focused on being a print industry incubator, offering consultancy services and promotion of industry-university-research projects.

Slow transformation

The 2022 annual review of the 1,425 printing enterprises in Shaanxi Province showed there were 259 publication printers, 68 digital printing companies, 538 packaging and decoration printing enterprises and 525 undefined, along with 42 platemaking companies, with a total employment of 30,100.

'After communicating with label converters, we found that although the industry accounts for only a small proportion of the entire packaging printing sector, its current growth and future potential are very good,' Li Xiaoling says. 'At present, the label converters in Shaanxi Province are concentrated in the capital city Xi'an, and the overall number of enterprises is about 50. The main applications include pharma labels, food labels, electronic



(L-R) Yolanda Wang, Labels & Labeling; Li Xiaoling of SAPT

“Enterprises need to break the circle of competing on price with their immediate competitors, and should look to actively expand into more diversified markets”

labels, household chemical labels and supermarket, retail, wine and beverage labels. The proportion of paper labels is about 60 percent.'

The low degree of concentration common in the printing industry is also obvious in Shaanxi, and the scale of most enterprises in this region is not very large. However, competition is becoming increasingly fierce. So how do converters transform themselves in order not to be swept away?

'On the one hand, I think that enterprises need to keep up with automation and intelligence manufacturing trends to reduce costs and improve production efficiency, to enhance their whole market competitiveness,' says Li Xiaoling. 'Official government policy aims at promoting the application of intelligent manufacturing and accelerating the construction of smart factories.'

'During our visits, we found that at present, many local label converters are aware of the need to automate and they have indeed invested in label printing equipment with higher levels of automation. According to, admittedly incomplete statistics, there are only 10 in-line flexo presses installed in Xi'an, of which seven presses were installed after the epidemic, including machines from Taiyo, Weigang, Hongsheng, Dowell, Label Source and JMD.'

'Enterprises need to break the circle of competing on price with their immediate competitors and should look to expand into more diversified markets. For example, expansion into higher value-added smart labels, anti-counterfeiting labels and others.'



For updates on the China label market visit Labelexpo South China in December. Scan the QR code to learn more



**BREWING A
GREENER CUP**

The coffee industry is leading the charge in sustainable packaging within the CPG sector, with the market demanding innovative materials that not only stand out on the shelf but also preserve coffee's freshness and flavor. Akanksha Meena reports

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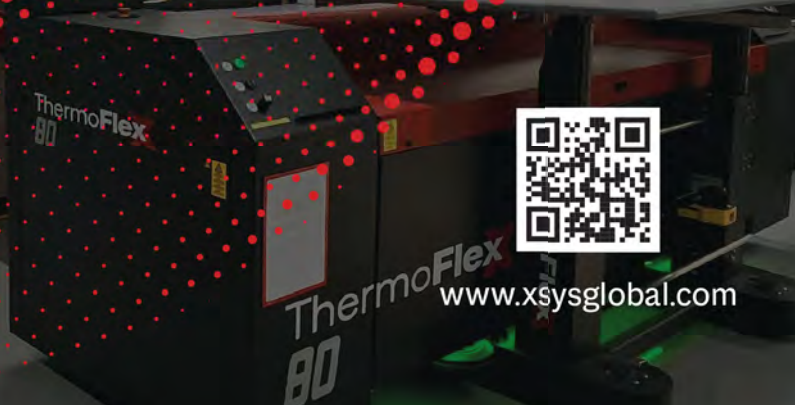
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Starting the day with freshly brewed coffee is a cherished ritual for many. Globally a beloved household staple, the coffee market is set to grow from USD 132.13 billion in 2024 to USD 166.39 billion by 2029, with a CAGR of 4.72 percent, according to Mordor Intelligence. New coffee brands are emerging to capture a share of this market.

Steve Halford, product development technologist at Parkside, a global flexible packaging producer, says: 'Roast and ground products and beans are benefiting from the continuing "Starbucks effect" – the move towards consumption of coffee shop-style coffees in the home. This has remained strong even after the Covid lockdowns were over, with further growth seen in start-up, independent and regional roasters each carving their niche.'

Besides creating a unique product, brands must address sustainability in packaging to appeal to environmentally-conscious consumers.

The desire for sustainability in coffee extends from longstanding, established mainstream brands to smaller, often premium brands – including start-ups. What these brands all have in common is the desire for their packaging to be a crucial part of their sustainability goals.

In particular, Halford adds that smaller brands have been leading the way in sustainable packaging for several years, with more prominent brands generally

playing catch up and some household name brands making relatively recent moves. Across categories, roast and ground coffee bean brands were the first to make the switch to sustainable packaging, while the larger volume instant coffee sector was slower to move.

For many coffee brands, the move toward sustainable packaging is two-fold: these brands can replace their traditional heavy glass jars with refill pouches and pouches are the clear transport winner over rigid packaging. The lightweight packs offer significant efficiencies throughout the supply chain, as the flexible pouches mean more packs can be shipped in each container, and their lighter weight significantly reduces supply chain transport emissions.

'Key brands such as Kenco, Nescafe, and L'Or all now have pouches available in the hot beverage aisle at supermarkets,' Halford notes.

However, flexible packaging, with its multiple layers, is not recyclable, and those multiple layers are crucial for keeping coffee fresh.

BARRIER FOR FRESHNESS

Coffee brands must carefully select their sustainable packaging that can preserve the rich, delicious flavor of coffee, or they risk losing their loyal customers. Exposure to oxygen is the main culprit behind stale coffee. Historically, a

high-barrier, multi-layer PET/ALU/PE would be the default option to provide barrier protection, but it is not a sustainable option.

Paper is generally more desirable due to its recyclability, but the roast and ground coffee segment faces challenges. The oils in the beans require barrier functionality and the CO₂ they release post-roasting means pouches need a one-way valve to let gas out without letting oxygen in. Structural features such as reclosure zippers and adhesives help maintain coffee quality but add plastic or foil, complicating recycling. Therefore, paper has not been an ideal alternative without some level of plastic or foil for the necessary barrier.

There are ways of tackling this issue – often involving material innovations such as water-based barrier coatings and monolayer packaging.

'The development of high-performance barrier coatings represents a significant moment for the industry. Kraft paper laminated with PE or foil grants the required barrier performance for packaging roast and ground coffee but not the desired recyclability. Development of paper substrates and barrier coatings will enable brands to begin switching to a more sustainable, recyclable packaging model,' Halford explains.

Parkside is resolving this issue with a new recyclable metalized packaging, made entirely of paper. Its Recoflex monopolymer

“COFFEE IS PROBABLY ONE OF THE MOST PROGRESSIVE CPG SECTORS WHEN IT COMES TO SUSTAINABLE PACKAGING AND BROADER ESG POLICIES”



Parkside has developed a range of sustainable flexible packaging for the coffee market including monopolymer and compostable packaging.

“COME JANUARY 2025, WE WILL BE THE FIRST UK PRODUCER OF FLAT BOTTOM, DIGITALLY PRINTED POUCHES”

material is designed to make plastic more sustainable. Because it is made from a single polymer, it is technically recyclable. However, its full benefits would be hard to achieve without investments in suitable recycling infrastructure.

'For example, Nescafe initially moved to monopolymer refill pouches, reportedly the first recyclable coffee pouches on the market compatible with front-of-store recycling schemes. This move has enabled Nescafe to highlight its sustainability credentials in an immediately visible way. The company has since moved on to fully recyclable paper packaging,' Halford shares.

Harry Baker, sales and operations, BakPac also notes that coffee packaging buyers ask for compostable paper constructions. The challenge has been finding the high barrier properties coffee requires to maintain the freshness of the product and extend its shelf life.

'The tactile feel was popular in the coffee market, which led to a demand for compostable structures,' Baker notes. 'However, the demand is now moving away from compostable structures as the view on multi-laminate structures is changing. Brands are moving towards mono-material structures as they're seen as a more sustainable decision when looking at the supply chain holistically.'

BakPac has developed a mono-polymer range that claims to offer comparable barrier properties.

BakPac helped a coffee brand that was previously using a tin with an inner bag switch to a high-barrier, mono-material stand-up pouch with a coffee valve.

'This allowed the brand to avoid sourcing its packaging from multiple suppliers. They can also utilize the full surface area of a stand-up pouch for branding instead of being restricted by the size of the label,' Baker explains.

Another challenge Baker notes is the coffee industry's preference for the flat bottom pouch format that BakPac currently does not offer. In response, the converter purchased a flat bottom pouching line from Indian manufacturer Galaxy Packtech that will be installed later this year. 'Come January 2025, we will be the first UK producer of flat bottom, digitally printed pouches,' Baker highlights.

COMPOSTABLE PACKAGING

Single-cup coffee and espresso brew systems are incredibly popular for their simplicity and convenience. Coffee pods are often made from recyclable plastic but throwing them in curbside recycling can contaminate the waste stream. To recycle a pod fully, consumers must remove the lid, grounds, and filter, rinse the pod, and then recycle it. Compostable pods exist, but the lids often prevent full compostability, and the lid is crucial for controlling heat, steam, pressure and water during brewing.

The challenge is to find a material that can withstand the brewing process and break down in compost conditions, which involves high heat, pressure and moisture.

After two years of development, S-One Labels Packaging's R&D team created a compostable, bio-based lid that meets ASTM D6400 standards and is awaiting third-party certification. S-OneLP worked with Stella Brands, a Las Vegas-based contract packager for the coffee pods market. The material is a printable paper-based prelaminate structure with a sealant web.

Greiner Packaging and Constantia Flexibles have also developed a fully home-compostable coffee capsule. In this collaboration, Greiner Packaging supplies the body of the capsule, while Constantia Flexibles provides the lid – EcoPressoLid.

The capsule body, developed by Greiner Packaging, preserves the freshness of the coffee and is compatible with conventional coffee capsule machines. This packaging offers consumers a more sustainable option without compromising on quality or convenience and supports a circular economy by reducing waste and minimizing environmental impact.

Constantia Flexibles' capsule lidding, EcoPressoLid, offers a high oxygen barrier, sealing for compostable coffee capsules, and quality coffee brewing performance. It is compatible with commonly used capsule filling and sealing machines on the market.

The EcoPressoLid is paper-based and can be used to seal both the top and bottom of the capsules. The capsule body and lid received the 'OK Compost Home' certification from TÜV Austria together as a system.

Similarly, Parkside has achieved long-term success using



Pact Coffee's flexible bags are made from 70 percent recycled plastic, with the remaining 30 percent virgin plastic



Pact Coffee's bag features a QR code that customers can scan to go to a page that tells them how to recycle it



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Harry Baker, sales and operations at BakPac



Will Sowerby, communications and content lead at Pact Coffee

“NESCAFE USED THE FIRST RECYCLABLE COFFEE POUCHES ON THE MARKET COMPATIBLE WITH FRONT-OF-STORE RECYCLING SCHEMES”

HP India Sales signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Atal Incubation Centre of Coffee Board (AIC CCRI CED) on May 22, 2024, in a significant move to foster innovation and growth among startups.

Under this collaboration, HP will offer comprehensive support to these startups, including insights into industry trends, best practices and the latest advancements in printing and packaging technologies.

The MoU was formally signed by Praveen HJ, CEO of AIC-CCRI-CED, Coffee Board, and Appadurai, country manager of Indigo and inkjet solutions at HP India. The signing ceremony was attended by Naipal Singh, business development manager at HP India sales, along with members of the AIC-CCRI-CED team.

HP Indigo will set up an experience zone at the Coffee Board's incubation center to showcase a gallery of applications possible using HP Indigo presses, displaying various packaging formats for startup brands. With 300 Indigo press installations across India, 15-20 percent of which are with label and packaging providers, HP Indigo aims to help startups connect with these users. This initiative will enable startups to prototype, test, proof, and place their orders with established HP Indigo customers.

compostable materials for roast and ground coffee applications.

'Coffee seems to fit well with compostable material, as the grounds themselves can also be composted along with the packaging, including zips and valves, helping brands to offer a truly circular product to their consumers. This approach helped one of our clients on their journey to achieving B-Corp status,' Halford says.

Halford mentions that this brand has developed a closed-loop composting system, collecting packaging waste from customers and composting it at its roastery. The resulting compost is used in its coffee shop gardens, which also serve as a space for local food service businesses to grow fresh produce.

'Every job we take on is a collaboration where we grow to understand our customers' exact needs before applying our design expertise and technology to respond to them. Some projects involve more development, while others use existing technology and materials. We are currently developing new paper, coatings and integral valves for coffee pouches,' Halford says.

He adds that as films become more mainstream, economies of scale bring costs down until sustainability becomes the norm, helped by key brands in the category making large steps toward sustainable packaging.

'Coffee is probably one of the most progressive CPG sectors when it comes to

sustainable packaging and broader ESG policies,' Halford adds.

Similarly, converters such as BakPac prefer to form relationships and make collaborative efforts with brands rather than be a simple me-too supplier.

'We want to open our customers' minds to what is achievable using our print technology. The coffee market, in particular, likes to push design boundaries as far as possible and often offers many product variations and blends, which work perfectly with digital. It also allows larger brands to dip their toes with a new idea and test the market rather than commit to a larger MOQ,' Baker adds.

BRANDS LEADING THE WAY

New-age brands such as Pact Coffee and Café Buendía are shifting to sustainable packaging to attract eco-conscious consumers and contribute to a more sustainable future, setting a positive example for the industry.

PACT COFFEE

UK-based coffee brand Pact Coffee has already switched to sustainable pouches for its packaging.

Will Sowerby, communications and content lead at Pact Coffee, says: 'Our core mission has been to make the coffee industry better for the farmer since the beginning, and we wanted to improve our practices at home, too.'

It took Pact Coffee two years to develop its new sustainable packaging.

'Freshness has been absolutely key to Pact Coffee since we began over a decade ago, and the challenge was maintaining this with recyclable packaging,' Sowerby explains.

'Sacrificing any quality that comes with coffee freshness would have been a significant mistake that would have disappointed many of our loyal customers. But we knew that continuing to use landfill-bound packaging was unacceptable.'

Oxygen quickly kills off the flavor and aroma of coffee, whether pre-ground or whole beans. Pact Coffee had to find a way to create the most sustainable packaging possible while also keeping oxygen at bay.

'More widely used sustainable packaging, like paper, would have allowed in too much oxygen, so we needed to get creative. After plenty of trials and errors, we found the answer in LDPE #4.'

Pact Coffee's bags are made from 70 percent recycled plastic, with the remaining 30 percent virgin plastic that the brand needs to use to keep its coffee food-safe and preserve freshness. The bag is then recyclable.



Recyclable coffee pouch by BakPac



Café Buendía has switched to Alico's Reciplus Alico monomaterial structure for its flexible packaging variant

“MORE WIDELY USED SUSTAINABLE PACKAGING, LIKE PAPER, WOULD HAVE ALLOWED IN TOO MUCH OXYGEN, SO WE NEEDED TO GET CREATIVE”

Specifically, it is made from LDPE #4 (a low-density polyethylene). The number '4' signals its density, with LDPE #1 being the densest. The brand reduced this number as much as possible to reduce its usage.

'For us, it is about being better today than yesterday – so this was a significant breakthrough,' Sowerby says.

Compared to the brand's previous packaging, it shows a 58 percent reduction in carbon, a 70 percent reduction in virgin fossil fuels, a 20 percent reduction in materials, and a 70 percent usage of recycled materials – promoting a circular economy.

In addition to choosing sustainable, flexible packaging, the brand is actively educating customers about its recyclability and the post-consumer handling process.

Each bag features a QR code that customers can scan to go to a page that tells them how to recycle it. Pact Coffee also releases a yearly impact report that contains information on the packaging and its social impact.

