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China: Informa Markets
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Sood Tower, Plot No. 25, Barakhamba Road,
Connaught Place, New Delhi 110001, India

Subscriptions

E: subs@labelsandlabeling.com
ISSN: 1478-7520

Printed by

CDT Associates Ltd, Sandhurst, United Kingdom

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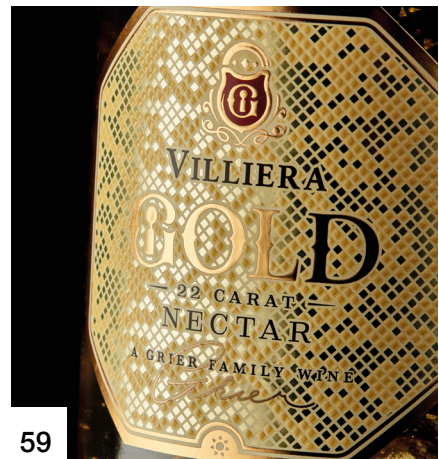
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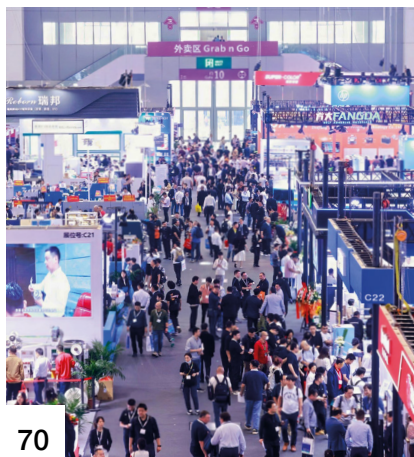
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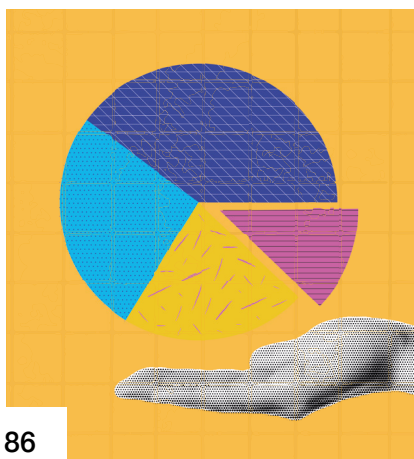
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Chinese printer invests in five Durst Tau 510 RSCi label presses

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Mark Andy unveils new press (video)

The new CEO, Duane Pekar, speaks about the Digital Series HD HighSpeed 1200



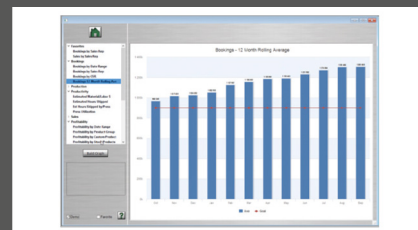
Read L&L Issue 4 online (magazine)

The previous issue of L&L magazine is now available to read online



Green new world (feature)

Converters and brands balance shelf appeal and regulations in cannabis industry



Order processing and job management (Label Academy)

How an MIS order process enables tracking the entire job life cycle



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L&L looks back (*L&L issue 3, 2013*)



P16 Coca-Cola revolutionized promotional marketing by launching a project that saw millions of labels printed with customized data by a network of digital and conventional printers across Europe. The project saw Coca-Cola marketing departments in more than 30 European countries supply the 150 most popular local names and a range of slogans.



P40 Andy Thomas presented a digital press buyer's guide to help converters navigate an astonishingly wide choice of digital presses designed to produce short to medium runs of labels in full color. He gathered important information needed to understand the difference between the technologies on offer and how to match these with the intended end-use application.



P64 Barry Hunt explored the latest advancements in adhesives and coatings, focusing on the shift towards environmentally friendly, water-based products and innovations in wash-off technologies, including Avery Dennison's adhesive for premium beer labels that allows easy removal in industrial brewery washers to support bottle-to-bottle recycling.



P94 L&L attended a four-day Mark Andy Open House in the UK for a stunning demonstration of the new Mark Andy ProLED curing system on a 6-color Performance Series' P3. It showcased how quickly this technology has come of age, and how it could match the performance of mercury lamp-based systems at a greatly reduced overall cost and energy consumption.

Automation changes the landscape of label industry

Editor's note

Make no mistake about it — the future of the label and package printing space will be defined by automation.

Don't believe me? Take a look through our predictions piece, beginning on page 102 for proof.

Over and over, leading industry players cite automation as the driving force for the year ahead.

This didn't happen overnight. In recent years, we've seen more converting companies investing in the IT infrastructure to build smart factories and connected shopfloors.

We're seeing a convergence of demands making a clear case for automation: A widespread labor shortage, faster turnaround times and reduced inventory levels, coupled with a demand for more reporting on emissions, waste and energy consumption

“Converters are turning to automation to relieve operational pressures, manage labor costs and lead times, streamline production and track real-time data”

from corporate clients.

Converters are turning to automation to relieve operational pressures, manage labor costs and lead times, streamline production and track real-time data.

Oftentimes, automation is not only about the machinery you can see, touch and feel. The automation we're seeing today is on the overall connection of shop floors. It's smart factories, it's lights-out manufacturing, it's the cloud, it's blockchain, it's artificial intelligence. Artificial intelligence is

driving everything from vision systems to job scheduling to artwork design to performance monitoring to predictive maintenance.

Turn to page 99 for an interesting story out of China on Shengda Print. The company, at just eight years old, has achieved full process automation with the help of an ERP system that handles everything from customer approval and production scheduling to pre-press file processing, platemaking, printing, finishing and

packaging for delivery. Our China editor visited Shengda Print and saw the company using robotic arms to help with press setup while AGVs moved finished products off the machinery. It's a level of automation that all converters will aspire to reach. Industry 4.0? Try Smart Factory of the Future.

Automation has the power to further redefine the processes we have in place today. Brands are asking for it, converters are demanding it, and industry suppliers are driving the technology forward. And it's going to be key to profitability in 2025 and beyond.

Chelsea McDougall
Group managing editor

Installations



Mark Andy Digital Series HighSpeed 1200

Labels, Tags & Inserts, US

Burlington, North Carolina-based converter invested in a new Mark Andy Digital Series HighSpeed 1200 press to align its operations with the vision of speed, quality and efficiency coming together in a single-pass technology. Mark Andy Digital Series HighSpeed 1200, a hybrid press operating at speeds of up to 480 ft/min while delivering 1,200 DPI resolution, allows LTI to handle jobs with high SKU counts and meet the increasing demand for faster turnarounds. 'The Digital Series HighSpeed 1200 is perfect for accounts with dozens of SKUs, and its in-line finishing capabilities will streamline production by reducing manual touch points,' said Rhonda Baker, Labels, Tags & Inserts owner. 'Automation has always been critical for us, and this press takes our automation to the next level.'

Nilpeter FA-4

New Capital, Egypt

Egypt-based printer, known for producing blank receipt rolls, expanded its capabilities by purchasing a refurbished Nilpeter FA-4 flexo press to enter the label production market for the retail and food and beverage industries. The Nilpeter FA-4 can handle a variety of substrates and will enable New Capital to meet the demands of a broader range of customers. Although an older model, the FA-4 remains a robust and dependable equipment for companies looking to deliver consistent print quality. 'We are pleased to have integrated a Nilpeter press into our production setup. This represents an exciting opportunity for us as we work towards developing high-quality labels alongside our existing receipt roll production,' said Turki Al Waily from New Capital.



Xeikon LX3000

Abbey Labels, UK

The UK-based converter has become the first in the country to install a new Xeikon LX3000 digital press at its Suffolk facility. This high-speed press, featuring advanced inspection and eco-friendly toners, joins two Xeikon CX300s at the company's Bury St Edmunds site. This 5-color, dry toner press prints at up to 42 m/min (138 ft/min), offering a significant jump in productivity. According to chairman Tom Allum, it features Cruise Control inspection to ensure that only the highest-quality labels leave the building. In addition to higher speed, the LX3000 press takes advantage of Xeikon's new Eco toner technology, which reportedly reduces the process's carbon footprint by more than 10 percent, making label production more sustainable.

Durst Tau RSCi

Platinum Press, US

Platinum Press completed a 15 million USD investment at its Fort Worth, Texas, headquarters, which has increased its floor space by nearly 50 percent and added several pieces of equipment, including the Durst Tau RSCi digital press with customized finishing units. The new Durst Tau RSCi press offers 7-color 1,200x1,200 px resolution even at maximum speeds. It uses FDA-compliant inks for indirect food/drug contact. The machine's off-line finishing units allow small- and medium-run specialty product production of booklet-style or two-ply extended-text labels. 'The floorspace expansion and infrastructure investments at our Fort Worth headquarters address both growing customer demands and evolving industry needs,' said Andrew Vale, vice president of Platinum Press.





Three Hontec machines

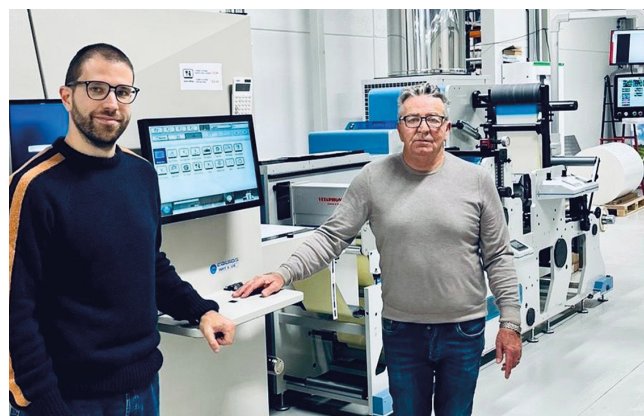
More Ambalaj, Turkey

A growing player in the Turkish label and flexible packaging industry, More Ambalaj invested in three machines from Hontec's portfolio: a FlexiCon 350-8C flexo press, a hot stamping flatbed and an inspection system. The investment expanded the company's production capacity. The new FlexiCon 350-8C, a high-performance flexo printing press features a hot stamping and flatbed system in 350mm width for intricate finishing tasks as well as an inspection module ensuring flawless quality control for the entire label production. Hontec's Turkish agent, Label Process, supplied and installed these machines. 'This is a significant step forward for us as we strengthen our market presence in Turkey,' stated Hontec's representative.

Lombardi hybrid line

Etikmar, Italy

Italian label converter expanded its cooperation with Lombardi Converting Machinery by investing in a new hybrid line to accelerate its growth and improve capabilities and production speed. The company invested in a Lombardi 8-color Synchroline 430 flexo press two years ago and guided by the positive experience with the equipment, purchased a new hybrid production line from Lombardi. Etikmar's sales manager, Alessandro Marani, said: 'This new line is a breakthrough for our company. It enables us to reduce production errors like misregistration, optimize processes and ensure consistent quality with substantial savings on Pantone colors. With the precision of digital technology and adding orange and blue colors, we can now cover a broader color spectrum than traditional flexo.'



Konica Minolta AccurioLabel 400

C K Enterprises, US

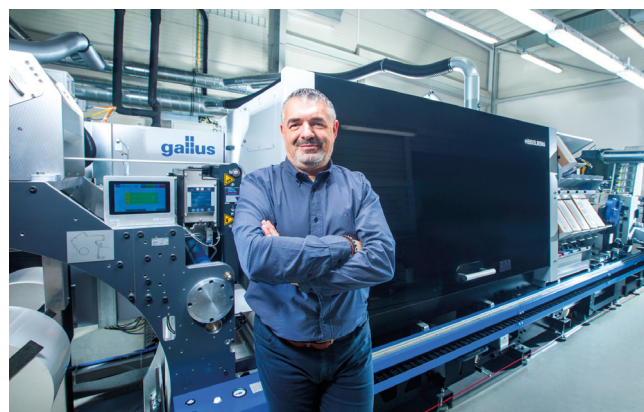
The company's partnership with Konica Minolta began in 2017 when it purchased a Bizhub Press C71cf label press to bring its label manufacturing in-house. Since then, the company has acquired numerous technologies from Konica Minolta. 'The breweries are thrilled with how well we can bring their vision to life using the AccurioLabel 400,' said Jim Osborn, chief marketing officer of C K Enterprises. 'Our customers absolutely love the one-hit white of the AccurioLabel 400, and many now insist on using that press for their jobs due to its superior white and higher quality,' added Charles Kunkel, president of C K Enterprises. 'Our previous digital press required multiple hits to achieve the same opacity, which cost us, and our clients, both money and time.'



Gallus One

Flexcon, Czech Republic

Flexcon installed the Gallus One in November 2024. The company chose its new digital press with an additional flexo unit and a semi-rotary die-cutting module to accelerate job changeover times for increasingly shorter label runs. Martin Chaluš, owner of Flexcon, commented: 'The importance of digital printing is growing. Importantly, the custom composition of this new solution means that we now have a finished label that "falls out" of the press needing only to be cut, saving us time, streamlining production and increasing profitability. As a previous enemy of digital technology, I wouldn't have believed if someone had told me that I would have two powerful digital machines by 2024. But today, it's clear that smart, connected printing is key.'