The carbon footprint of these bags is offset by SeaTrees. This project protects and regenerates coastal ecosystems by planting and restoring aquatic plants.

'These plants, like mangroves, kelp and coral, can be up to 10 times more effective than rainforests at removing carbon from the air. These bags also fund this project, which stops plastic bottles from entering our oceans,' Sowerby notes.

'For every kilogram of packaging we purchase, this initiative saves the equivalent of two plastic bottles from rivers in Asia. If they weren't to be recovered and recycled by this initiative, they'd end up in the ocean.'

This initiative has collected over 20 thousand plastic bottles from rivers and recycled them.

packaging that aligns with its brand values and meets the growing consumer demand for products packed in eco-friendly packaging. In partnership with Dow and Alico, the brand's material and packaging suppliers, Café Buendía developed a mono-material packaging.

As noted earlier, packaging for high-barrier products such as coffee, cocoa and milk powder traditionally required metalized structures to maintain freshness and quality. These structures, however, posed significant challenges in terms of recyclability. Café Buendía needed packaging that could offer the necessary barrier properties while being environmentally friendly and recyclable.

Café Buendía chose Alico's Reciplus Alico mono-material structure, which preserves coffee's taste, aroma characteristics and shelf life. The mono-material structure utilizes high-performance polyethylene resins. This packaging is claimed to maintain the functionality of traditional laminated packaging while enabling closed-loop recycling. It offers a high barrier against moisture, oxygen and light. This innovative structure has been recognized with two awards at the Dow Chemical Awards for its easy recyclability.

According to Alico, Reciplus is also resistant to tears and punctures, ensuring the product remains intact during transit and storage. Additionally, it requires a lower sealing temperature, reducing overall energy consumption, and is lighter than rigid packaging.

By using Reciplus, Café Buendía successfully introduced what it claims is the world's first freeze-dried coffee in 100 percent recyclable packaging. This move has boosted the brand's reputation and demonstrated its commitment to sustainability.

CAFÉ BUENDÍA

Columbian coffee brand Café Buendía presented during Label Summit Latin America in Columbia how it has adopted sustainable



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Drupa 2024 review

Drupa is not usually the first port of call for the label community but is always an opportunity to look at wider trends in the package print converting sector. Andy Thomas-Emans and Chelsea McDougall report

Although most major launches for labels and mid-web packaging converters were made at Labelexpo Europe last year, there was still much interest in label and packaging technology at drupa 2024.

The event in Düsseldorf, Germany, drew 1,643 exhibitors from 52 nations over 11 days and 19 halls.

Water-based inkjet

Perhaps the key theme was water-based inkjet, with prototype machines from both Canon and Epson on display along with the recently launched FujiFilm FP790.

The **Canon LabelStream LS2000** prints at 40m/min CMYK + white and features a new 2,400 x 1,200 DPI printhead with ink recirculation to help eliminate nozzle clogging and extend printhead life. Food-safe polymer water-based inks were developed by Canon specifically for these printheads. Canon says the inks contain highly saturated pigments which produce a wide color gamut. Because the inks form a very thin layer on the substrate, reduced scattering of light results in high-quality color reproduction, according to the company.

The press features a unique design with two priming stations; at one end with CMYK, and the other with white. The white is printed first and the inks are dried on an extended web path inside the press before application of CMYK inks, followed by further drying back through the press.

Printhead maintenance and quality control are automated, as are color measurement and adjustment.

Qualified substrates for the LabelStream LS2000 include coated, synthetic and textured papers and even some heat-sensitive films.

The press is based on the same core technology as Canon's varioPrint iX1700 sheetfed inkjet, allowing the company to transfer proven technology from the commercial sector.

The LabelStream LS2000 will be commercially available in 2025 and can be seen in action at Labelexpo Americas 2024 in September.

Also on the Canon stand were modules from an **Edale FL5** in-line folding carton converting line, capable of adding cold foil, cast+cure or varnish before moving to the FDC600 flatbed die-cutter for cut/crease, braille/embossing and waste stripping.

Epson demonstrated a concept 6-color



Canon LabelStream LS2000 water-based inkjet press

“Epson demonstrated a concept 6-color aqueous inkjet press designed as the successor generation to the company's existing and highly successful L-4000 series aqueous presses”

aqueous inkjet press designed as the successor generation to the company's existing and highly successful L-4000 series aqueous presses.

The L-4000-series presses use an x-y frame to build an image before the web indexes forward, limiting speeds to around 8.2m/min. The Concept press currently operates at 13m/min. It still prints one frame at a time, but the page-wide array makes a single pass over the length of the frame before the web moves on.

Nozzle verification technology has also improved, so nozzles are continuously monitored in real-time and nozzle compensation happens in the background. The press prints at 1,200 x 1,200 DPI resolution.

The Concept press uses a new version of Epson's established AQ water-based resin ink technology. An optimizer liquid is jetted onto the material just before the colors to better control dot placement.

Screen, meanwhile, demonstrated its Truepress PAC 520P inkjet press using water-based food-compliant inks to print on paper-based flexible packaging. The company also displayed the inkjet imaging unit from the Truepress PAC 830F water-based inkjet press for filmic flexible

packaging. Also on the Screen stand was a Truepress Label 350UV SAI S UV inkjet press with the newly developed digital primer unit for label printing.

FujiFilm demonstrated its Jet Press FP790 water-based inkjet press for flexible packaging and filmic labels, printing at 50m/min at 1,200 x 1,200 DPI. As noted in Labels & Labeling, the first FP790 was installed by Eco Flexibles in the UK, and at drupa the company confirmed the purchase of a second machine.

Landa is still not in a position to demonstrate a web version of its nanographic press technology or to say when the press might be commercially available, limiting itself to print samples from the development W11 press.

On the consumables side, **DuPont** was promoting its Artistri range of water-based inkjet printing inks and dispersions for commercial and packaging applications, claiming high durability and color fastness. **Toyo Inks** previewed its next-generation low-energy drying water-based ink technology.

UV and toner

Durst used drupa 2024 as the launchpad for its new KJet hybrid press developed

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Canon-Edale inline folding carton converting

“The Canon LabelStream LS2000 prints at 40m/min CMYK + White and features a new 2400 x 1200 DPI printhead with ink recirculation to help eliminate nozzle clogging”

in cooperation with Omet. This is both companies' second joint venture after the XJet.

Combining the cylinder-based dual-servo flexo technology from Omet, with the Durst RSCi digital printing engine, the KJet has been developed with an ultra-short web path that minimizes waste and reduces the set-up times highlighting the benefits of digital printing. Durst says the power of its automation and register control 'redefine the concept of versatility' as the press can cater to a number of applications from labels to packaging.

Thomas Macina, sales director for labels and flexible packaging at Durst Group, says:

'The combination of digital with flexo offers an innovative hybrid solution that maximizes productivity and flexibility, enabling printers to select between flexo or digital printing, thereby optimizing efficiency and reducing costs while meeting evolving market demands such as personalization and just-in-time deliveries in a single-pass.'

The KJet press will be available at Labelexpo Americas 2024.

Xeikon demonstrated both a new UV-inkjet press and the digital foiling integration with Kurz first seen at Labelexpo Europe last year.

The new 330mm/13in PX3300HD LED-UV inkjet press prints at 70m/min, even when printing high opacity white, at a resolution of 1,200 DPI. The press utilizes Xeikon's newly developed px-Cure LED HD ink series, capable of hitting up to 88

percent of Pantone colors within DeltaE 2, rising to 94 percent in DeltaE 3. The new ink set will also be used for the recently introduced PantherCure UV LED series of 600 DPI inkjet presses.

The inkjet heads are Xerox W-Series with dedicated waveform and screening software developed by Xeikon.

The press is prepared for hybrid printing with the option to add Xeikon's modular inline LCUs (Label Converting Units) and a large unwinder for uninterrupted production runs.

A key feature of the PX3300HD is an inline camera system that automatically adjusts registration, stitching and nozzle compensation during setup and running.

Xeikon also unveiled a partnership with Kurz company Scribos to develop interactive brand protection, track and trace, and consumer engagement features based around an inline Kurz Digital Metal embellishment unit. First seen at Labelexpo Europe 2023, the system makes use of the unique curing technology on Xeikon's Titor dry toner press.

Powered by Xeikon's X-800 DFE, the application uses Scribos ValiGate technology and Scribos 360 Cloud Platform to image serialized, protected QR codes and metallic variable elements. Not only does each code have a unique ID, but they also contain a finely printed sub-pattern that acts as advanced copy protection.

Also shown was the high-speed 'Lion' toner press.

Gallus-Heidelberg made some major

announcements concerning the further evolution of the Gallus One digital press system. First is the addition of a 430mm web width to the existing 340mm configuration; second is the addition of orange and violet – jointly developed with Heidelberg – to the CMYK+W print engine.

Gallus also introduced its 'System to Compose' concept which allows converters to add Labelmaster print and converting modules to the Gallus One. The Gallus One is built on the Labelmaster platform. The range of available Labelmaster modules includes flexo and screen printing units, cold and hot foiling, embossing and gravure printing as well as die-cutting. Dario Urbinati, Gallus Group CEO, says this will be a plug-and-play system allowing converters to extend or change the configuration of the press as business needs change.

Interestingly, owners of Labelmaster 340/440 flexo presses will be able to add the Gallus One digital engine to their existing presses – effectively transforming the press into a bespoke Gallus One.

HP Indigo premiered its high-speed V12 narrow web press integrated with ABG automatic non-stop unwind and rewind modules. This greatly increases the productivity of the press, which can print at up to 120m/min in 6-color mode. ABG also demonstrated a Digicon series 3 converting line equipped with a Fast Track high-speed (150m/min) semi-rotary die-cutting module to complement the V12.

HP Indigo also promoted the latest upgrade to its 200K mid-web press which increases the imaging resolution to address markets such as pharma and cosmetics where the ability to print microtext is a requirement.

Automation took center stage, with many exhibitors using the show to focus on AI and smart workflows. HP leadership acknowledged this

'The HP transformation we announced 20 years ago has fully materialized at drupa 2024 with digital now becoming fully engrained within the print industry,' says Haim Levit, senior vice president and general manager, HP Industrial Print. 'The intelligent automation we have demonstrated across our production lines answers our customers' pain points which are largely driven by labor shortages, energy waste as well as customization and on-demand products.'

Several other digital label press manufacturers were present including Dilli with its Neo Picasso 600 x 1,200 DPI UV inkjet press and **HanGlory** with the LabStar 330S hybrid label press.

Seiko Instruments' printhead division unveiled its 600 DPI Acrobat RCE2560 printhead with recirculation to avoid nozzle



Epson concept aqueous press



FujiFilm FP790 water-based flexpack press

“Also on the Screen stand was a Truepress Label 350UV SAI S UV inkjet press with the newly developed digital primer unit for label printing”

clogging. The 2,560 nozzles are arranged across four rows over a printing width of 108.3mm. The RCE2560 offers 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.

Digital embellishment

Digital embellishment across all types of packaging and commercial print applications was another key theme of this drupa show.

On the labels side, **Brotech** highlighted its iDM 330 Digital Embellishment System, a multifunctional machine that supports digital white, digital metalization, digital varnish, variable data, barcodes/2D barcodes and braille.

Cartes showed its Gemini GE363VJL tool-free converting and embellishment line including digital printing, foiling and laser die-cutting. The company was heavily promoting the ability of its Jet D-Screen 'digital screen' unit to replace Screen print units.

ABG showed off the possibilities of its DigiLase laser die-cutter paired with the dual-head DigiJet print bar, capable of jetting tactile varnishes and other variable spot effects.

Konica Minolta introduced its Alphajet digital embellishment system, developed with France-based partner MGI Digital Technology. It both inkjet prints and embellishes B1/B2 sheets with varnish and digital foil in a single pass.

Kurz demonstrated its latest DM-Maxliner 3D for haptic digital embellishment, UV spot and relief varnishing. Also unveiled was 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.

For smart label production, **LemuGroup** showed its LI 220 RFID smart label inserter, equipped with a delam-relam system for accurate insertion of smart inlays.

JetFX showcases its digital embellishments in the HP digital pouch factory, showing embellished pouches with a 30in Solo Flexpack printbar mounted on a Karville Classic Duplex Slitter.

Automation and digitization

Automation and robotization were key trends at drupa. Although these were generally not labels-specific applications, they did point the way forward for all package printing and converting formats.

Berhalter, for example, showed its new B6 Die-Cutter paired with a Beamstack automated packaging system. The robot separates die-cut stacks into the desired number of pieces and automatically packages them into plastic blisters or

cardboard boxes.

AV Flexologic showed its RoboCell robotic pre-press technology comprising RoboTape for taping printing sleeves; RoboSleeve for transferring taped sleeves onto the plate mounter and then delivering them to the sleeve rack. The company's Famm 3.0 system automatically mounts multiple plates.

BST showed its SmartData system to centrally control, optimize and document networkable web monitoring and inspection systems.

EyeC was also focused on AI-assisted inspection, demonstrating a new, AI-based defect classification option for the entire EyeC ProofRunner line.

Enfocus joined the team from **Esko**, **X-Rite** and **Pantone** for an innovation lab including a new AI-assisted decision-making tool for upstream packaging project specifications. This complemented Esko's unveiling sCloud, a cloud-native platform that includes computing, data sharing and AI functions. All existing Esko applications - from ArtPro+, ArtiosCAD, and Phoenix through to Cape Pack and Automation Engine - will connect to the new platform, giving authorized users 24/7 real-time access to live data and common resources.

Hybrid Software Group showcased the AI-driven automation features of its Packz packaging pre-production software alongside its CloudFlow modular workflow suite. The company's MyCloudFlow workflow integrates CloudFlow into a SaaS workspace fully operated and managed by Hybrid Software.

Although not specifically related to labels, Tecna showcased strategic collaborations with Canon, Fujifilm, HP, Kodak, Ricoh, Screen, Heidelberg, Horizon, Kompac and Smyth which enabled robot-assisted automation of both print and end-of-line packaging. The company showcased advances in its industrial-grade IoT system Tecna Connect, which reports and analyzes production statistics.

Sheetfed

Drupa is a good place to catch up on sheetfed wet glue and IML print and finishing technologies.

Blumer Maschinenbau presented its Atlas-1110 Double Stack, which allows two strips to be processed simultaneously. Blumer also presented its AG-4220 counter-pressure die-cutter, a new technology for large-format paper and IML labels. The company was exhibiting together with the Postpress Alliance - an association of leading print finishing companies.

Plockmatic Group showed its ColorCut LC330, a compact

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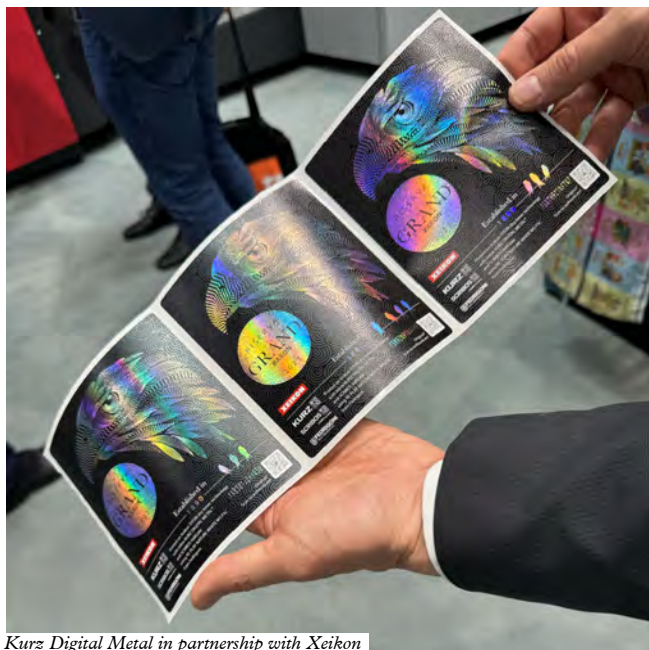
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Kurz Digital Metal in partnership with Xeikon

“Automation and robotization were key trends, although these were generally not labels-specific applications, they did point the way forward for all package printing and converting formats”

automatic label sheet cutter designed 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 pressure of 500g.

The ColorCut Professional series LC700 Pro label cutter is a sheet label cutter for automated high-volume label production. It provides high-speed precision cutting at speeds up to 1.2m/s and up to 760g of pressure.

The flagship model on show, the LCF700 Pro, takes 330mm width rolls with a maximum outer diameter of 350mm and includes a station to apply laminates before cutting. The LCF700 Pro has a waste matrix removal system and includes a five-knife label slitter with an advanced tracking system.

Heidelberg showed off the automation features on its new Speedmaster XL 106 alongside a highly automated end-to-end packaging workflow.

A key trend at the show was the introduction of new digital sheetfed presses, both toner and inkjet-based. **Konica Minolta**, for example, introduced the AccurioJet 60000, the successor to the established AccurioJet KM-1 and KM-1e, first released in 2016. The AccurioJet 60000 boasts a throughput of 6,000 sheets/hour using HS-UV ink.

Wide web converting

Wide format print and converting systems are commonly used for wraparound and shrink sleeve labels and some long-run PS jobs as well as flexible packaging, and automation along with digital hybrids were the key trends at the show.

Uteco demonstrated its OnyxOmnia hybrid press which combines Uteco's CI flexo core technology with a SmartJet inkjet

module. The press runs at 400m/min flexo only and 300m/min with digital on a maximum print width of 1320mm. The press is designed as a hybrid system with a similar concept to narrow web hybrid, in that the flexo units are designed to complement inkjet rather than the other way round. Six flexo units allow for spot colors, primers and whites with the last unit being convertible to a roto unit for overprint varnish.

Windmoeller & Hoelscher was promoting a concept technology for hybrid printing developed with Epson which incorporates four flexo stations and seven digital. On the company's stand was an entry-level AlphaFlex press, printing 8-colors and 400m/min and a maximum print width of 1,270mm.

BW Converting showed flexible packaging samples produced on its Ion hybrid digital press, printing at 400m/min, though this was not on the stand.

Bobst introduced its SmartGravure technology which aims to automate job setup and tuning along with the configurable Expertlam 900 coater and laminator.

Comexi launched its F1 evolution CI press, printing up to 600m/min on a print width up to 1,690mm. The press can be equipped with a robotic arm for sleeve and anilox changes, as well as other automation systems from the GeniusTech range, including job setup optimization and Genius Run HD, claimed to eliminate bouncing and barring.

Soma announced its Proxima flexo press running up to 400m/min on a maximum print width of 1,270mm, designed for short runs using the company's Iris automated setup system.

Platemaking also showed advances in the flexpack sector. **Xsys** demonstrated its 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 company also spotlighted the recently launched nyloflex FTV plate, an LED-optimized, inherent flat-top dot plate, engineered specifically for the high-quality flexible packaging market.

On the plate processing side, Xsys launched the Catena ProServX, a cloud-based, real-time equipment monitoring tool for proactive maintenance and quality control.

Materials

Henkel launched Aquence PS 3017 RE, a water-based acrylic pressure-sensitive adhesive designed for the olefinic filmic labels used for wash-off PET bottles. The company says its new adhesive offers excellent wash-off efficiency, even at 65 deg C, for PE facstock. Aquence PS 3017 RE has received the CHI Certificate confirming that the adhesive does not negatively impact the recycling path for transparent PET bottles when used in combination with a PO label. The company says the adhesive resists water whitening and is approved for indirect food contact.

Taghleef Industries featured new Leather and Soft Touch finishes for its Derprosa film 4x4 brand. The company says the coating combines a soft feel with a high level of fingerprint and scratch resistance.

Taghleef's Derprosa reLIFE BOPP laminated films were demonstrated using ISCC Plus certified resins obtained from post-consumer chemically recycled (PCR) plastic sources, while Derprosa bioBLUE BOPP laminated films use certified resins from residual vegetable origin, including waste cooking oil.

Ancillaries

LED-UV continues to make inroads across all sectors of the package and commercial printing sectors, along with swappable arc/LED systems for transitioning printers to LED.

The newly formed curing business unit of **Dr Hönle** showcased its new LED Powerline LC HV, a water-cooled LED-UV curing device



PX3300HD LED-UV inkjet press

that can be used both for pinning and final curing.

GEW highlighted its ArcLED technology, with UV Arc and UV LED lampheads that can be quickly interchanged on a press. GEW's Rhino power control system automatically recognizes the lamp type and switches the power supply accordingly.

IST Metz promoted its HotSwap system for switching between mercury and LED-UV lamps on narrow web presses. The company also presented its UV Analyzer measuring device, a combination of UV app, measuring strips and an Analyzer Stick. The company also promoted its partnership with Kocher+Beck and Heidelberg to offer a comprehensive range of technologies including tooling and UV curing for the press manufacturer.

Pantec showcased its 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. The company also showed its Rhino flatbed embossing system, suitable for enhancing labels and flexible packaging.

Prati spotlighted its DigiCompact converting and finishing line for self-adhesive labels and digitally printed flexible packaging. 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.

Schobertechnologies showcased its RSM410 IML/MX with Twin Spider designed for high-speed counting, cutting and stacking of in-mold labels with robotic assistance.

Advances in inspection systems also featured, with **Esko/AVT** introducing a varnish inspection module for the Esko/AVT Helios system. The add-on module detects issues such as varnish misregister, and partial and full starvation simultaneously with print defect detection.

FAG Graphic Systems showcased an upgraded FAG FluoSP Spectro, a spectrophotometer designed to control invisible fluorescent inks used in anti-counterfeiting applications.

Isra Vision showed a new version of its PrintStar Evo for inspecting flexible packaging, featuring a 'Static Code Reading' function checking the legibility of barcodes and QR codes.

Re launched ReVision NET, a web viewing system designed for print quality control.



Labelexpo Americas 2024 will allow US converters to see much of the narrow web equipment launched at drupa for the first time. Scan the QR code to learn more



Hybrid Software joins AI-generated label artwork project

Hybrid Software has participated in Project Halo, a unique consumer experience spearheaded by Diageo, one of the world leaders in the alcohol beverage market, to invite customers to co-design their unique Johnnie Walker Blue Label bottle.

During August, visitors to Johnnie Walker Princes Street in Edinburgh will be immersed in an experience where they are invited to co-design their own unique bottle of Johnnie Walker Blue Label.

In collaboration with Scottish artist Scott Naismith, the experience begins with visitors answering a few simple prompts to compose AI-generated artwork with various colors, locations, artistic styles and times of day. The result is a one-of-a-kind piece of artwork printed directly onto the bottle.

Project Halo was engineered by industry experts, including Phantom, Amazon AWS, GMG, Roland DG, and Hybrid Software. The collective mission of this project is to propel brands to success by pioneering personalized consumer experiences.

At Johnnie Walker Princes Street, visitors are invited to explore the world of direct and variable on-site bottle printing hands-on. The unique and innovative integration with AI technology molds a special connection between the brand and the consumer, aiming to reinforce brand recognition and loyalty.

Siegwerk launches Cirket Clearprime UV E02 primer in Europe

Siegwerk has launched its first full UV flexo deinking system Cirket Clearprime UV E02 for the European market.

The new primer technology for non-food packaging applications offers a validated solution for the safe and economical deinking of UV-printed self-adhesive labels (PSL). It improves the recyclability of labeled plastic packaging and enables the recovery of high-quality recyclates that are suitable for reuse in non-food packaging applications.

Although UV inks offer some advantageous properties for printing labels, they also pose a challenge for subsequent recycling.

With Cirket Clearprime UV E02, Siegwerk now offers a primer that specifically addresses this challenge. By enabling easy and safe deinking of UV-printed self-adhesive labels, it eliminates the need for prior label removal if the used plastics are compatible.

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LABELEXPO AMERICAS 2024 PREVIEW

Compiled by Pitor Wnuk, edited by Akanksha Meena, Andy Thomas-Emans and Chelsea McDougall

Labelexpo Americas 2024 promises to be a showcase of technological innovation. This year's event is set to spotlight the latest advancements in technology that will transform the label industry with trends to be found in flexible packaging, RFID, sustainability, automation and more. This comprehensive preview is aimed to guide you through the technology and innovations on display at Labelexpo Americas 2024, on Sept 10-12 at the Donald E Stephens Convention Center in Rosemont, Illinois.

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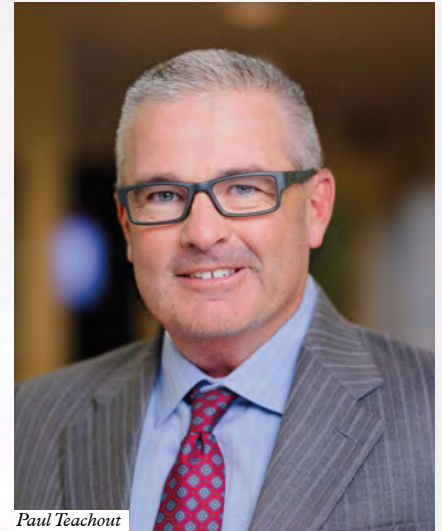


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PAUL TEACHOUT WINS GLOBAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Teachout will be honored at the Label Industry Global Awards during Labelexpo Americas 2024. Chelsea McDougall reports



Paul Teachout

Highly-respected industry veteran Paul Teachout has been named this year's winner of the Global Achievement Award, which recognizes his significant contributions to the label industry.

Teachout will be honored at the Label Industry Global Awards during Labelexpo Americas at a special networking event on Tuesday, Sept 10. Other awards that evening include Avery Dennison Special Recognition, Rising Star and Converter of the Year awards.

The judging panel of this year's Global Achievement Award unanimously selected Teachout for his openness, passion for education and storied career in the industry.

'I warmly congratulate Paul Teachout on winning the Label Industry Global Achievement Award,' says Andy Thomas-Emans, chair of the judging panel. 'The judges noted Paul's major influence on the development of standardization of the flexographic process worldwide through his work on the FTA's technical committees and most recently as chair. The judges particularly commended Paul's selfless work as a mentor to young people looking to enter the label industry, championing the Phoenix Challenge competition and participating on the boards of multiple leading educational institutions.'

The judges also included Tim

McDonough, chairman of TLMI, Chelsea McDougall, editor of Labels & Labeling, Greg Hrinya, editor of Label & Narrow Web, Lisa McTigue, editor of Packaging Digest.

'I am extremely proud and honored to be the recipient of this year's Global Achievement Award and to be included on a long list of amazingly influential people,' Teachout says. 'It is wonderful to be recognized individually, but I cannot emphasize enough that I would achieve nothing without the support of this wonderful industry.'

HONORABLE BACKGROUND

Teachout has over 40 years in the label and printing industry and is currently a technical marketing and content specialist at Harper Corporation of America. His career began as an apprentice in commercial offset. In 1986, he moved to the former Webtron/Aquaflex where he bore witness to the narrow web flexo industry in its infancy – as the industry moved from offset printing to the narrow web.

'I've been privileged to be exposed to some amazing people in this industry and had the opportunity to see that evolution from the front row,' Teachout says. 'And I've got to do it working with great people and great companies.'

Teachout is a second-generation printer, and now his son, Christopher, works as a plate and screen technician at CCL Label.

'Ink is our blood,' Teachout says. 'It's easy to be passionate about this industry when it's what you grew up doing. Seeing my son as the next generation growing up in this incredible industry is extremely gratifying. If my father was looking down at us, he'd be pretty proud of how it all turned out.'

If ink is in his blood, 'teach' is in his name. He sits on numerous boards of printing colleges, including current chairman of the FTA board of directors/FFTA board of trustees, and leads the TLMI Print Awards. Teachout sits on the advisory boards at Clemson University Sunoco Institute and Central Piedmont Community College/Harper Campus.

A new award will join the awards programming, with a Stan Avery Special Recognition award going to Ferdinand E Ruesch IV, the grandson of the founder and current flagbearer of Gallus. He started at Gallus in 1964 as a mechanical craftsman, moving his way through the company and taking over the company from his father in 1991. Since 2002, he served as vice chairman of the Gallus Group, and has seen the company through its acquisition by Heidelberg. Ruesch will retire this year.



Scan the QR code
to learn more about
the Label Industry
Global Awards



RISING STAR, CONVERTER OF THE YEAR

Other awards to be announced at the Global Label Awards are winners of the Rising Star and the Converter of the Year.

Sponsored by Avery Dennison, the Rising Star recognizes the achievements of emerging talent in the label and packaging industry who represent the next generation of leaders. The shortlist

includes: Alex Abbott, of Smart Solve; Christian Bortolin of Amonn Print; and Zach Janowski, of Wilson Manufacturing.

The converter of the year award is given to a converting company which has championed a diverse and inclusive work environment, built comprehensive training and

development programs for its staff and contributed to community/charity initiatives, as well being a standard bearer for the industry among label buyers. The short list includes India-based Any Graphics; UK-based Harkwell and US-based NextGen Label Group.

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LABELEXPO AMERICAS 2024 PRESENTS EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Labelexpo Americas will be host to a wealth of learning and networking opportunities, Corinne Lavictoire writes

Labelexpo Americas 2024 promises an exciting three days packed full of educational insights and networking sessions, alongside cutting-edge show features.

DAY ONE, SEPT 10

The education starts the first day of the show with a special **Converter Leadership Lunch** that features a high-level panel discussion from leading converters including Guido Iannone, All4Labels; Bruce Hanson, AWT Labels & Packaging; Craig Curran, Nosco; and Elizabeth Yerecic, Yerecic Label. That event features targeted networking discussions around topics that will also be explored at the panel, including sustainability, automation, M&A, succession planning and addressing workforce challenges.

Day one will also see the opening of a new area dedicated to the high-value flexible packaging and shrink sleeve markets.

FlexPack @ Labelexpo will feature the latest equipment and materials from leading industry suppliers.

Confirmed participants include Karlville and Mamata with pouching equipment, Gonderflex and S-One LP with laminating equipment, AB Graphic with shrink sleeve seaming machinery, Bonset, Nobelus and Protect-All with label materials and Sanzip promoting re-closable zippers.

The show visitors can also attend a short introduction to flexible packaging, presented by HP three times a day.

The **flexible packaging master class** will provide converters with expert guidance into how label converters can enter or expand into this lucrative market. Sessions include an introduction into flexible packaging, materials and sustainability.

Day one ends with the **Label Industry Global Awards networking party**,

which will recognize key achievements and celebrate excellence in the label and package printing sector. Awards given that evening will be for Global Achievement, Stan Avery Special Recognition, Rising Star and Converter of the Year.

DAY TWO, SEPT 11

Day two kicks off with **breakfast networking** session with Katie King, published author and AI expert, who will discuss how AI and automation are transforming the label and packaging industry. King, CEO of AI in Business, will also explore AI's potential and offer key takeaways for label companies to take back to their businesses for a smarter and more streamlined production.

A **conference program** on day two comprises six sessions focusing on topics affecting the labels and package printing industry in North America. Morning sessions include a global and regional overview of the US label market presented by Linnea Keen, president at TLMI and Corey Reardon, president and CEO of AWA Alexander Watson Associates. Further sessions will cover the use of AI in sales and marketing roles and consumer trends shaping the future of the label industry.

Afternoon sessions will focus on growing a label business, including diversification into new segments, design and branding opportunities, as well as a brand owner case study looking at the cannabis packaging market in North America.

DAY THREE, SEPT 12

On the final day the Label Academy will host two master classes.