Label & packaging showcase



2024 L9 World Label Award winners

01 Flexo line

Association: CPF (China)

Winner: Suzhou Jiangtian Packing Technology, China for Rio Neon cocktail label

02 Flexo line/screen

Association: FPLMA (Australia)

Winner: Fantastick Label Co., Australia for Moro Ultra

03 Flexo color process

Association: SALMA (New Zealand)

Winner: Kiwi Labels, New Zealand, for Win with Kylie

04 Flexo wines and spirits

Association: JFLP (Japan)

Winner: Takara Pac, Japan for Japanese sake label

05 Combination line

Association: Finat (Europe)

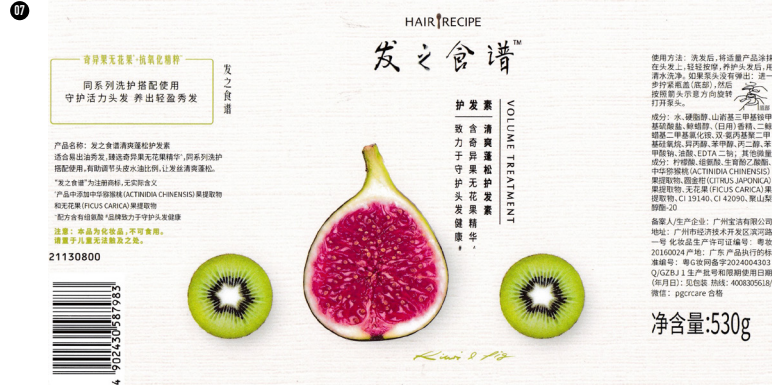
Winner: Gráficas Varias, Spain for El Hallazgo



06 Digital Line / Screen

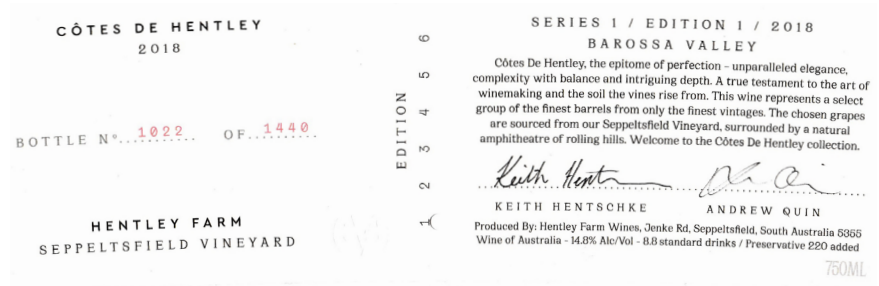
Association: SALMA (New Zealand)

Winner: Leading Label Co. New Zealand for 26K Glacial Water

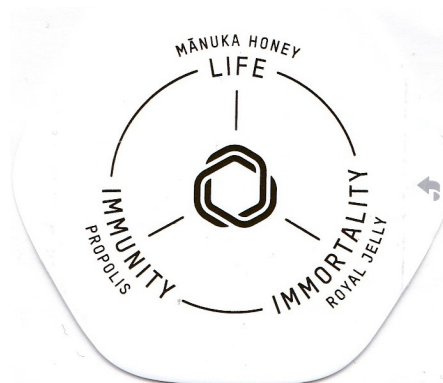


07

08



09



10



10 Innovation

Association: Finat (Europe)

Winner: Schreiner Group, Germany for needle protection

07 Digital Color Process

Association: CPF (China)

Winner: Cymmetrik (Jiangsu) Printing, China for P&G HR shampoo label

08 Digital Wine & Spirits

Association: FPLMA (Australia)

Winner: Ultra Labels & Flexpack, Australia for Cotes de Hentley

09 Booklets

Association: SALMA (New Zealand)

Winner: Kiwi Labels, New Zealand for Manuka concertina honey label



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Andy Thomas-Emans: *Flexo, hybrid or digital – which is best for short runs?*

There is no clear-cut answer for converters facing a choice of conventional, digital or a mix of both, writes Andy Thomas-Emans

As run lengths continue to come down, label converters are forced to think hard about which combination of print and converting systems is best suited to their evolving business needs.

Let's look at the choice between flexo, hybrid (flexo+digital) and standalone digital with off-line finishing.

The boundaries between these technologies are fluid and constantly shifting.

Until relatively recently, we would have discounted flexography as a viable short-term printing method. However, increased levels of automation and integration with digital networks have changed this situation. The industry has found new ways to automate key elements of the flexo process. These include automated pressure setting systems capable of tracking press speeds, plate cylinder presetting, automated cross and print direction registration, substrate-dependent tension presetting, in-line defect and color monitoring, modular control systems, and the ability to store all these parameters for repeat jobs.

Add to this quick-change sleeves, high-speed semi-rotary die-cutting and 7-color ECG inking systems – meaning print units do not have to be washed down between jobs – and you have a powerful machine tool capable of rapid makereadies with minimal waste.

Well over 70 percent of short-run jobs are, in fact, long-run jobs broken down into multiple smaller batches for just-in-time delivery. So, the key metric is how quickly you can get a repeat job back onto the press and print sellable labels with minimum waste.

Automated flexo presses, as described above, are well suited to this kind of short-run environment. The cost of flexo plates is amortized the more times the same job is re-run.

In addition, digital print bars allow flexo presses to print variable data, such as unique 2D codes or serial numbers, screen-replacement white or variable varnish, creating a new category of hybrid press.

Digital and hybrid

Turning to digital, historically, converters have chosen standalone digital presses with off-line finishing.

In the early days of digital printing, the reason was clear: digital print engines were slow and could not keep pace with finishing lines, so it made sense to keep the print engine working and finish off-line (though interestingly, Xeikon in the 1990s was an advocate of in-line finishing through partnerships with Mark Andy and Agfa, and Indigo worked with Gallus to produce the in-line DO-330).

“The key metric is how quickly you can get a repeat job back onto the press”

This situation has been turned on its head by the astonishing increase in speed and overall productivity of digital presses over the last few years. Now, we are looking at speeds of 75-120m/min (242-393ft/min), which approaches real-world narrow web flexo speeds.

So now it makes more sense to add in-line coating and finishing to the digital print engine.

The most common flexo integrations are to add print primer and first-down white flexo stations before the digital engine, to add cold foil either before or after the digital engine, and to add varnish stations – including digital varnish – and sometimes flexo spot colors after the digital engine.

Semi-rotary die-cutting technology has reached speeds of over 150m/min (492ft/min), so it can easily keep up with these faster digital print speeds, and of course, there is no requirement to change format sizes between jobs. Automatic die ejection means the only manual operation is loading the die.

Of course, hybrid presses also take advantage of all the flexo automation factors we have noted above in their

conventional modules.

We know this as a hybrid press configuration. However, some press manufacturers have chosen their own terms to reflect what they say is a tighter integration of digital and conventional units. Bobst, for example, uses the term 'All-in-One'.

We are also seeing the incorporation of 7-color digital print engines into converting lines, effectively producing a hybrid press. This can be seen, for example, in the recent joint venture hybrid developed by Grafotronic and Domino for LP2i Étiquettes in France.

What's next

Will flexo automation and greater hybrid productivity start to squeeze out standalone digital presses with off-line finishing?

No, and for two reasons.

Firstly, many converters' job mix will always favor maintaining maximum productivity on the digital press and finishing off-line without any interruption to set up conventional print and converting units, however automated.

Secondly, we are at the beginning of an exciting process of automating off-line finishing machines. Mercian Labels' 2-year JDF/JMF automation program, carried out with ABG, Screen and Cerm, points the way to this future, where responsibility for machine setup shifts from machine operators to remote job programmers.

The digital press prints at full productivity, and each SKU carries with it, in the form of a barcode, instructions on how it should be finished.

Each of these technology strands will take a leap forward at Labelexpo Europe 2025, providing the label converter with an unprecedented choice of strategies for handling short-run work.



Turn to page 86 to see what other label industry experts predict for the year ahead

WRITTEN IN THE PLANETS

There is a precise geometry in the solar system, and each element interacts perfectly with the others. Inspired by the planets, PRATI builds its own machines so that each model can function in harmony with the environment and... "run endlessly"!

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Sales success depends on knowing your customer's 'why'



The most successful salespeople are those who ask and understand their customer's goals and objectives. The first step to this is crucial pre-planning ahead of sales calls, Lois Ritarossi writes

Why do your customers need to produce labels, packaging and signage? Why do they choose your firm for their production projects? These are basic questions. The most effective salespeople regularly ask and have clarity about what is most important to key customers. Great salespeople can articulate the customers' 'why'.

Salespeople who ask and understand why customers need print and know how the projects in your shop are related to larger business goals. Goals that are specific to new product launches, market share, brand awareness, acquisition, retention, etc. Part of a predictable sales discovery process is defining customers' business goals and metrics, especially for large projects. Strategic sellers know that winning larger deals requires understanding key decision-makers' long-term goals beyond the quality and cost requirements of specific jobs.

In the print and labeling sector, salespeople often don't know the why or specific goals for major projects. This often results from:

- Not asking about customers' goals,
- Not speaking with decision makers and,
- Not following consistent pre-call planning for customer calls.

Salespeople who are successful with account expansion prioritize spending time with decision-makers. They schedule planning meetings quarterly or more frequently to clarify their customers' business issues and goals. With this knowledge, they can suggest products and services that align with customers' needs. Without defining the 'why,' price becomes a driving factor in the decision process.

Pre-call planning: Just do it

Pre-call planning involves dedicating time to strategically planning how best to conduct mutually beneficial meetings that will move closer to closed deals and then writing it down.

"Sellers who engage in thorough pre-call work experience a minimum 20 percent boost in productivity"

Pre-call planning works. There are several proven benefits, including:

- Improved sales confidence in leading meetings,
- Increased internal collaboration,
- Productive communication with clients and prospects,
- Increased sales effectiveness.

Most importantly, pre-call planning delivers better outcomes. Sellers who engage in thorough pre-call work experience a minimum 20 percent boost in productivity. Every B2B sales manager would be thrilled if they could implement a process that would make their sales team 20 percent more effective.

Pre-call planning is not looking up the news page and LinkedIn posts 30 minutes before a customer meeting. Instead, it involves researching and documenting the purpose, goals and topics for the meeting. This includes determining each attendee's role, motivations and level of influence on closing the deal.

Pre-call planning includes defining potential outcomes for the seller, and the customer, in the context of documenting a detailed agenda. The agenda enables your sales team to stay on point and effectively manage time to address relevant points. Planning means salespeople are prepared to focus on the key topics when senior-level people arrive late or announce their early departure.

Scan the QR code below to download and use the HubSpot pre-call template to enhance your sales process.

Align with customer goals

One best practice for demonstrating value to decision-makers is to open a meeting with the question, 'What would you like to learn and accomplish from this meeting?' This approach acknowledges your respect for their time and your desire to offer ideas that align with their goals. It may also send the meeting in a different direction than your pre-call plan.

The planning process will support your sales team's ability to pivot and focus on ideas and content that are most important to the customer. When your team provides the customer value, and they feel heard, relationships expand.

If you are looking to improve your sales strategies, I suggest reading the book, 'The TOP Sales Leader Playbook: How to Win 5X Deals Repeatedly' by the talented sales coach and LinkedIn trainer Lisa Magnuson of Topline Sales.

What got your company to this point is unlikely to get you where you want to go by the end of 2025. If you would like to speak further about effective strategies for sales growth, please contact me for a free 30-minute consultation call.

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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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An update on TLMI's liner recycling initiative

Partnering with Sustana Solutions for its liner recycling initiatives, TLMI has learned that a new approach may be needed, writes Rosalyn Bandy

In mid-2024, TLMI took a firm stand on improving siliconized paper release liner recycling by creating the Liner Recycling Initiative (LRI), a pilot program to identify and solve obstacles to recycling that material. We partnered with Resource Recycling Systems (RRS), a global consultancy that provides solutions for optimizing recycling processes, reducing waste and minimizing environmental impact at all points in the supply chain.

“By integrating these efforts, we can enhance collaboration, improve material flow, and ultimately increase our chances of success”

RRS's partner in this project is Sustana Solutions, a paper recycling mill that will take siliconized paper release liner from roll-to-roll labels; variable information labels used in E-commerce, transport, logistics, and warehousing; and prime labels. Sustana Solutions is a diversified paper company with three divisions – Sustana Fiber, Sustana Paper and Sustana Recycling.

Sustana Fiber has two pulp mills that recycle white grades of paper using a float de-inking process that can remove silicone, ink and other contaminants from used office paper, cartons and silicone-coated paper release liner. The mills are in De Pere, Wisconsin, and Levis, Quebec.

Sustana Fiber mixes silicone-coated release liner with other sources of recovered white fiber like office paper and cartons to produce a high-quality, recycled market pulp that can be used as recycled content in white fiber products like office paper, tissue products and food-grade applications.

TLMI's LRI pilot program will cover the areas surrounding two Sustana Fiber mills in Chicagoland and the Northeast US. The first objective of the pilot project was to work with Sustana Fiber to develop a bale specification document, which RRS can then use to recruit paper liner generators to start recycling their liner. The bale specification has been completed and is available on the LRI website (www.linerrecycling.com).

The next objective is to identify liner generators surrounding the mill locations.

Updated approach

Initially, the strategy focused on partnering with large generators due to the assumption that they would facilitate a more straightforward logistics process. The expectation was that these generators could deliver substantial quantities of material (truckloads) that could be shipped directly to the mill; however, in practice, this approach proved to be more complex than initially anticipated, highlighting the need to re-evaluate our strategies.

RRS's findings indicated that large and small generators may need a broker or aggregator to process their materials to meet the mill's specifications efficiently. For example, materials such as liner on cores must undergo grinding and baling processes before being delivered to the mill, adding a layer of complexity to logistics. Consequently, RRS discovered a robust broker network operated by Sustana Recycling and various third parties. This network presents a valuable opportunity to connect all sizes of liner generators to the market as part of a unified pilot framework. By integrating these efforts, we can enhance collaboration, improve material flow, and ultimately increase our chances of success.