The **shrink sleeve technology master class** is designed to give converters a clear understanding of shrink sleeve printing and converting, as well as insight into the latest converting technologies and specialized

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applications. Sessions include exploring film types, the design and origination, elevating shrink sleeves and adding embellishments and special features.

The **RFID in labels and package printing workshop** aims to provide technical knowledge for label and other converters interested in RFID and smart labeling. Sessions include an introduction into RFID in label production presented by Michael Fein, board member of RAIN Alliance, understanding RFID CHIP technology, and exploring end user mandates, as well as everything a converter needs to learn about manufacturing, testing and data processing.

On the show floor, the **RFID experience** area takes attendees on a journey to explore the definition behind RFID and how this technology will affect converter businesses in the future.

The RFID experience features an immersive video explaining RFID, its importance to the label industry and the latest developments are from leading retailers which are mandating RFID.

On the **Innovation Stage**, attendees will be able to see leading suppliers present their latest technologies.

The **Eco Stage, hosted by TLMI** (booth 3005) on the first two days of the show, is designed to support a better performing, more sustainable label and package printing. Sessions will focus on tackling myths surrounding sustainable packaging, what converters should really be concerned about and the key takeaway actions.

On Wednesday, Sept 11 at the Eco Stage, TLMI will be hosting a student-run panel on hiring Gen Z in the label industry.

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LABELEXPO AMERICAS 2024 FOCUSES ON FLEXIBLE PACKAGING

Flexpack@Labelexpo, co-located with Labelexpo Americas 2024, will focus on the complete production chain from materials selection to print, laminating and pouch-making. Andy Thomas-Emans reports

Flexible packaging will be a key focus at Labelexpo Americas 2024 in September as label converters continue to diversify their product offering and wide web converters seek solutions for the increasing amount of short-run work coming their way.

This is a trend we are now seeing across Labelexpo shows around the world. Labelexpo Asia 2023 was the first Labelexpo show to feature a dedicated flexible packaging hall, being effectively a 'show within a show'. This takes nothing away from Labelexpo's core focus on label technologies. Rather, these two sectors of the package print industry are entirely complementary.

Why is there this growing interest from label converters in flexible packaging?

The last decade has seen a quiet revolution in packaging formats as brands have moved more of their premium products into high-value, small-format laminated stand-up pouches as an alternative to labeled containers.

There are many reasons for this, including the drive toward differentiation, easier placement on shelves using POS display units, and convenient resealable closing systems. Because these are mostly premium products – or new marketing

concepts – the run lengths are short, quality requirements are high and brands want a fast turnaround.

Brand owners dealing with wide web converters have 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 reflects the flexible packaging supply chain, geared to delivery of multiple container-loads of raw materials to converters who often manufacture their own bespoke laminates.

At the same time, label press technology has been evolving toward wider web widths and the ability to handle extensible films. Mid-web presses – defined as in the range 26in to 30in – will be a standout machine category at Labelexpo Americas 2024, and for many label converters these are becoming the main gateway into flexible package printing and converting. These presses can be configured with both UV and extended hot air drier units for water-based inks and coatings.

The wider web width of these machines allows them to print larger format packaging products including flexible

packaging, in-mold labels and shrink sleeves two or more up on the same web. These products can, of course, be printed on narrower web machines, but only 1-up, which creates more waste and is less efficient.

At Labelexpo Americas 2024 Mark Andy stages the global launch of its 26in-wide P Series S9 press for label and flexible packaging markets. Using sleeve technology, the press will be available in a 22in as well as 26in format. Show visitors can also see the US debut of Nilpeter's 26in-wide FA-26 following its highly successful launch at Labelexpo Europe last year when multiple presses were sold off the show floor. Lombardi shows a print unit from its mid-web Invicta press.

Digital printing of flexible packaging has been dominated by HP since the launch of its 30in-wide HP Indigo 20000-series presses at Labelexpo 10 years ago. At Labelexpo Americas 2024 HP marks the US launch of the latest press in this series, the HP Indigo 200K, which greatly increases productivity over previous generation machines.

For the first time, the 2000K is fitted with inline slitting knives, allowing converters to print PS labels as well as shrink sleeves and flexible packaging and convert off-line.

FLEXPACK ECOSYSTEM

Entering the flexible packaging market requires much more from a label converter than simply installing a press, either digital or flexo. It requires acquiring a wide range of knowledge about the flexible packaging ecosystem, which is a different world from labels. Put shortly, labels are secondary packaging, not in direct contact with the product, while flexible packaging is the primary container of the product.

This means it is essential to come to grips with the required properties of flexible packaging: burst resistance, moisture and light resistance, structural properties, and, increasingly, sustainability profile. Flexible packaging requires an understanding of lamination, multi-layer structures, barrier properties and surface and reverse printing. The finished pack needs to be tested for a range of properties including leakage and pack integrity.



"ENTERING THE FLEXIBLE PACKAGING MARKET REQUIRES MUCH MORE FROM A LABEL CONVERTER THAN SIMPLY INSTALLING A PRESS, EITHER DIGITAL OR FLEXO. IT REQUIRES ACQUIRING A WIDE RANGE OF KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE FLEXIBLE PACKAGING ECOSYSTEM"

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Following printing and laminating the pouch needs to be formed ready for filling. And depending on the end use, a filling/dispensing spout may need to be incorporated.

Increasingly, label converters are looking to take pouch manufacturing in-house, a step which involves a steep learning curve. In other cases the printed and laminated rolls are shipped to a contract packer, toll poucher, or the end user to be formed, sealed, spouted and filled.

The critical requirement to understand all aspects of the flexpack workflow has led the organizers of Labelexpo Americas 2024 to introduce, for the first time in the US, a dedicated 'exhibition within an exhibition' called Flexpack@Labelexpo. This will allow show visitors to focus on post-print machinery, consumables and services, supported by a half-day deep dive flexible packaging Master Class organized by the Label Academy.

FlexPack@Labelexpo will be located in Hall F of the Donald E Stephens Convention Center. Exhibitors will be present to talk about everything from materials – films, zippers, thermal laminates, overprint varnishes for example – to curing technology, laminating technology, slitting machinery, pouch-making and spouting equipment.

Companies currently confirmed in the FlexPack@Labelexpo zone

LABEL ACADEMY PRESENT FLEXIBLE PACKAGING MASTER CLASS

Attendees at Labelexpo Americas looking to get a deeper dive into flexible packaging and hear expert guidance for entering the flexible packaging market can register for a Label Academy Master Class. Taking place at 10 am on Tuesday, Sept 10, this half-day event will be presented by leading flexible packaging experts from across the supply chain.

Those looking to expand their production into flexible packaging are likely to require a new skillset, and the Master Class aims to address it all. Starting with an introduction to the market, and touching on materials, sustainability, printing processes, lamination and coating, migration testing and quality control. The class ends with a label converter discussing their challenges and opportunities with diversifying into this market. Attendees will have the opportunity to see a live demonstration of flexible packaging production in action at the FlexPack @ Labelexpo area of the show.

The Master Class is organized by the Label Academy, the global training program for the label and package printing industry.

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include Karlville, Gonderflex, S-OneLP, ABG, Mamata, Protect-All, Novaflex, Bonset American Corporation, Sanzip re-closable zipper and Nobelus. In addition, three times a day, visitors will have the chance to attend a short introduction to flexible packaging presented by HP.

FLEXPACK EQUIPMENT

Focusing on the equipment on show, Gonderflex will demonstrate its P-8009 GFXW single pass thermal laminator-coater-embellishment-slitting machine. The Labelexpo machine configuration includes lamination, a single flexo unit for either surface or reverse print and textured cold foil application with an integrated JetFX print bar system, followed by slitting and rewinding.

Karlville Converting and Karlville Swiss partner to demonstrate post-print flexible packaging machinery for pouch making, lamination and slitting in partnership with HP Indigo. The company will showcase its compact thermal laminator for surface print application running a Protect-all MET PET with Nobelus Soft Touch thermal laminate.

Alongside is the Karlville Swiss Compact D, a quick change pouch making machine running Charter MDO PE Mono Material.

S-OneLP demonstrates the Cellcoat Systems T-14 thermal laminator, for which the company is exclusive US and European distributor. S-OneLP also displays its range of flexible packaging films and related primers, including Michelman in-line and off-line primers and water-based varnishes. Visitors can also see a range of overprint varnishes and coatings helping to achieve bespoke surface effects and protection for printed materials. Available OPVs include water-based, UV, LED, and eBeam varnishes and topcoats.

Companies providing information on different aspects of the flexpack supply chain include, Protect-All, which demonstrates printable barrier films and laminations; Novaflex promoting its laminating systems; and Mamata promoting its pouching machines and Form, Fill, Seal (FFS) equipment. Omet will also have an information booth promoting the company's flexpack converting expertise.

Flexpack@Labelexpo is also set to attract conventional wide-web flexible packaging converters interested both in meeting existing suppliers and deciding how they will tackle the challenge presented by increasing requests for short run packaging.

At this point it is worth noting that the wide web converting industry generally regards shrink sleeves as flexible packaging – as one more unsupported film application. Flexpack@Labelexpo will follow this categorization, so shrink sleeve materials and converting equipment will be included in the exhibition zone going forward.

At Labelexpo Americas 2024 AB Graphic will demonstrate new and shrink sleeve systems in the Flexpack@ zone. The Turret Seaming Rewinder (TSR750) ensures a weld that conforms to any container shape. Alongside this will be ABG's Doctoring machine (DR450).

Karlville Converting shows its Plus series shrink sleeve seamer running a Bonset CPET as well as a film printed with Siegwerk inks demonstrating a de-inking application.



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LABELEXPO AMERICAS 2024 TECHNOLOGY PREVIEW

A B GRAPHIC INTERNATIONAL (ABG) | BOOTH 3223

ABG showcases a range of innovations including NSU Lite, a new addition to the company's non-stop winding range. The system is demonstrated in-line with ABG's fourth-generation Converter platform and the recently launched Vectra AutoSet turret rewinder.

Additionally, ABG promotes the flagship Digicon Series 3, including the ABG Connect workflow for automation and streamlined processes. A full beverage specification Digicon is also on display.

Key technologies showcased include a DigiLite, DigiLase and shrink sleeve machinery.

ACTEGA | BOOTH 711

Actega promotes its low-migration inks and specialty coating effects for labels and flexible packaging, along with its Signite and Ecoleaf technologies.

Ink and coatings developed for the labels and flexible packaging industry include Actexact Safeshield inks for low-migration applications, LED-UV inks and coatings, haptic and optical effect coatings and opaque whites for labels, shrink sleeves, tubes and pouches.

ANYTRON | BOOTH 5707

Anytron showcases the Any-Jet II Plus, the extended version of its in-line digital label press, the Any-Jet II. This machine offers printing, laminating, laser cutting and the capability to deliver roll-to-roll labels and full-cut stickers along a conveyor. In addition to its flagship machines, Anytron also presents new applications for Any-Press, a compact CMYK+W, 13in toner printer.

APEX INTERNATIONAL | BOOTH 1442

Apex International exhibits anilox rolls and sleeves engineered for label, package and print applications, including the GTT 2.0, developed to mitigate liquid turbulence and increase quality and performance at top press speeds. According to Apex it

reduces ink spitting, mottling, pinholing, plugging and dot gain.

The company also showcases Apex UltraCell engravings, engineered ultra shallow for greater ink release and easy cleaning, including Hex 60 degrees, 75 degrees, longcell, trihelical, channelox, and 45 degrees quad. Labelexpo visitors are also invited to see Apex engravings in detail through the Veritas inspection system.

ARROW SYSTEMS | BOOTH 5703

Arrow Systems promotes the latest water-based pigment inkjet printing, along with a range of digital finishing equipment. The ArrowJet range delivers 1,600 x 1,600 DPI resolution and print speeds up to 60m/min, while using Nestlé and Swiss-compliant, water-based inks.

The ArrowJet 330R M Series, which makes its US debut, features a modular design, allowing customers to integrate a range of in-line technologies such as priming, varnish, lamination, and slitting.

The company also showcases the EZCut range of digital knife-finishing equipment. The latest upgrades to the EZCut 330R+ include auto knife adjustment, roll-to-part option and auto-job change. The EZCut 350R+ also makes its debut.

ASAHI CASEI CORPORATION | BOOTH 937

Asahi Kasei Corporation showcases

AWP-CleanFlat and AWP-DEW flexo plates, certified Carbon Neutral products. Additionally on show is the AFP-R, which was awarded the FTA Sustainability Excellence Award in 2024. This solvent-washable plate offers a reduced environmental impact. Asahi also promotes its AWP-Loop, a wastewater recycling system based on Asahi Kasei microza technology.

ASHE CONVERTING MACHINERY | BOOTH 918

Ashe Converting Equipment demonstrates the Opal glueless turret rewinder with patented cut and transfer technology. Booth visitors can also see the Opal ISR full 100 percent label inspection slitter rewinder and a range of converting lines with full rotary die-cutting along with the wide web range of equipment.

AVERY DENNISON | BOOTH 119

Avery Dennison promotes a range of industry technologies based on pressure-sensitive technology including RFID and sustainable, lower carbon alternatives. Booth visitors can discover products that enable recycling or reuse and learn how they can contribute to a more sustainable future.

BEONTAG | BOOTH 840

Beontag showcases its extensive portfolio of paper and film facestocks and adhesives, including specialty label materials for wine bottles, removable adhesives and linerless options.

BREIT TECHNOLOGIES | BOOTH 5801

The company promotes its cast and cure technology, which adds holographic and tactile elements and can be applied in transparent flood coat and spot applications. It comes in a variety of patterns, can be customized for brand enhancement and protection and reused over five times. Breit Technologies also shows dedicated equipment for both sheet-fed and flexo presses.



AB Graphic International (ABG)

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Bobst

BRODBECK MASCHINENBAU | BOOTH 6336

Brodbeck showcases Multi ID Core Cutter UNI 1000, a machine with the patent-pending design of a single-cutting mandrel suitable for all core diameters between 25 and 180mm. Once the desired cutting length and quantities are keyed in and the parent tubes fed in, the machine cuts and discharges cores without additional setup.

BST | BOOTH 837

BST North America exhibits its TubeScan 100 percent print inspection system developed for a wide range of applications. The TubeScan Dynamic Job Change technology developed in collaboration with Hybrid Software, which is also on show, works with customers' pre-press software to efficiently manage digital workflow.

BOBST | BOOTH 5601

Bobst showcases Digital Master 340 demonstrating its all-in-one label production concept with printing, finishing, die-cutting and quality control in a single pass. It features Accucheck, a proprietary in-line inspection and calibration system that comes with digital automation on all print and finishing modules, controlled via a single interface with cloud connectivity.

Accucheck has been updated with automatic quality inspection setup and job queue synchronization. Calibration improvements include a new color uniformity feature and advanced color-to-color registration.

Bobst experts are also discussing oneECG, an extended color gamut technology developed for in-line flexo presses offering savings, sustainability benefits and improved color consistency.

At Labelexpo, visitors can also experience Bobst Connect demonstrations showcasing the latest features, including a major update to the equipment monitoring capabilities providing detailed data insights, performance management KPIs and job inspection reports.

CANON | BOOTH 5903

Canon shows the LabelStream LS2000

prints at 40m/min CMYK + white that features a new 2400 x 1200 DPI printhead with ink recirculation to help eliminate nozzle clogging and extend printhead life. Food-safe polymer water-based inks were developed by Canon specifically for these printheads. These specialized inks contain highly saturated pigments and help produce a wide color gamut while forming a very thin layer on the substrate. This helps reduce the scattering of light, aiding in superb color reproduction. The LabelStream LS2000 can handle substrates from coated to synthetic paper and film, including low-heat-resistant film, opening possibilities for diverse label applications. The thin ink layer of the print is designed to allow printed substrates—including textured media—to maintain their original look and feel.