In the current landscape of the brown fiber market in the US, release liner is often viewed as a problematic material. This perception is mainly due to concerns associated with adhesives found on residual labels, which can complicate recycling. Conversely, Finat research shows that some

European mills have successfully integrated small percentages of release liner into old, corrugated containers (OCC); however, it is essential to note that this approach has not yet led to widely accepted testing protocols before mill acceptance, raising concerns about quality and reliability assurance.

While testing is being conducted in parallel to the LRI, any potential brown fiber mill acceptance will likely fall outside the timeline of our initial LRI project, underscoring the need for continued diligence and proactive measures in this area.

In support of the LRI, TLMI's Liner Recycling Committee, led by Christina Barajas (Mactac) and Adam Frey (Wausau Coated Products), have strategized around this vital initiative by creating four working groups to assist RRS: mill outreach, broker outreach, silicone research and testing and generator outreach. If you are a TLMI member and are interested in participating in any of these working groups, we welcome your participation. Contact me at rosalyn.bandy@tlmi.com for more information.

The LRI is designed to assist all current liner recycling work done by the industry by being transparent and providing options to all. As such, there are ways that industry members can support the LRI, whether you are a TLMI member or not.

To help locate generators of the liner, you can work directly with RRS, including a non-disclosure agreement, if desired, to connect any customers interested in recycling their silicone-coated paper release liner. For more information, contact me.



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

The neuroscience behind multisensory packaging: How haptics captivate shoppers in-store and online

Imagine stepping into a grocery store, convenience store or retail space. What happens first? As soon as we walk in, we see signs, posters and merchandising graphics. Then, we see shelves and end caps and all the different types of products and packaging. The imagery we see piques our interest — the designs, colors, photography, typography, shapes and sizes.

What's the next thing we do? We reach out and touch. We pick up a product, we feel it and turn it over in our hands to see more information. We may grab another product and compare the two. Next, we select one to buy. At this point in our shopping journey, we have activated two of our senses: our sense of sight and our sense of touch.

In this and other experiences, our sense of touch has a superpower: connection. Think about when you see a friend you haven't seen in a while; you hug, high-five or put your arm around their shoulder. Connection is a fundamental, innate human desire. Even during the pandemic, we found ways to touch. Remember fist bumps and elbow taps? There's something about touching that makes us feel connected.

To understand the influence of touch further, we need to look at neuroscience. You might be surprised to learn that more than half of our brain power constantly manages sensory input: sight, smell, taste, sound and touch. Based on brain scans and imagery, the sense of touch occupies a significant portion of that sensory processing.

Psychological ownership and the endowment effect

If you're intrigued by what's going on in your brain when your sense of touch is engaged, let's go a little deeper. There's a neuroscience phenomenon called psychological ownership. It means that merely touching a product increases our feeling of ownership.

Again, think about your own shopping experiences. When we see something in a store and pick it up or take it off the shelf, we start to feel as if it's ours, even before we've purchased it. When we hold it in our hands or put it in our cart, we consider that 'it's already mine.' That's psychological ownership.

You can imagine the impact of graphics, tactile effects, embellishments, die-cuts, foils, etc., on psychological ownership. If a product on the shelf looks like it would feel good to touch it, and then you pick it up, and it does feel good, well, the next logical step is to put it in your shopping cart. That whole cognitive process happens in a matter of seconds.

Another phenomenon is triggered once we feel that sense of psychological ownership: The endowment effect. The endowment effect is our willingness to pay more for something we own or think we own.

So now we understand why things we touch mean more to us than things we don't. We feel connected to them. We remember them better. We feel like they're ours. We're willing to pay more for them.

The impact on predicting sales

But how powerful is sensory input in predicting sales? In a recent study between Sappi and Clemson University, researchers discovered that by simply touching a premium package two times, people are 50 percent more likely to take it home than to leave it in the store. Just two touches and that premium product is on its way home more than half the time. The study also showed that with four touches, people are 90 percent more likely to take that same premium product home.

Think about the various embellishments that we can add to packaging. The elements you might suggest to a client or brand to make it elegant, or to make it traditional, or to make it feel and look natural or tranquil. You suggest these embellishments to increase a consumer's connection to the product and brand and, ultimately, to increase their decision to purchase. After all, one of the primary business goals for most brands is to increase sales.



More is more

Let's go back to our neuroscience studies. Researchers have also found that more is more. That is, the more senses a retail or grocery store can engage, the more connection it can make to the shopper. So, in addition to our sense of sight and touch, our sense of hearing is activated when we walk into a retail space. There's noise all around us — conversation, announcements over the PA, music. Some stores even have signature music they play that matches their consumer demographic. If I'm shopping with my daughter at American Threads, the music is different than if I'm shopping at Nike, Marshalls or a boutique shop. With audio, now three of our senses are activated. What if we, printers, designers, brand owners, can activate a fourth sense to further enhance that consumer connection?

We can, and we do. Some of the varnishes you see in print and packaging today are scented varnishes. You touch one, and it releases scent capsules. Chocolate, vanilla, coffee, lemon. That design choice is based on research: the more senses we can activate, the more emotional connection consumers feel to that product and brand.

The star of the unboxing experience

Let's step outside of the store now and go into the home. You already know that many packages and printed materials are so beautiful or creative that people keep them as prized possessions.

When you've included haptics that generate an emotional connection, people don't just save them; they also talk about them to their

friends, family and followers. They may post an image on Instagram or record an unboxing video for Facebook or TikTok.

Some people watch unboxing videos for fun; some watch them as part of their product research before they buy. Did you know that 97 percent of people read reviews or watch product videos before they purchase something?

Here's what's interesting from a packaging design perspective: if you watch unboxing videos, have you ever noticed that about the first 20 to 25 percent of the video is focused solely on the packaging? So, whether that's a five-minute video or a 30-second video, that's still 20 percent focused on the packaging alone. This speaks volumes about the value of specialty effects in haptics and embellishments that we're including on our packaging.

What does this mean to your clients? Well, in 2023, YouTube videos with the word 'unboxing' in their title were viewed 25 billion times. Let's extrapolate that. About 60 percent of people watching unboxing videos have an intention to purchase that product (or a similar one). And 20 percent of that video is focused on the packaging. That packaging may even have been what inspired the person to post their unboxing video in the first place.

So, let's do a little bit of math: 25 billion views; 60 percent of people watching are intending to buy; that's 15 billion views by potential customers of that product, of that brand, which we can now link all the way back to the printed packaging and its material and special effects. As you're talking with your customers and advising them about embellishments and haptics (and you're naturally discussing benefits versus costs versus time and so on, right?), consider those numbers.

"Unviewed is also unsold. If your packaging doesn't inspire people, they are less likely to post about it. The simple math shows that your client could be missing out on billions of views"

Bringing it home

You could even discuss it this way: untouched is unsold. If people aren't inspired to touch your package, they are 50 percent less likely to take it home. Unviewed is also unsold. If your packaging doesn't inspire people, they are less likely to post about it.

The simple math shows that your client could be missing out on billions of views by a captive, intentional and interested consumer audience.

The most successful converters, printers and brands continue learning more about the physical, psychological and emotional connections regarding the sense of touch. They leverage that knowledge by finding powerful and unique ways to appeal to the haptic senses in our brains through packaging that engages us, drives purchase intent, builds brand loyalty and creates share-worthy unboxing experiences.



Vicki Strull is a design strategist with more than 25 years in the industry designing packaging, brand identities and a multitude of packaging and online touchpoints. Vicki co-founded MarketWise Academy to help fellow designers and marketers accelerate their impact, level up their design strategies, and thrive in a world dominated by business.

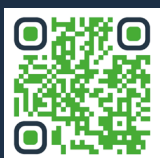
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Harness the power of lean processes

Small efficiency gains can translate to quantifiable wins when lean manufacturing is implemented, writes Brian Van de Water, CEO of SPL Consulting, LLC



As SPL Consulting, LLC works with clients across printing and packaging industries, we often uncover that many companies are familiar with lean as a methodology for improving performance and even have teams focused on continuous improvement.

SPL polled a large group of senior executives about lean manufacturing and asked how many had documented over 1,000 hours of capacity generated in the last year. Roughly 15 hands went up out of nearly 200. I then asked how many had documented over 5,000 hours. Five hands were raised (three of them were SPL clients). Let's explore what lean is and how you can harness its power to improve performance and the lives of your team members.

"I encourage you to challenge your paradigm and pursue transformational improvements"

Through numerous conversations, it became clear that there are wide and varied interpretations of lean manufacturing and the processes it can impact. This is confounded further when we consider that many leaders accept the concept. They see some processes improve, see evidence of better organization in work areas and are happy with progress. I offer this thought: Although small incremental changes are a fundamental objective of lean manufacturing, major and transformational change opportunities are commonly unrecognized. Taking results from small gains in efficiency to literally thousands of quantifiable hours is within your grasp.

One of SPL's clients initially told me they didn't need my lean consulting services as they already had mastered lean implementation. They had evidence of 5S (a future topic); they asked team members for ideas for improvement and often made small enhancements. They engaged SPL for coaching and developing a new sales-focused strategic plan. Due to the success, we generated with that project, the CEO shared that they had never had an outside lean process expert evaluate their lean maturity and asked me to look under the hood.

SPL was engaged to conduct an assessment to uncover potential opportunities. The process uncovered significant potential for generating capacity in an area that was significantly over capacity. This led to our first Kaizen, capturing over 5,000 hours of press capacity in a single Kaizen. Their VP of operations told me he thought he would lose his job because he should have known it was that bad. I share this because it is not uncommon for SPL to find opportunities, even in well-run companies.

This is not shared in judgment but to open minds to reflect on whether your journey yields thousands of hours, ultimately

increasing profitability. If you're not experiencing high-impact transformations, consider taking a deeper dive into the concept and process.

The concept of lean manufacturing is simply a systematic approach to improving efficiency and effectiveness by eliminating waste and enhancing value.

The primary goal of lean processes is to create more value for customers while using fewer resources. These opportunities are uncovered by identifying waste, such as unnecessary motion, waiting, transportation and overproduction. When waste is identified, various tools in the lean toolbox are used to reduce or eliminate it, improving performance, quality and profitability, allowing you to better satisfy customer expectations.

This is done most effectively through the Kaizen approach. Kaizen is commonly translated to 'change for the good' or 'continuous improvement'. It is also often translated as rapid improvement. SPL prefers this definition as we operate with an extreme bias for action that I transfer to clients. Our experience is that most businesses have six to 10 opportunities for major, transformational Kaizens that typically range from 1,000 to 5,000 hours there for the taking. The true power of Kaizen is at the end of the event, not in the future; we immediately begin implementing the new standard work process capturing results.

When applied and facilitated properly, the Kaizen approach will also become one of the most impactful team-building opportunities a company can use to strengthen its teams. It consists of a cross-functional group of people working on a specific process.

Through the Kaizen, they understand what other teammates go through in their jobs. Invariably, people share comments like 'I had no idea your job was so complicated' or 'I would never want to do your job; I'll keep mine'.

One CEO shared that when SPL suggested having resources, like operators, participate in a customer service Kaizen, he thought I was crazy. After a few events, he acquiesced to my recommendation and shared: 'We have team members still talking when they had never spoken even though they worked here for years'.

In summary, lean can be instrumental in improving performance in front-end transactional and manufacturing processes. I encourage you to challenge your paradigm and pursue transformational improvements as well. Harness the power of this process to improve the lives of your team members.



SPL Consulting, LLC specializes in the printing industry and has expertise in strategic planning, lean enterprise implementation and talent development. CEO Brian Van de Water can be reached at brian@splconsultingllc.com

How prepared are brands for packaging waste regulation?

A recent UPM Raflatac and Pentawards survey highlights the challenges packaging designers face when navigating environmental concerns and tightening regulations. Akanksha Meena reports

Packaging sustainability will become a significant focus in the coming years as regulations become stricter. This is particularly evident as the EU Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulations (PPWR) impact all converters that provide labels and packaging in the EU.

PPWR establishes new obligations for packaging suppliers, manufacturers, producers, retailers and waste management companies to handle packaging made from any material distributed in the EU market, regardless of location.

Designing sustainable and functional packaging is a complex process influenced by several factors, including material selection, functionality, cost and environmental impact. With these existing challenges, the added requirements of the EU PPWR raise the question: Are brand owners and packaging designers prepared to adapt and ensure compliance while maintaining packaging innovation and functionality?

UPM Raflatac, in collaboration with Pentawards, revealed insights from a survey of top packaging designers, highlighting challenges in sustainable packaging design and strategies to overcome them.

The survey results show that while most (47 percent) of the designer respondents feel extremely comfortable handling briefs that include sustainability requirements, 43 percent of them would prefer more direction or information to feel fully comfortable when dealing with these briefs. This highlights a need for further education on incorporating sustainability into packaging design, with 35 percent of respondents suggesting material guides would be the most beneficial.

Further findings reveal that 57 percent of the designer respondents believe they always, or often can, impact a product's material choice. However, 20 percent say they seldom do, and 17 percent almost never do, which suggests some clients may not have yet realized the value of exploring alternative and more sustainable packaging options.

Cost challenges

Many packaging designers and brands surveyed highlighted price as a key challenge. Although many designers acknowledged the importance of using sustainable materials for innovative packaging, the cost frequently deterred their customers, leading many to

“While cost has been highlighted as a barrier to embracing sustainable packaging design, it’s important to take a moment to consider the true cost of not doing so”

choose the cheapest option. One respondent stated: ‘Everyone wants to be green, until they see that being green is usually more expensive.’ Another noted: ‘I think the production end, or the manufacturers, are not yet completely ready for this kind of change.’