CARTES | BOOTH 5403

Cartes shows the Gemini Series GE363WJL machine combined with Jet D-Screen, a semi-rotary flexo and a laser converting system for no tooling operation.

Also on show is the GT365HFSRH model, a part of GT360 portfolio set up with the hot stamping and embossing units, a semi-rotary flexo unit, a silk screen unit, a semi-rotary die-cutting unit and the labels-on-label and cut-off window systems.

The company promotes its latest entry-level, compact GE261L Star Line Finally laser converting machine.

CERM | BOOTH 437

Cerm promotes its smart MIS software offering an automated workflow integrating into all elements of a business.

Labelexpo visitors can explore the latest innovations, such as AI-based scheduling and the new partner integrations aimed at improving productivity.

CHANNELED RESOURCES GROUP | BOOTH 1211

Channeled Resources Group showcases a diverse inventory of blank labels, including commodity-sized blank labels for thermal transfer and direct thermal applications.

The company also promotes its pressure-sensitive roll label materials, including the Channeled Choice line, and Channeled Value line boasting a B-grade label stock and setup materials.

COMEXI | BOOTH 3614

Comexi presents its labeling industry technologies, including offset printing with a central impression cylinder, which adapts to the time-to-market concept and offers reduced costs and environmental impact with the solventless EB offset inks.

CTS INDUSTRIES | BOOTH 1316

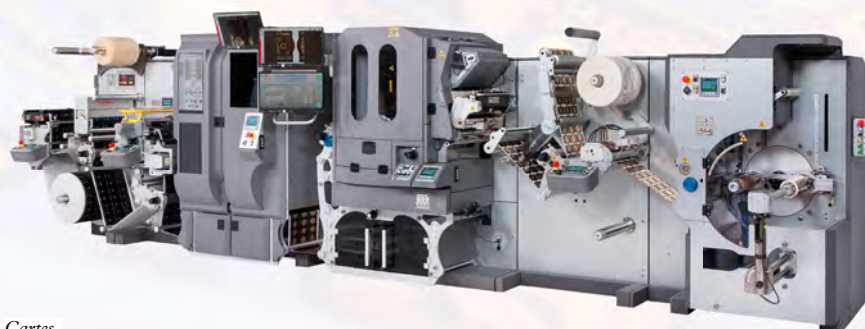
Celebrating its 44th anniversary, CTS Industries promotes the Pro-Lite HD laser engraved ceramic anilox roller developed to offer ease of care and cleaning. Expanding on achievements with EZ View Pro engraving specs, it helps operators view details such as LPI, BCM, and Serial ID. Also on show is the RollerTec servicing narrow web rubber rollers from 35 to 85 durometer.

DACO SOLUTIONS | BOOTH 934

Daco Solutions, along with its agent Flexo Export, exhibits a Daco PLD-430M semi-automatic turret rewinder. The machine features a web width of 17in, a 40in unwind with roll lift, a laminating station, two die-cut to register rotary die stations, auto-set slitting, and a three spindle semi-automatic turret rewinder with roll closure.

DANTEX GROUP | BOOTH 6129

Dantex Group presents its PicoJet 1200 digital inkjet technology. PicoJet models are available as either reel-to-reel or as a hybrid press with in-line finishing



Cartes

capabilities, including flexo, die-cut, cold foil, lamination, edge trim, back scoring and rotary or shear slitting.

The Dantex team is on hand to promote the extensive range of plate processing and cleaning equipment, letterpress and flexo plate materials along with tapes and sleeves.

DECOSYSTEMS | BOOTH 3540

Decosystems showcases Sentinel, an inspection technology developed for the label industry in different versions: silver, palladium, gold and platinum. Sentinel includes 100 percent print inspection control, color control, 2D and 3D code reading and grading and variable data verification. The optional Sentinel Workflow enables linking the printing machine and rewinder flow to save waste and keep the production under control.

The company also demonstrates its ScanDiff2 proof software matching and discovering all pre-press problems early in the work cycle.

On show is also the MultiLabel machine developed for pharmaceutical labels and equipped with automatic tension control, label/meter/diameter counter and Sentinel print inspection system.

Lastly, DECO_GPR (Global Production Report) also promoted at the stand is a software that keeps all production data accessible from a computer or smart device.

DELTA MODTECH | BOOTH 5415

Delta ModTech runs two RFID tag insertion demonstrations. The first, presented as part the RFID Experience, and the second is at its booth. Both processes feature Delta ModTech's patented Island Transfer module and the Delta Crusader platform and RFID tags inserted on pre-printed, die-cut labels. Delta's Island Transfer process can provide a low-risk technology for introducing RFID



Comexi

tags and antennas in label production.

DIGIMARC | BOOTH 5702

Digimarc promotes its digital watermarking technologies already have been deployed at scale for the identification and the authentication of physical and digital items, including a notable example the partnership with a consortium of the world's central banks.

DIGITAL PRINT | BOOTH 6511

Digital Print introduces the M7, a 13in variable system operating at speeds over 800 feet a minute with a resolution of up to 600 DPI, printing variable barcodes, text and graphics. The M7 is designed for efficiency and precision, optimizing ink usage and minimizing downtime.

DILLI | BOOTH 5929

Dilli unveils Neo Picasso Plus, a digital UV inkjet label press capable of printing at 600 x 1,200 DPI with width of up to 330mm. It is capable of full-color variable data printing and offers integrated UV LED curing system.

At the company's booth, Neo Picasso Plus is equipped with an optional jumbo winder module for handling larger roll

diameters to produce extended print runs and high-volume jobs.

DMS | BOOTH 950

DMS presents its latest innovations in hot stamping and foil-saving technology, including the FV-Series Hot Stamping System. The company also showcases its foil handling technologies, auxiliary UW/RW unit and a turn bar unit equipped with air bars.

DOMINO | BOOTH 5821

Domino demonstrates the N730i offering 1,200 DPI Bitstar printhead technology and print speeds of up to 230fpm (70m/min). It is configurable up to seven colors (CMYKOVW) and covering 92 percent of the Pantone range and prints white at 76 percent opacity at speed. The optional pre-digital flexo priming station can optimize print quality on difficult media types; the optional post-digital flexo station can be used for varnishing, brand spot color or flood white for shrink sleeve applications.

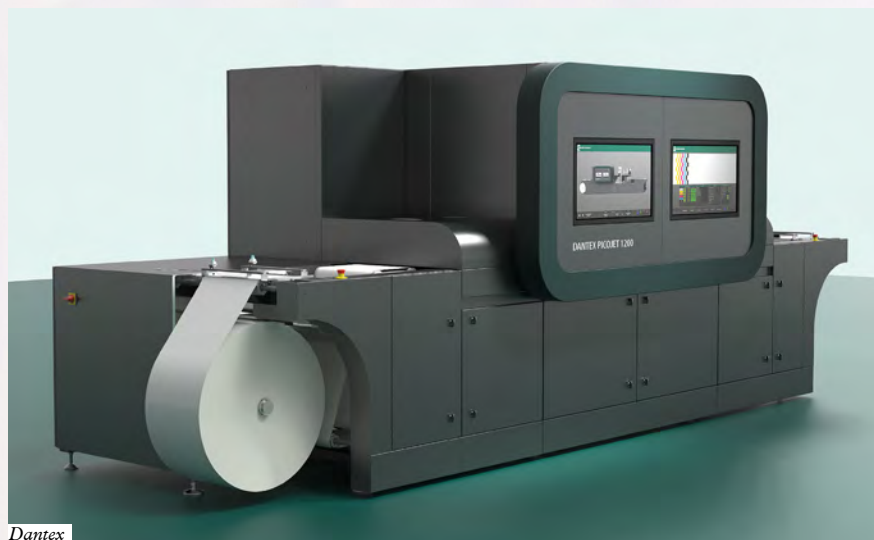
The company also showcases the N610i, a 600 DPI machine available in up to seven colors (CMYKOVW) with 72 percent white opacity, able to print from 164ft/min (50m/min) to 230ft/min (70m/min) offering a Pantone range of 92 percent.

Finally, the company launches the new Domino K300, which offers print speeds of up to 410 fpm (125m/min) at 600 DPI, or 820fpm (250m/min) at 300 DPI. The K300 is suitable for VDP unique codes, 2D, or QR codes that require a print width of 2.1in (54.1mm) with one print station, or 4.26in (108.2mm) with two print stations.

Domino K600i and K300 are integrated on a Mark Andy Pro Series flexo press. Lake Image Systems, a Domino Group Company, vision inspection systems are shown at all Domino digital printing stations.

DONGGUAN BENGRAPHIC PRINTING EQUIPMENT | BOOTH 5736

Bengraphic promotes two flexo presses: the IP, developed as an entry-level label



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converting equipment, and the F8, which can process film and folding carton paper with the maximum printing width is 650mm.

D.P.R. LABELING | BOOTH 5922

D.P.R. Labeling showcases Taurus system, a laser cutting and laminating machine eliminating the need for pre-die cut labels and die tools. It offers high-speed digital cutting, waste removal and a cutting management software.

The Aries system, also on show at the booth, is a semi-rotary label finishing machine that combines laminating, die-cutting, waste removal, slitting and rewinding in a single pass. It features a touchscreen PC interface and a flexible magnetic die plate.

The UV Varnish Module, compatible with Taurus and Aries, adds a protective layer to labels, enhancing durability against UV rays, moisture, and abrasion.

DURICO | BOOTH 1515

Durico showcases a wide range of direct thermal film, including Phenol-free options that are safer for human health but also have lower environmental impact. Durico's DT film products are designed to be highly resistant to harsh environments, such as exposure to heat, humidity, hot water, solvent, alcohol, oil and tallow.

The company also features its Translucent DT film that boasts enhanced transparency with a frosted look for see-through food labels.

Also presented are durable Inkjet PP films BS5609 and GHS compliant, and Inkjet DuPont Tyvek suitable for use with color inkjet printing systems.

DURST GROUP | BOOTH 3123

Durst North America showcases KJet, a new hybrid press making its American debut, alongside Durst Tau RSCI, and Durst's software.

KJet combines Omet's dual servo flexo printing units with Durst's RSCI inkjet technology. Modules for finishing and further processing, such as cold foil stamping or die-cutting units, can be integrated into the KJet, offering flexibility and a broad application portfolio.

The company also runs demonstrations of the Durst Tau RSCI, designed for an industrial level of productivity. Available in printing widths of 330, 420 or 510mm, the press offers printing speeds up to 100m/min and can be equipped with the double white feature.

Durst Software & Solutions round out the booth lineup showcasing the software ecosystem ranging from web shops and online graphic editors to comprehensive workflow and analytics and ERP/MIS systems.

EAGLEWOOD | BOOTH 945

Eaglewood Technologies introduces the latest narrow web technologies for anilox roll and parts cleaning, including the Sitexco L20 anilox cleaner. Based on the award-winning Sitexco

laser technology, it is designed for the label printers and produces cleaned aniloxes without water, chemicals, media or consumables.

The Nanovis Bella, also promoted at the show, provides a cleaning for HP Indigo parts with the Bella DC-1300 model able to automatically wash the BIDs on HP Indigo assets without consumables and VOC's.

EMT INTERNATIONAL | BOOTH 136

EMT International presents Rotocontrol portfolio of finishing machines in inspection and rewinding configurations, which can be fitted with numerous modules such as integrated vision inspection, semi-automatic turrets, multiple slitting, counting and product detection technologies.

The BL-Series on show is equipped with the Longford International OS700X triple motor surge feeder or a Kraus Joker booklet feeder.

The company also promotes the Rotocontrol DT 2.0 modular hybrid digital finishing line, compatible with all major digital printing presses. It integrates flexo and inkjet printing, die-cutting unit, inspection, register control and offers a range of options for the processing and finishing of digitally preprinted rolls.

Also featured is EMT International's Chameleon web finishing technology and auxiliary processing products for the inkjet market.

ETI CONVERTING EQUIPMENT | BOOTH 817

The company runs live demonstrations of its flagship Cohesio narrow-web converting, printing and coating equipment, showcasing its flexo printing, silicone coating, adhesive coating/laminating and die-cutting capabilities. Attendees can see the transformation from raw materials to finished labels in real-time. ETI also demonstrates how vertically integrating silicone and adhesive coating can create various labels from start to finish, catering to all end-use segments.

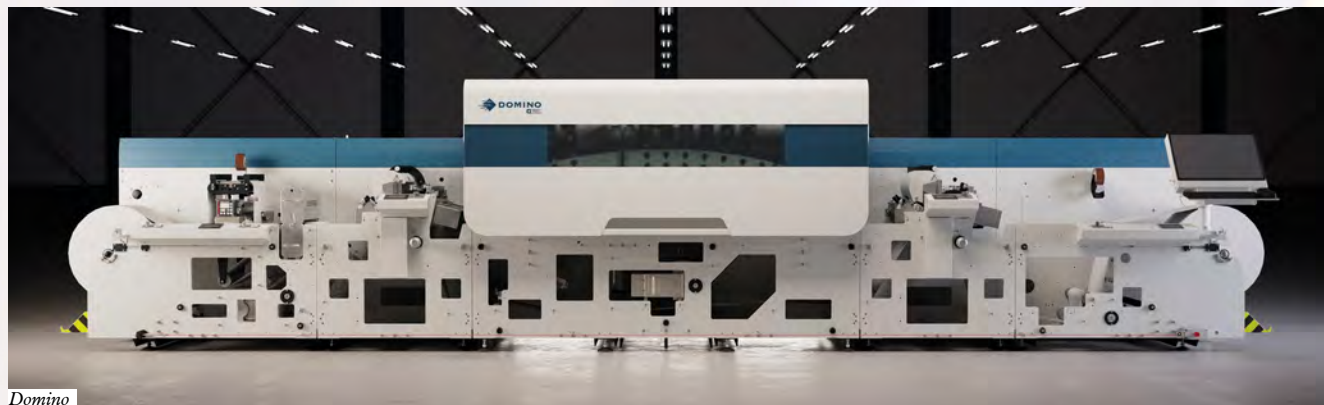
ETI also partnered with Martin Automatic and LemuGroup to showcase integration of Martin Automatic's MBS butt splicers for nonstop web automation, Lemu Group's GTU turret rewinder and UltraCompact end-of-line automation equipment with Cohesio machine. This collaboration highlights how these technologies provide unique customization options.

EXCELITAS TECHNOLOGIES | BOOTH 3810

Excelitas Technologies showcases its latest UV LED curing technologies, including the Phoseon Nexus One platform, now available in expanded sizes: 300mm, 375mm, 450mm, 525mm, and 600mm. The new water-cooled LED curing lamps complement the existing Nexus One air-cooled products, which are also available in the same range of lengths.

FEDRIGONI SELF-ADHESIVES | BOOTH 3101

Fedrigoni Self-Adhesives showcases a variety of products for the wine and spirits label converters, including a premium black paper



Domino



Durst

range, materials with recycled content and 100 percent recycled materials and labelstock made from alternative fibers.

Home and personal care label printers can see a selection of films from Fedrigoni's patented open-close technology for wet wipes.

Lastly, in the food and beverage section of the booth, the company showcases Ri-Move, an APR-certified wash-off material, as well as compostable materials.

In the Smart Labeling section, the team is promoting a portfolio of RFID inlays and tags from Tageos.

FLEXCON COMPANY | BOOTH 1311

Flexcon features products enabling recycling, reducing waste, including removable, conformable, and post-consumer waste labels.

Flexcon's sustainability expert Dan Riendeau shares insights on what drives consumer demand for sustainability and actionable steps brands and converters can take to become more profitable and sustainable on the Innovation Stage on the first day of the show.

FLINT GROUP | BOOTH 6419

Flint Group presents its products designed to minimize energy use, reduce waste and support packaging circularity. The range available at the booth includes Evolution de-inking primer and caustic-resistant Overprint Varnish (OPV), which enhance sustainability in packaging by improving material yield during the PET bottle recycling process.

The company also promotes the dual-curing EkoCure ink series, which eases the transition from UV mercury to UV LED curing and Ultra Clear Dual Cure Coatings, which can cure under UV LED lamps and UV lamps containing mercury.

SHENZHEN RUNTIANZHI DIGITAL EQUIPMENT CO | BOOTH 5699

Shenzhen Runtianzhi Digital Equipment Co launches the Flora J-350 P8 HD UV inkjet label press. It prints at a resolution of up to 1,200x1,200 DPI at speeds of up to 100m/min (328ft/min), supporting a CMYK+W+O/V color configuration and media range is between 0.04-0.35mm on coated paper, synthetic paper or films.

The Flora J-350 P8 HD is equipped with a closed-loop tension control system, web cleaner and corona treater and has a maximum roll capacity up to 1,000mm.

The press can be optionally configured with flexo, cold foil, varnishing and laminating modules.

The J-350 P8 HD boasts a compact design, covering an area of only about 14sqm.

FUJIFILM | BOOTH 3623

Fujifilm Flexographic Packaging showcases sustainable technologies and its efforts toward more efficient product design for both analog and digital to lower CO2 carbon emissions.

Fujifilm's products for the packaging industry deliver sustainable and responsible manufactured goods without compromising quality. To demonstrate these efforts, Fujifilm recently launched its new award-winning J Press FP790 water-based inkjet digital flexible packaging press.

FUJIFILM INTEGRATED INKJET SOLUTIONS | BOOTH 3623

Fujifilm Integrated Inkjet Solutions presents the 46kUV Printbar System UV printbar for label imprinting adding variable data capabilities, including high-quality text and codes, at speeds up to 500 feet a minute (152m/min) at 1,200 x 600 DPI.

The 46kUV features the Samba printhead and is available in 13-, 17-, and 20-in print widths.

Another product on show is the DE1024 digital embellishment system able to add gloss or tactile effects to existing analog or digital print production.

GENERAL INKJET TECHNOLOGY | BOOTH 5621

The company presents its recently launched Label Modular 330HD with 1,200 x 1,200 DPI printhead for label printing with up to 9-color channels and printing speed of up to 70m/min. Its modular design allows for several optional equipment configurations including coating, printing, varnishing, foil-stamping and cold-stamping.

GEW | BOOTH 3500 AND 3608

GEW launches two new high-performance LED products.

The new AeroLED2 delivers an increased power level, when compared to the original AeroLED model, for faster printing across more applications. It is also now available for wider web widths, to cater for more presses in the narrow web market. It can be interchanged with GEW's Arc lamp systems and maintains the centralized fan cooling architecture.

The second new product, LeoLED2, introduces two power level options to the water-cooled system. The regular power option offers modest gains over the original LeoLED while maintaining backward compatibility, while the high-power option, delivers significant increases in UV irradiance and dose over its predecessor for extreme curing challenges in the packaging market.

GLOBAL VISION | BOOTH 1621

GlobalVision features its products and services for proofreading, quality assurance and requirements for regulated industries

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with capabilities including braille height inspection, print inspection, text inspection, barcode inspection, Cloud PDF and Proof inspection, large-format scanners for full press sheet inspection, and counting systems for inserts, cartons, and vials.

GRAFISK MASKINFABRIK (GM) | BOOTH 6111

GM showcases the DC350Flex+ Premium finishing line with high-speed die-cutting. It features semi-rotary varnishing, die-cutting and can be configured with a high-speed single anvil (HSSA). It runs at up to 80m/min (or 130m/min when fitted with full rotary die-cutting). The modular design allows converters to choose from multiple configurations, adding options such as digital embellishment, laser cutting, hot foil, and even integration with third-party technologies.

Visitors can also experience the GM DC350Mini compact and DC350Nano ultra-compact label finishers, as well as the HF350 Hot foil unit, the LC350 Laser finisher, the LR250+ Label rewinder, and the CC160/200 Core cutter.

GRAFOTRONIC | BOOTH 911

Grafotronic showcases four machines, including its flagship DCL2 in two different configurations and two versions of the CF2, a compact machine that can be extended in the future.

The exhibition includes the CF2 in a HAPTIC configuration, equipped with a flatbed screen printing and a hot stamping module. The ultra-high stamping pressure can be controlled through the electronic

pressure control allowing each corner of the counter pressure plate to be individually adjusted. The module extends dwell time and enables multi-stroke foiling and embossing, as well as single foil and complex multifoil designs.

Grafotronic also introduces Infinity, an automatic turret designed for producing a wide range of labels, including those printed on delicate, heat-sensitive substrates or using heat-sensitive ink. It features numerous automatic changeover capabilities, such as a glueless start for clean label separation from the core, roll closure with printed labels, automatic core positioning and finished roll ejection.

Additionally, Grafotronic presents the Boon-Tech suite of efficiency-enhancing auxiliary machines, including a slit/rewinder, fan-folding equipment, core cutter and label cutter.

GTI GRAPHIC TECHNOLOGY | BOOTH 5600

GTI presents its new D50 LED product portfolio, including desktop systems, floor stand models, large format viewing systems and press console viewing stations. The LED lamps used in these products have a CRI that is greater than 98, are environmentally friendly, offer compliance to ISO 3664:2009 for 7,500 hours of use, are EU RoHS compliant, require no warm-up time, and are available in lengths of 24in, 36in, 48in, and 60in.

GODEX INTERNATIONAL | BOOTH 1620

GoDEX unveils its thermal printing

technologies, which integrate with popular printer languages such as EZPL, GEPL, GZPL, GDPL and come with free label and tag design software that supports database integration. GoDEX's showcase is headlined by the GX4600i, a 600 DPI thermal printer boasting a 5in video touchscreen LCD with built-in video-assisted guidance, as well as one-touch calibration button.

HANGZOU TODAYTEC DIGITAL | BOOTH 1239

Todaytec shows several products, including the TDW136, enhanced wax ribbon with strong scratch resistance and high sensitivity. Also on show is the TDM209 general wax-resin ribbon with high printing performance, low printing temperature, high printing blackness, strong scratch resistance, and high-resolution printing.

As a cost-effective general wax-resin ribbon alternative the company promotes the TDM242, which can print well on various substrates at low printing temperatures. Besides its excellent scratch resistance and high blackness, it also offers small characters and fine-line printing.

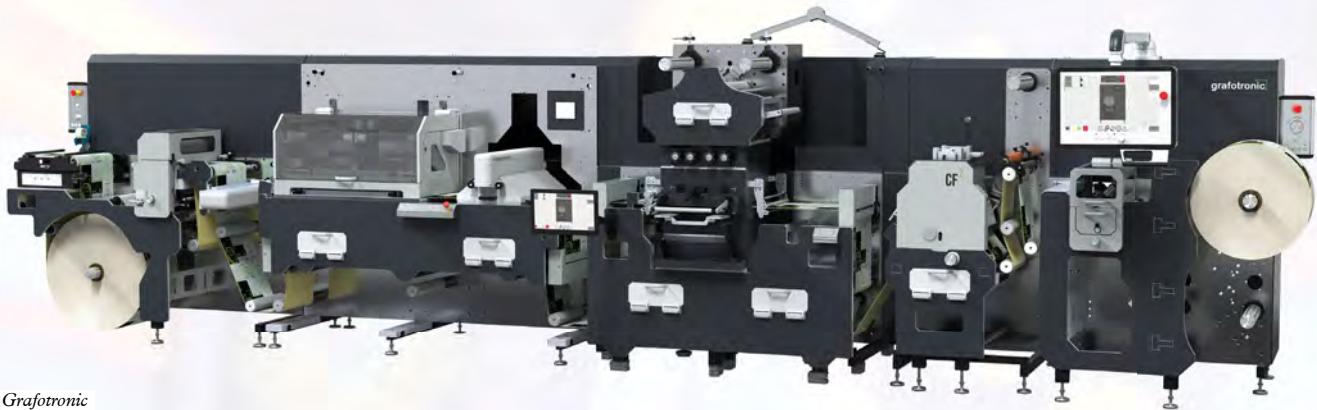
Lastly the team discusses the benefits of the TDR345, high-performance cost-effective resin ribbon offering high printing blackness, media adaptability and alcohol resistance.

HEIDELBERG / GALLUS | BOOTH 3523

Heidelberg and Gallus showcase an ecosystem of technologies designed to drive down the total cost of ownership, reduce reliance on skilled labor and



ETI Converting



Grafotronic

future-proof businesses.

Gallus unveils the latest Gallus One 17in digital inkjet label press, featuring an extended color gamut at 230ft/min, and a brand-new 'system to compose'. Gallus machines now boost adaptability, modularity and versatility with the ability to retrofit the existing equipment or modify it into new configurations by integrating the Labelmaster modules.

The booth visitors can also learn more about Prinect, the workflow streamlining digital production, and explore the latest advancements in the Screeny technology used to embellish and enhance labels.

Heidelberg is also showcasing material handling tools from its partner Dotec, including pneumatic roll handling systems and a range of products from Double E Group enhancing workplace safety and operational efficiency.

HMJ TECH | BOOTH 3706

HMJ Tech shows its automated ink dispenser A200. Developed as a compact and cost-effective machine it can improve ink room efficiencies. The company also displays its newly developed line of semi-automated and manual dispensing systems.

HB FULLER | BOOTH 941

HB Fuller shows its microsphere Gel-Tac that enables the creation of ultra-removable and highly repositionable products. It utilizes water-based acrylic and pressure-sensitive microsphere technology for linerless self-wound label applications. The company also presents its Swift melt Earthic 9010E, a near-carbon-neutral hot melt adhesive made from a high percentage of fossil-free and sustainable raw materials. This versatile adhesive is ideal for labelstock applications and is ISCC+ certified, ensuring full supply chain transparency.

HONGKONG JIUHENG GROUP | BOOTH 3619

Jiuhe Group shows waybill, thermal label, packing label, document envelope, courier plastic bags and woven bags.

HP | BOOTH 3226

HP exhibits an HP Indigo 200K digital press with an add-on slitter allowing converters to print PS labels, slit on the press and convert off-line.

The company also promotes the HP Indigo 6K digital press. The HP Indigo fleet is part of an end-to-end approach including the Digital Pouch Factory and ABG non-stop winding and converting equipment.

Also on show is the HP PrintOS software suite, which helps converters automate the entire production line and produce high volumes.

The adjoining station on the HP stand promotes the PrintOS Spot Master, showcasing how to reach spot colors and streamline the print process. HP also promotes XR Services, security and

NEW FEATURES AT LABELEXPO TO HIGHLIGHT INDUSTRY TRENDS

Labelexpo Americas 2024 will highlight industry topics and trends including flexible packaging, RFID and artificial intelligence.

FlexPack @ Labelexpo will feature alongside Labelexpo Americas 2024, a focused area for flexible packaging and shrink sleeves, which will allow attendees entering this high-value market to see the latest equipment and materials from leading industry suppliers in the flex pack sector.

The new FlexPack @ Labelexpo highlights key technology for label converters interested in diversifying into flexible packaging production as well as traditional wide-web flexible packaging converters wishing to amplify their operation.

Companies confirmed as participating in FlexPack @ Labelexpo include Karlville, Gonderflex, S-One LP, ABG, Mamata, Protect-All, Novaflex, BONSET American Corporation, SANZIP re-closable zipper and Nobelus. In addition, three times a day, attendees will have the chance to attend a short introduction to flexible packaging, presented by HP.

Also featured is an RFID experience (radio frequency identification). Attendees will get the opportunity to learn more about the growth of RFID, see live demonstrations of how smart labels are produced and understand how data is stored, tracked and managed.

Exhibitors will also get the chance to present new technologies and solutions in a 20-minute presentation at the Innovation Stage.

TLMI, the sponsoring partner for Labelexpo Americas 2024, will host an Eco Stage on the first two days of the show, presenting the latest developments in sustainability.

The Eco Stage is designed to support a better performing, more environmentally-conscious label and package printing industry. Sessions include topics such as tackling the big myths surrounding sustainable packaging, what converters should really be concerned about and the key takeaway actions.

Tasha Ventimiglia, group director, Labelexpo Americas said: 'Flexible Packaging, sustainability, RFID, AI and automation are all key topics that are trending in the label and package printing industry right now, so it made sense to capitalize on these trends at this year's Labelexpo Americas. FlexPack @ Labelexpo, for instance, will allow attendees to see short-run, added-value flexible packaging, including all the ancillary equipment, thermal lamination, pouching equipment, materials, and coatings required to enter this demanding market. We look forward to showcasing these fast-growing areas of the industry to all attendees.'

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GEW

brand protection, sustainability with the CO2 calculator, and an extensive customer application showcase.

HYBRID SOFTWARE | BOOTH 3015

Hybrid Software showcases MyCloudFlow SaaS Workflow, a 100 percent cloud-based technology based on CloudFlow, offering access through a secure environment, strong data protection and immutable backups.

Also on show is the enhanced CloudFlow's ProofScope tool with a 3D approval system using iC3D technology for visualizing labels and embellishments on 3D shapes. Also showcasing Capture3D for precise artwork distortion on shrink sleeves and metal packaging.

Moreover, Hybrid Software promotes MyPackz SaaS PDF Job Editor, a cloud-based application offering packaging pre-press tools in a hosted SaaS model for improved efficiency, quality, and reduced error rates.

Also at the booth the team discusses SmartDFE Digital Front End, AI-accelerated RIP, Xitron's Navigator DFE and Flexo Suite.

IN-MOLD DECORATING ASSOCIATION (IMDA) | BOOTH 6646

The team at IMDA booth helps to find specific member experts and the resources needed in in-mold label production. Visitors also can learn about the benefits of IMDA membership, including significant discount programs with Grainger and FedEx and the HelpLinks email service for troubleshooting and technical questions.

INX INTERNATIONAL | BOOTH 129

INX International shows a trio of products including its Genesis washable, INXFlex Contour and VerifyInk inks. Genesis is a sustainable and recycle-friendly ink system that meets or exceeds the PET-CG-02 Critical Guidance Protocol for washable ink recyclable PET shrink sleeve applications, making it easier to recycle plastic films. Genesis curable primer makes INXFlex Contour inks washable as well. This UV

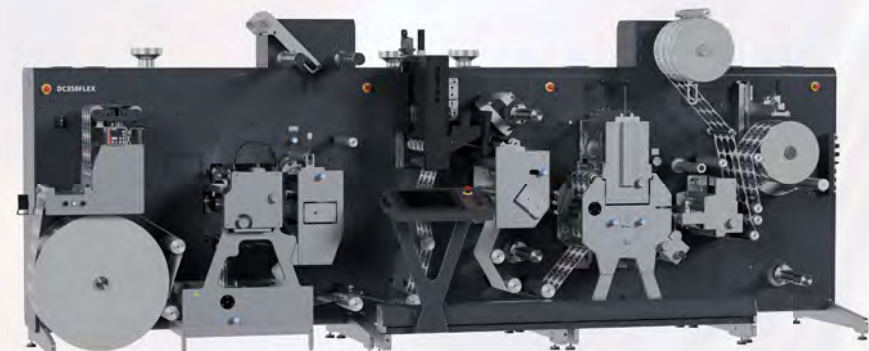
and LED dual cure flexographic ink system eliminates post-shrink adhesion loss and ink flaking. VerifyInk is a covert taggant technology that can be printed on paper, flexible packaging and shrink labels to combat marketplace counterfeiting using time-sensitive logistics, authentication, supply chain monitoring, and data-rich customer engagement features with unique smartphone readable codes on their products.