Robert Taylor, sustainability director at UPM Raflatac and member of the Pentawards jury, states: ‘While cost has been highlighted as a barrier to embracing sustainable packaging design, it’s important to take a moment to consider what is the true cost of not doing so. We need a holistic approach that considers the total cost and value creation potential in a market that is growing twice as fast for sustainable products. This is especially key as the impact of new regulation and green finance kicks in, with carbon taxes, plastics taxes and extended producer responsibility (EPR) fees just being a few examples. Reducing packaging is one of the most effective ways to reduce impact and cost. Using less raw material, water and energy and generating less waste or having a more effective supply chains brings savings and reduces the environmental footprint.’

He adds that the industry needs to understand the true cost of sustainable packaging design and embrace innovations that will help meet ambitious environmental targets. UPM Raflatac’s approach when collaborating with value chain partners is to ensure that they understand the total cost or the total value opportunity of introducing a more sustainable option.

‘There are many sustainable solutions already on the market that do not come with a higher cost, let’s be clear about that,’ Taylor emphasizes.

Brands will have to consider EPR and taxes, making it essential to look at both the overall value and the costs when making decisions.



Robert Taylor, sustainability director at UPM Raflatac



Seawake Gin bottles use UPM Raflatac’s Ocean Action labels made by repurposing ocean-bound plastic waste

“One of the most important elements of PPWR is providing a level playing field for designers, converters, and companies like UPM to innovate”

'This means looking beyond a simple comparison of raw material cost A versus raw material cost B, because that's no longer the full story,' he says.

Collaboration across value chain

The survey also revealed that designers working for brands and developing new packages need more information.

'The survey with Pentawards reveals that more than half of the designers were uncomfortable with understanding sustainability enough. And that, therefore, presents the opportunity for companies to come in and provide that help through material guides, offering training and podcasts, whatever is needed for them to grow their knowledge, and make the decisions that will ensure future packaging meets the needs of the legislation,' says Taylor.

Another key insight from designers was the need for better collaboration across the value chain to explore opportunities around raw materials and their price points. Designers expressed interest in taking a step-by-step approach rather than implementing changes all at once.

Taylor explains that UPM Raflatac, as a material provider, can play a pivotal role. It can offer various tools for packaging designers to incorporate into their creative toolbox. As material manufacturers, the company's role is to collaborate across the value chain with its partners to identify and deliver tailored products that meet the unique needs of each packaging designer.

'At UPM Raflatac, our strategy is centered on designing a future beyond fossil-based materials, and there are many ways to achieve this. The first step is reducing packaging, followed by incorporating recycled content and improving material efficiency. Enhancing recyclability is another critical area of focus,' Taylor explains.

'For example, we offer innovative products such as Forest Film and Ocean Action label. They go a step further than simply reducing packaging, they support circularity and address climate challenges effectively. Our "reduce, recycle, renew" approach not only tackles sustainability, but also contributes to a more climate-positive future.'

Regulations accelerating change

The industry is seeing the impact of regulations such as the PPWR, which aim to reduce packaging waste, promote recyclability, develop markets for recycled materials and foster a circular economy model.

'One of the most important elements of PPWR is its harmonization across Europe, providing a level playing field for designers, converters and companies like UPM Raflatac to innovate. All the actors are putting a lot of effort into understanding what this legislation will mean in practice and develop their packaging accordingly,' Taylor remarks.

Leading brands are considering what this means for their future packaging designs and exploring what's available to help them promote recyclability, increase the share of recycled content, or replace fossil-based raw materials with renewables.

Ripple effect

The PPWR regulations, while being introduced in the EU, will have a larger ripple effect worldwide. For example, Taylor says that brands placing packaging on European shelves generally follow similar principles of circularity and recyclability for products intended for the UK market. Likewise, any packaging produced in the UK and sold in Europe must comply with the regulations set by European authorities. Over time, Europe's standards will likely influence packaging practices in the UK.

Seawake Gin chooses Ocean Action label

Italian liquor factory Bad Spirits, founded by Andrea and Alessandro de Cinque in 2015 in Bologna, has grown from its artisanal roots to a company with a strong environmental ethos. With sustainability in mind, Bad Spirits started the search for the perfect label for its Seawake Gin bottles.

'Our goal was to create a more sustainable liquor that could contribute to the environmental cause. We chose recycled glass for the bottles and a cap made of cork and activated carbon, which naturally neutralizes unwanted substances, allowing less use of water, chemicals and energy,' says Alessandro de Cinque.

'After careful research for the label material, together with our label printer Rotocel, we discovered the Ocean Action labels, which represent exactly what we were looking for – a direct impact in the fight against marine pollution.'

UPM Raflatac's Ocean Action labels are the first of its kind, made with plastic waste that could otherwise end up in the oceans. This waste is collected within 200m of shorelines and 50km of waterways, specifically in areas where waste management is lacking or ineffective. The collection and reduction of plastic entering the ocean is incentivized by repurposing ocean-bound plastic waste. The plastic is then chemically recycled as label materials, giving it a new life.

The decision to use Ocean Action label for Seawake Gin represents a tangible contribution to the fight against marine pollution.

'Ocean Action has made it possible for us to create a more sustainable liquor packaging that reflects our values and actively contributes to the protection of the oceans, while also spreading awareness to the consumers,' Alessandro de Cinque says.

The label on each bottle of the brand features a unique illustration of marine life, created by a local artist.

Seawake Gin represents a comprehensive and integrated commitment to sustainability, involving not only Ocean Action labels, but every aspect of the product.

'Whenever possible, we use recyclable and biodegradable materials for our packaging and select local, Italian suppliers who practice sustainable agriculture and minimize waste,' Alessandro de Cinque says.

The company also collaborates with Marevivo, an organization dedicated to protecting the sea and the environment. For every bottle bought, Bad Spirits donates 5 percent to Marevivo, helping it with its projects.

The feedback from customers has been positive.

'Many of our customers appreciate that we take concrete steps to reduce our impact on the environment and contribute to its conservation. This kind of feedback inspires us to keep going and urges us to constantly seek new ways to enhance our environmental performance. The satisfaction of our customers is very important to us and pushes us to persist on our journey towards a more sustainable future for everyone,' Alessandro de Cinque concludes.