ISYS | BOOTH 6023

iSys promotes Horizon, its latest toner-based label press printing at speeds up to 55ft/min for short run production on a variety of die-cut, kiss-cut or roll substrates. Designed for in-house production, it is capable of printing 4,000 labels in less than 20 minutes.

JETFX | BOOTH 3134

JetFx promotes digital embellishments on a number of machines throughout the show, including its newly launched Solo Fusion, 13in wide print bar, and Solo FlexPack 30in wide bring that's specially formulated for eBeam and UV inkjet coating for full FDA compliance. The Solo Fusion will be at the JetFx booth and at JetFx partners. Gonderflex will showcase the Solo Flexpack (in Flex Pack @ Labelexpo in Hall F), GM will have a Solo Flexpack; Prati will demonstrate the Solo 13in, A B Graphic will demonstrate JetFx inkjet heads.



Grafisk Maschinfabrik (GM)

KAMPF MACHINERY | BOOTH 1047

Kampf and Atlas showcase their range of slitting and rewinding products, services and digital technologies for label applications. Kampf features the Unicon spindle machine and Unislit CS station machine. The visitors can also explore the joint machine portfolio, including the Kampf ConSlitter and the Atlas TitanSlitter series.

KLÖCKNER PENTAPLAST | BOOTH 3128

Klöckner Pentaplast features its SmartCycle range of heat shrink sleeve label films, including SmartCycle Plus, manufactured with up to 30 percent PCR, boasting a high shrink rate and offering a virgin-grade performance while meeting environmental goals.

Also on show is the SmartCycle Pro line recyclable heat shrink sleeve label film, featuring a 30 percent PCR. It meets the Association of Plastic Recyclers (APR) standards for recyclability in the RIC 1 stream, ensuring both bottles and labels are recyclable together.

Additionally, the company showcases SmartCycle shrink sleeve label films that are recyclable in the RIC 1 stream.

KOCHER + BECK | BOOTH 3209

The company highlights GapMaster EM (Electronic Move), the servo-driven adjustable anvil system offering adjustments by a rotary dial and digital input with haptic feedback for the operator. The system allows adjustment steps as small as 0.25 of a micron, and it is on display for the first time, showing the ability to use one HMI control system to operate two GapMasters simultaneously.

A selection of K+B flexible dies and precision-engineered magnetic and print cylinders are also on show, along with samples of TecScreen Printing Plates.

Additionally Kocher+Beck highlights its advancements in die-cutting with a new Industry 4.0-ready digital KMS Pressure Gauge System, equipped with a variety of sensors and offering higher stability under load changes.



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Celebrating Excellence

10 SEPTEMBER 2024 | DONALD E. STEPHENS CONVENTION CENTER, CHICAGO

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.



**LABEL INDUSTRY
GLOBAL AWARDS**

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HP

KONICA MINOLTA | BOOTH 5645

Konica Minolta promotes a range of digital label presses for any production run, including the latest AccurioLabel 400 offering CMYK and a new fifth station white dry-toner for true white applications. This press is capable of production speeds of up to 131ft/min and resolution equivalent to 3,600 x 2,400 DPI.

Also on show is the AccurioLabel 230 digital toner press developed for shorter runs and more customization. It offers printing speeds of 77ft/min, simple user interface and integrated software packages allow operators to quickly learn and operate the press.

Konica Minolta's new JETvarnish 3D Web 400, also promoted at the stand, is a 100 percent web-fed digital embellishment technology integrating spot UV varnish, hot foil stamping and variable data printing in a single pass.

The company also showcases various technologies for color management and workflow automation, plus advanced technology for digital converting and finishing.

LECTA | BOOTH 251

Lecta showcases a wide range of products, including environment-friendly, recyclable functional papers, based on natural, renewable resources that support a circular economy. Its range of facestock and release liner products for the pressure-sensitive label market includes one-side coated Creaset, cast-coated Eurokote, release liner Linerset, metalized Metalvac, thermal Termax, and new 'Recy' papers made from recycled fibers.

LEMORAU | BOOTH 3615

Lemorau showcases Smart-L Premium compact machine featuring a flexo unit in semi-rotary mode allowing an extra color or varnish.

Lemorau also promotes MEBR+ with its modular configuration for the optional equipment such as embellishment and other modules to meet specific production requirements and can be upgraded with new automation feature.

The company also showcases MICR, an inspection slitter rewinder featuring variable data printing, video inspection for quality control, precision slitting and rewinding.

In the auxiliary equipment range the company features a CTA1500 producing cores of various sizes in automatic mode; an ER400/1500 that enhances safety and efficiency in handling heavy rolls; and RA, which rewinds labels for distribution or further processing.

LOMBARDI | BOOTH 6649

Lombardi partners with Rotatek to showcase a print unit from a digitalized Invicta press with its digital twin model introduced in collaboration with Siemens. Lombardi demonstrates how the integration between hardware and software, offers advantages in

label design, material usage and operator training through virtual environments, all with zero waste.

By sharing its space with Rotatek, Lombardi also promotes the combined flexo-offset technology, underscoring its commitment to developing versatile presses meeting diverse industry needs.

LUNDBERG TECH | BOOTH 815

Lundberg Tech showcases MatrixCompactor 200, a waste-capturing system designed specifically for label matrix handling. This system helps to reduce the use of virgin materials and lower the CO2 footprint associated with the transport of waste. Additionally, it minimizes the unnecessary disposal of paper cores and alleviates the physical strain on press operators by reducing heavy lifting requirements.

MACTAC | BOOTH 143

The company showcases new, vibrant Vivid chrome film labels developed for improved printability and barrier resistance to moisture and oil migration to prevent label staining. The range has been developed to offer a premium chrome look. Mactac partnered with Fortis Solutions Group for a live demo applying Vivid film labels at its booth.

On show is also the new direct thermal portfolio without bisphenols developed to comply with regulations limiting exposure to bisphenols, including the new logistics grade direct thermal material, MacScript 2 prescription grade and non-top coated grade.

MARK ANDY | BOOTH 319 AND 424

Mark Andy exhibits five printing presses, off-line finishing systems and products designed to drive progress in the narrow web industry.

Highlights include the Domino iQ-R digital engine integrated with the Mark Andy 2200 flexo press, the Digital Pro MAX, the Digital Series HD, and the new P Series S9 for the label and flexible packaging markets.

Additionally, the Mark Andy Pro Series press is also showcased in the Domino booth (5821). Adjacent booth 424 features the Rotoflex VLI-700, optimized for running unsupported films at high speeds, and the Rotoflex VSI-330.

Mark Andy Print Products (MAPP), supplying the offset, flexo, digital, and letterpress industries, will introduce a new line of branded products.

MAXCESS / ROTOMETRICS | BOOTH 749

Maxcess highlights new technologies from RotoMetrics, Fife, Tidland, Maxcess Vision Systems and Componex. New products include RotoMetric Flexible Die portfolio developed to find the exact die engineered for specific application for better performance.

The company also showcases RotoMetrics AccuAdjust Intelligent

Die Station providing accurate control for variability and easy upgrades to automation.

Tidland's RD AutoScore on show is a scoring system automating lateral and depth control reducing setup time.

MEECH INTERNATIONAL | BOOTH 3600

Meech International promotes a range of static control, compressed air technology, and web cleaning systems, including AC Shockless Ionizing Bars, Ionizing Air Blowers, Ionizing Air Curtains, Guns and Nozzles, Pulsed DC Equipment for long range neutralization without the use of air, Static Generators and Static Measuring Devices.

The company also showcases the latest Hyperion SmartControl Touch, designed to meet the needs of modern automated industries and the growth of Industry 4.0.

MICRODYNAMICS | BOOTH 1345

MicroDynamics showcases live demos of the Veritas and MicroScan3 anilox inspection systems. With +/- 1 percent repeatability and scans in less than 10 seconds, users can inspect a wide variety of engraving depths, shapes, and sizes, quickly and accurately.

Attendees can also view the newly released wide field mode which doubles the field of view to inspect a wider range of rolls, without the risks or downtime of lens changes.

MÜHLBAUER | BOOTH 6406

Mühlbauer showcases its Entry Level Package featuring two powerful machines.

The IL 30000 offers a small footprint and high speeds delamination and relamination and can also function as an applicator. The PL light R2R, also promoted at the show can handle multiple jobs within a single batch.

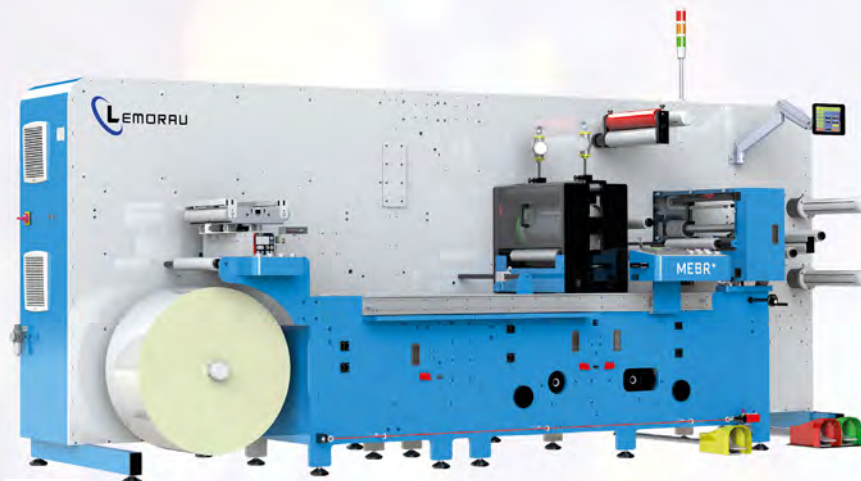
NAZDAR INK | BOOTH 1245

Nazdar Ink Technologies presents its diverse range of inks developed for narrow-web printing applications. The company launches the W181 series water-based inks that offer bio and renewable resource benefits, and the new 68500 LED flexo series, offering improved economics of the dual cure product.

NILPETER | BOOTH 6523

Nilpeter showcases the FA-26, the new FB-Line, and the Digital Shadow.

The flagship FA-26 flexo press is designed for short- to medium-run lengths. It offers print quality, efficient operation and easy job changeovers. The FA-26 is suitable for a variety of substrates, including flexible packaging, labels and carton board.



Lemorau

The FB-Line, engineered to deliver high-quality print results with maximum efficiency, is available in 14 and 17in versions. It is particularly suited for label production, offering quick setup times, advanced automation features, and the ability to handle a wide range of substrates. Its modular design allows for upgrades.

Finally, Nilpeter's Digital Shadow technology captures crucial data on press usage, performance, and maintenance for a complete digital shadow of a physical press.

NOBELUS | BOOTH 3622

Nobelus showcases how tactile finishes can elevate prime labels in any market through unsupported films and wet lamination. Featured films include Karess Film, a velvety, luxurious soft finish ideal for high-end brands, and FineGrit Film, a rugged, durable finish with the feel of fine-grain sandpaper.

Nobelus teamed up with Applied Molecules and GM, to bring attendees the DC330Mini compact finishing system from GM used to process labels in the booth throughout the show, allowing visitors to see and feel the premium haptic labels as they are finished.

OMET | BOOTH 3125

Omet promotes its entire range of label and packaging printing machines, also taking attendees on a virtual tour of the Omet production headquarters. Omet Americas also announces the opening of its latest Innovation Center in Mount Prospect, Illinois, featuring Omet KFlex 17in flexo press, which integrates an in-line RFID antenna insertion system from Tamarack. Additionally, to promote environmental sustainability, the press is equipped with a full LED UV system, reducing power consumption by over 60 percent.

ONEVISION SOFTWARE | BOOTH 5802

OneVision Software showcases the

2-in-1 Label Automation Suite combining production planning with print file optimization. Via the user interface, digital printers can control and monitor the label production with all steps mapped transparently in the software as a digital job bag. The modular structure of the software enables individual configuration – tailored to specific requirements.

PPG TESLIN | BOOTH 5619

PPG showcases Teslin, a synthetic material offering durability and performance in challenging environments. Teslin is available in five standard types: general purpose permanent, ultimate bond, general purpose removable, BS 5609-certified for marine conditions, and two pharmaceutical grades: tight mandrel and low-energy and sterilization applications. Teslin is compatible with various print technologies, including digital inkjet, laser and thermal transfer. It offers adhesion even under extreme conditions, is flexible and conformable to different packaging shapes.

PRATI | BOOTH 3529

Prati presents DigiCompact, the converting and finishing line for self-adhesive labels and digitally printed flexible packaging, with JetFx digital embellishment. The machine will have a cutting unit and a rewinder, to convert self-adhesive material from roll-to-roll for the rewinding of large rolls and subsequent finishing passage on the control table, as well as roll-to-roll finishing in a single pass. This configuration includes a cutting module for the division of tracks and/or the removal of side trims.

PRIBER | BOOTH 3806

Priber promotes the SQ Label software suite for efficient and reliable barcode and label printing, enhancing operational efficiency across various sectors. It features specialized tools for cable and wire marking, double-sided printing and an integrated product catalog.

Univacco Foils

Univacco Expertise

Unique chemical formula
Vacuum metalizing
Coating technology

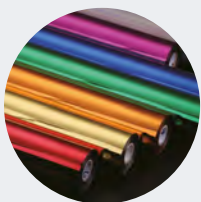
Technological Advantage

30 years in graphic foils
In-house R&D team
Experienced technical service

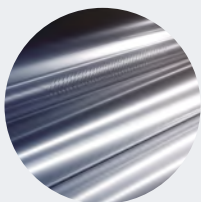
A Worldwide Service Network in 70 Countries

World-class manufacturer of
the highest quality hot stamp
and cold transfer foils

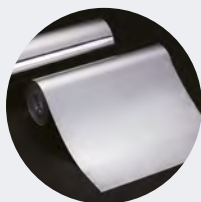
Comprehensive Foil Product Range



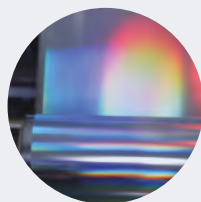
Hot Stamping
Foil



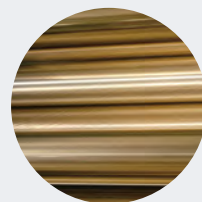
Sheet-fed Offset
Cold Foil



Narrow-web
Cold Foil



Holographic Foil



Digital Foil

Certified Safe and Hazard-Free



LABEL ACADEMY



ILLUSTRATED MANGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEMS AND WORKFLOW AUTOMATION

Technology has brought more control, automation and sophistication to every stage of the label and package printing process – from a customer placing an order to receiving it. This is creating vast opportunities for converters, as well as adding complexity to project management.

Management Information Systems and Workflow Automation is an essential read for new, as well as more experienced users, to help navigate the intricacies of choosing the most appropriate system for your business from the many options available.

This illustrated guide will not only explore MIS and workflow automation systems, but it will specifically look at:

- + Accounting for profitability
- + Inventory control and quality management
- + Efficient order processing and job management
- + A detailed appendix of industry suppliers

Also in the series:



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PRISCO | BOOTH 841

Prisco features its full portfolio, including solvents, costings and adhesives, including the Green Clean and Blue Wave solvents are designed to tackle tough cleaning challenges in flexo printing. Additionally, Prisco developed a LED coating which cures to a hard finish and minimizes the yellowing typically associated with such processes.

QSPAC INDUSTRIES | BOOTH 1021

QSPAC Industries presents the complete product line of selfwound overlamination. New products include soft touch, holographic, security, biodegradable, thermal transfer, and release coated.

RE | BOOTH 1428

Re USA promotes ReVision Net, an integrated web viewing and control system. From a single control point, with up to two touch displays, operators have access to any number of ultra-compact, high-quality cameras. The system offers a large field of view and captures still details with 16 times zoom even at high web speeds.

Re also showcases web guiding and tension control systems featuring load cells, pneumatic and electromagnetic powder brakes, safety chucks, pneumatic air shafts and friction shafts.

RETROFLEX | BOOTH 5701

Retroflex features printing and coating equipment for the flexible packaging, paper, tissue, envelope and paperboard markets, including the T-Series, S-Series, K-Series and Fox-Series. Models are available with gears or full servo drives with servo deck positioning, on-press anilox and plate sleeve change capabilities. Presses are available for retrofit to existing lines or as part of a complete Retroflex line with a wide variety of optional features.

RHYGUAN MACHINERY | BOOTH 329

Rhyguan Machinery introduces the Top-Plus series label converting and finishing machine, which connects with digital presses, enabling spot varnish and semi-rotary die-cutting. It is equipped with fully automatic knife positioning system and features a wide range of optional equipment such as corona treatment, IML die-cutting, dual rewinds or a semi-automatic turret rewind and sheeting capabilities. Top-Plus series machines can achieve semi-rotary die-cutting speeds of up to 90m/min.

RICOH ELECTRONICS | BOOTH 921

Ricoh Electronics showcases the new DT Tight Mandrel designed for labels that must adhere securely to small-diameter surfaces. Additionally, Ricoh presents its expanded Linerless DT product portfolio,



Mark Andy

which eliminates traditional liner waste and enhances operational efficiency.

Another highlight is Ricoh's Clear DT product range offering transparent labeling, suitable for applications where product visibility and aesthetics are crucial.

RIGAKU TECHNOLOGIES | BOOTH 458

The company exhibits EDXRF (energy dispersive X-ray fluorescence) analysis instruments for silicone coaters, providing non-destructive coating or composition analysis for web applications.

The NEX LS, also promoted at the booth, offers continuous, in-line silicone coat weight profiling without halting production. This compact scanning measurement system provides valuable information about the coating's properties or the product's composition.

The company also promotes the NEX QC Series spectrometers that do not require helium or a special sample cup for Si determination.

ROSAS MACHINENBAU | BOOTH 6515

Rosas Maschinenbau demonstrates its Leopard 300 bidirectional tabletop rewinder featuring an advanced RFID HF and UHF tag serialization module with code verifier and backside serialization and TIJ printer for numbering and coding. This technology encodes and verifies RFID tags at high speeds.

The company also promotes the Gazelle II digital printer with unwind diameter of 650mm (25in), web widths from 40-330mm (1.5-13in), print width up to 200mm (8in), corona treatment, a flexo primer station, and an LED UV curing unit. It's also built with a pre-installed interface for a fully automatic 100 percent inspection module, quick release of tension axles for simple reel change installations and removals, and advanced web tension control.

Rosas also demonstrates its Gazelle II integrated with the eZ-ColorJet 100, a 160 FPM 4-inch-wide four-color process industrial inkjet printer from US-based Graph-Tech for imprinting a variety of labels.

ROTOMETAL | BOOTH 717

Rotometal showcases AluLite Magnetic Cylinders manufactured from aerospace-grade aluminum, offering a 50 percent weight reduction, translating into time savings and improved ergonomics.

The company also shows Antifriction Print Cylinders and introduces rotoSleeves range of lightweight printing sleeves.

SCHOBER | BOOTH 6623

The company showcases high-performance finishing technologies for in-mold labels, folding cartons and technical products. Schobertechnologies also promotes high-quality rotary cutting, creasing and punching equipment, rotary die-cutting and stacking machine RSM for in-mold labels.

SCREEN AMERICAS | BOOTH 6423

Screen Americas promotes its Truepress Label 350UV SAI Series, which prints CMYK plus white, orange and blue inks. The press' white ink is suitable for metallic and transparent substrates used in the beverage industry and the press' optional low migration ink complies with food safety regulations. The SAI Series also allows label manufacturers to produce industrial labels that can withstand extreme conditions with the ability to print on vinyl, polyester, film and BOPP.

SIEGWERK | BOOTH 845

The company marks 200th anniversary by showcasing a comprehensive range of products and services, including the FastMatch Cloud, a cloud-based color management system, and APR-certified inks for sustainable recycling.

Siegwerk also promotes Nutriflex Orbis DC inks for UV/LED printing in the food, pharma, cosmetic and tobacco industries; Apex for basic stick and shine coating; and Sicura DGT for digital printing technologies. The company's team is available to discuss LED, shrink, food packaging, circular economy, sustainable technologies and ink trends.

SMART SOLVE | BOOTH 1815

SmartSolve promotes certified, bio-based, facestock, pouchstock and labelstock,

including water-soluble 'dissolvable' labels that rinse entirely with water.

SmartSolve showcases two distinct label technologies: 3pt pressure-sensitive and 4pt direct thermal pressure-sensitive. Both leverage a trade-secret dissolvable pressure-sensitive adhesive. This feature allows for improved tack adhesion and a 12-month shelf life.

S-ONE LABELS & PACKAGING | BOOTH 1353

The company presents a wide range of products including flexible packaging films from eco-friendly options to conventional films. On the stand there are also primers, including Michelman in-line and off-line primers and water-based varnishes.

Visitors can also see a range of overprint varnishes and coatings helping to achieve superior finish and protection for printed materials with its premium OPVs, including water-based, UV, LED, and eBeam varnishes and topcoats.

SUN CHEMICAL | BOOTH 831

Sun Chemical showcases SunEco portfolio, guided by the '5Rs' framework: reuse, reduce, renew, recycle and redesign. Highlighted technologies include SolarFlex CRCL inks for increased recyclability in labeling, high-adhesion SolarFlex UV flexo inks, SunCure Mono-web Coatings for reduced carbon footprint, SunVisto AquaGreen renewable inks, and MX12 Ink Dispensing Technology for precise, waste-minimizing color mixing.

Also featured are energy-efficient UV-LED inks, SunEvo digital technologies.

TECTUPRINT | BOOTH 1424

This year's edition marks the second participation in Labelexpo Americas 2024 for the Italian company, which promotes a wide range of finishing equipment, die-cutters, cutters, robinators, coil elevators, punching units, perforators, stackers, rewinders, unwinders and roll lifters.

TOOTECH | BOOTH 357

Korean company showcases a device that prints barcodes using a laser without consumables such as ribbons, thus not requiring any maintenance costs. The laser prints on the middle layer of the label after passing through the label's surface without causing damage.

TR ELECTRONICS | BOOTH 1046

The company demonstrates advanced measuring and positioning technologies specifically designed to optimize label manufacturing operations. They ensure precise label detection and positioning, even at high belt speeds. TR Electronics products are calibrated for a wide range of label materials, including paper, metallic, transparent, and both thin and thick labels.

TROIKA SYSTEMS | BOOTH 254

Troika Systems presents its AniCAM HD Plus and discusses key topics such as functional, 3D accurate anilox measurement, the importance of precision roll, cylinder and plate inspection, as well as sustainability goals.

Troika's 3D scanning microscopes measure anilox and gravure cylinder volumes, as well as flexographic plate dot, and by recording the data into the inventory management software, enables improvements of internal processes.

UNILUX | BOOTH 3003

Unilux features the new UniPrint monitoring system giving operators the ability to correct defects through touch-screen controls and providing access to features like split-screen and programmable web positions.

Labelexpo visitors can also see the latest innovations in stroboscopic inspection and how it can reduce waste and maintain quality.

UPM RAFLATAC | BOOTH 515

UPM Raflatac showcases its new portfolio of UPM Raflatac Carbon Action plastic labels. These labeling materials combine multiple circular economy Rs: reduced, recycled, or renewable materials that enable recycling or reuse. These labels are expected to replace traditional fossil-based options without compromising quality or performance.

In addition, UPM Raflatac showcases: UPM Raflatac Forest Film, a unique 100 percent wood-based plastic face material that's ISCC PLUS-certified bio-circular on a mass-balance basis;

UPM Raflatac Ocean Action, the ISCC Plus-certified label material designed to combat ocean-bound plastic pollution; UPM Raflatac RAFNXT+, a labeling material verified by the Carbon Trust to reduce carbon footprint and help mitigate climate change.

Finally, UPM Raflatac spotlights the RafCycle Partner Program enabling converters to offer to their customers' label release liner collection and recycling services.

VELOX | BOOTH 1530

Velox presents its IDS-NC 500 for digital printing directly on necked beverage cans, running at up to 500 cans per minute. This machine provides label converters with a way to expand their offering with a sustainable alternative that eliminates shrink sleeve and label plastics and allows can recyclability. It is suitable for small-to-medium production runs and craft beverage brands.

Velox's technology of proprietary inks and system architecture was specifically developed for the mass production of direct-to-shape applications. It features a wide color gamut, photorealistic imagery, opaque selective white, matte and gloss finish, smooth gradients and decoration with no seam or overlap.



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VOYANTIC | BOOTH 3804

Voyantic promotes test and quality inspection systems for high-speed Rain RFID and NFC label converting lines and processing machines.

The company showcases the Voyantic Tagsurance 3 critical for ensuring the quality and performance of every RFID label on the production line while giving real-time visibility into the machine operation. The modular and scalable system is easy to integrate into an extensive range of machine types.

XEIKON | BOOTH 6419

Xeikon promotes fleXflow, its stand-up pouch production process developed to offer minimal setup and turnaround times for short runs while enabling full variable data printing, powered by the X-800 digital front end.

The company also discusses its PX3300HD, The Panther, designed to produce high-quality, durable labels at 1,200 DPI. Also showcased is the LX3000, The Lion, which uses Cruise Control System and artificial intelligence to monitor and adjust production settings at speeds of up to 138 feet a minute.

Additionally, attendees can learn about Xeikon's TX500 press, which uses Titon toner to facilitate printing on food-safe, flexible packaging, on paper substrates, resistant to temperatures and solvents without requiring a varnish.

The Xeikon team also promotes new collaboration with Kurz, offering opportunity to integrate digital metal hot-stamping in-line.

YUPO CORPORATION | BOOTH 567

Yupo launches its next-generation in-mold labeling technology CleanSort, which can be fully detached from the bottle or container during the recycling process, allowing for the bottle to be recycled back to the polymer form. This technology allows brands to be more sustainable and for recycling reclaimers to be more profitable. The available substrates include HDPE, PP and PET resins. Substrates also work for blow or injection-molded applications.

ZELLER+GMELIN | BOOTH 1015

Zeller+Gmelin exhibits eco-friendly inks, including its high-performance Nuvaflex energy-curable ink series, and the new EarthPrint UV recycle primer. The Nuvaflex 17 series is formulated for shelf stability and complete curing under LED systems. The new EarthPrint product line is designed to combat raw materials shortages and product recyclability through enhanced wash-off capabilities. All inks are formulated for high-quality color, opacity, adhesion, and optimized performance in a single pass.

RFID TAKES CENTER STAGE

Labelexpo Americas 2024 will have a strong focus on how converters can get involved in the RFID revolution.

The morning of Thursday 12th September sees the Label Academy presenting a half-day workshop on RFID in Labels and Package Printing sponsored by Avery Dennison. Topics delivered by industry experts include end user mandates, a comprehensive overview of RFID technology, and the equipment required to convert, test and encode RFID labels and tags. There are further sessions on ensuring security on RFID networks and understanding how Electronic Product Codes (EPC) are implemented in an RFID system to identify individual products. The workshop closes with a converter case study.

One of the key suppliers exhibiting at the show will be Voyantic. The company is all about demonstrating turnkey quality control and testing equipment for RFID tag and label production lines and offers advice on RFID technology and systems.

Other exhibitors who will be at Labelexpo Americas 2024 is GIC. The company demonstrates a range of RFID tag/label encoding and inspection systems.

Tamarack is a manufacturer of RFID inlay insertion equipment which can be configured as standalone or an inline module on a flexo press. Delta ModTech is a company that manufactures single-pass RFID processing, encoding and inspection systems. Delta ModTech will feature their Crusader Converter with patented Island Transfer and Island Placement modules in the RFID Focus Area. This converting system is designed to provide high-speed, high-precision RFID tag insertion while also minimizing waste.

Kirk-Rudy supplies high-speed encoding and imprinting lines for hang tags primarily used in the garment industry, and a machine for applying RFID labels to flat items.

Both Mühlbauer and Melzer are companies that have long experience of advanced standalone RFID manufacturing, encoding and verification systems.

Rewinder/inspection machine specialist Rosas Maschinenbau recently launched an RFID label converting and serialization system which can encode HF and UHF chips based on information from a database or synchronize with printed serialization codes read by a camera. This ensures visual and encrypted codes match.

Some of the world's leading suppliers of RFID inlays and systems expertise are also exhibiting, including Avery Dennison, Fedrigoni Group, UPM Raflatac, 3M, Beontag, Checkpoint Systems and Hana Technologies.

From China comes RFID tag and label specialist Nexqo, founded in 2010 to provide one-stop RFID and NFC solutions for applications in the hospitality, warehouse management, transportation and retail sectors.

For the highly entrepreneurial label converting industry, RFID at Labelexpo Americas 2024 represents a major opportunity for business expansion.



Scan the QR code to learn more and register for Labelexpo Americas 2024



ILLUSTRATED SELF-ADHESIVE LABELS

Self-adhesive Labels offers a comprehensive introduction to self-adhesive / pressure-sensitive label technology, the individual components, materials and specific applications. Also covered are performance requirements and sustainability.

This brand new Label Academy guide is a must-have resource for label converters, brand owners, designers and the wider label supply chain.

The chapters in this book will specifically look at:

- + Introduction to the self-adhesive label market
- + Silicone release liner technology
- + Pressure-sensitive adhesive technologies
- + Identification and characteristics of PS label materials
- + Test methods for pressure-sensitive labels

Also in the series:



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Label trends: Flexible packaging

The global flexible packaging industry is growing, and label converters are finding success in this high-value market

Market size:

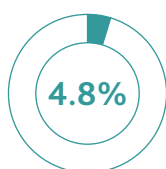
Global market:

USD 182.4 billion

Expected to reach

USD 264.9 billion

by 2030



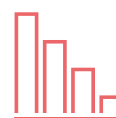
CAGR

Growth can be attributed to increasing demand for sustainable packaging solutions and rising consumer preference for lightweight, durable, and attractive packaging.

Benefits:



Material efficiency



Source reduction



Better life cycle metrics

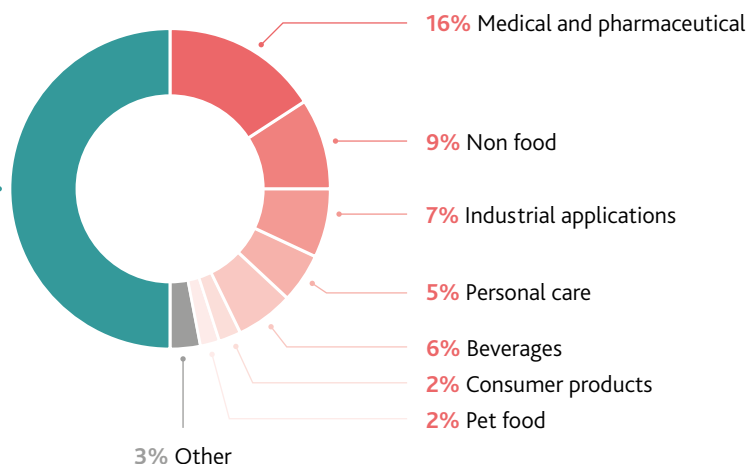


Customized packaging

Market segments:

The largest market for flexible packaging is food, accounting for about

50%
of shipments



Other markets:

16% Medical and pharmaceutical

9% Non food

7% Industrial applications

5% Personal care

6% Beverages

2% Consumer products

2% Pet food

3% Other

Sources: Flexible Packaging Association, Markets and Markets

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