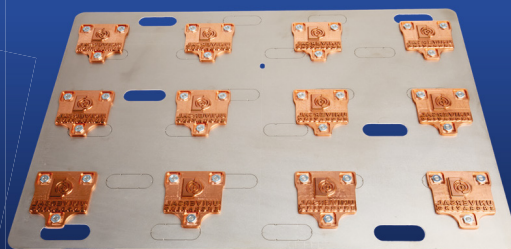
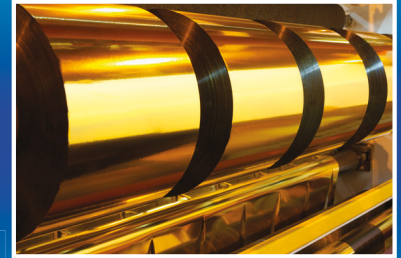
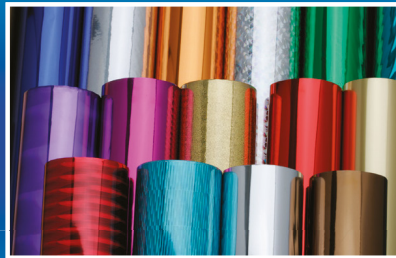
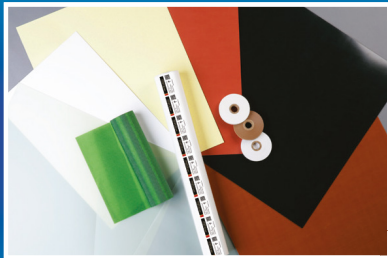
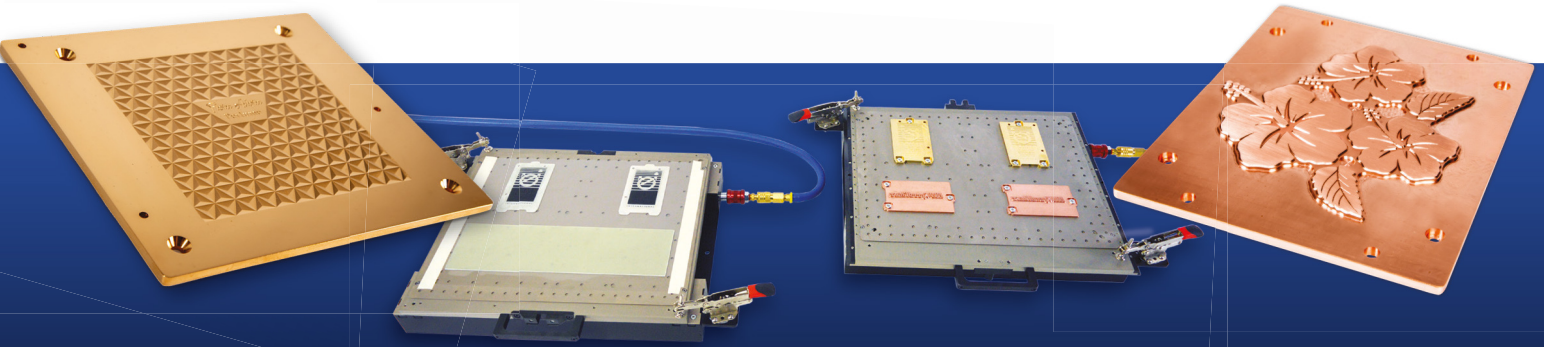
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Heidelberg acquisition paves digital future at Gallus

Gallus' acquisition by Heidelberg in 2014 brought benefits to both companies, particularly in developing digital technology. James Quirk reports

Ferdinand Rüesch IV, widely known as Ferdi, has retired after a long and storied career leading his family business, the press manufacturer Gallus.

Winner of the R Stanton Avery Special Recognition Award at Labelexpo Americas last year, he will spend this year visiting and bidding farewell to long-standing customers. It's an opportune moment to look back, with vindication, on perhaps the most important decision of his 45-year career: the sale of Gallus, the family business founded by his grandfather in 1923 and previously run by his father, Ferdinand Rüesch III, to Heidelberg in 2014. With Ferdi's retirement, Rüesch family involvement in the company is no more.

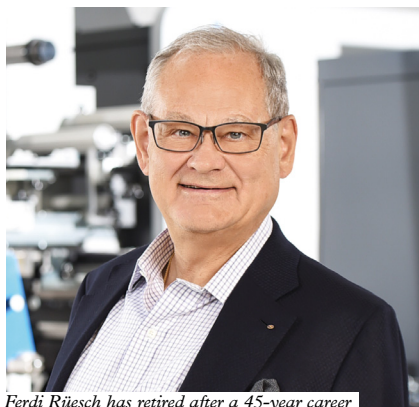
'There is some sadness about that aspect,' he admits, 'as there was in 1999 when we sold Heidelberg the initial 30 percent stake in Gallus. But you have a head and a heart, and, in the end, it was a decision of the head. At the time, my father and I decided that it was the best path for the future. It took a while to digest, but I look back, and I know that it was the right decision.'

It is instructive to look at today's digital printing landscape. Can any major press manufacturer in the sector claim to be a medium-sized, independent, family-run business? All are either major multinational manufacturing corporations themselves or have partnered with one for technology development. Gallus was seeking investment and resources for the development of digital printing technology when it sold an initial stake to Heidelberg in 1999 before completing the sale in 2014.

Global growth

Ferdi Rüesch took over from his father in 1990 and set about accelerating Gallus' global growth by opening subsidiaries in the US, UK, Germany, Australia and Denmark. Toward the end of that decade, sheet-fed offset press manufacturer Heidelberg, which was keen to diversify into the flexo industry, approached Rüesch about the possibility of an acquisition.

Heidelberg, says Rüesch, was attracted not only by Gallus' flexo technology but also by its experience in combination printing, where the company would routinely employ different systems such as



Ferdi Rüesch has retired after a 45-year career

"I look back, and I know that it was the right decision"

flexo, UV flexo, offset and screen on its presses.

'We are at home in the roll-to-roll market; their expertise was in sheet-to-sheet. Our technology would complement the Heidelberg portfolio.'

Having not run the company long, Rüesch was reluctant to endorse a full sale. 'But I knew there was a need for digital printing in the industry and recognized that Gallus needed support in order to develop it,' he says. Gallus had attempted previous forays into digital press development, including with Benny Landa in the mid-1990s.

Heidelberg offered to acquire a 30 percent stake in a deal that included an option to buy the remaining 70 percent in the future. 'I spoke with my father about it. We decided it was a good offer to enter this kind of partnership,' says Rüesch.

The partnership quickly bore fruit, with the joint development of the Labelfire hybrid press and a digital finishing module for the Gallus ECS flexo machine. 'It was an advantage for customers to have one supplier for these different printing technologies. And Gallus benefited hugely from Heidelberg's technology expertise. We wouldn't have been able to do it without Heidelberg's support,' says Rüesch.

Following 15 years of collaboration, Rüesch says it was then the right time for both parties to complete the deal.



Dario Urbinati, Gallus CEO

'It was complicated to divide the R&D costs. Heidelberg had a greater reach worldwide, they could open doors for us at big companies which we otherwise couldn't enter.'

The full acquisition was finalized in 2014. Rüesch became Heidelberg's largest individual shareholder at the time and focused on managing key accounts before becoming a supervisory board member in 2018.

A low point came in 2021 when an attempted acquisition of Gallus by Benpac failed. 'It was the toughest year of my career. We lost some credibility among the converter market and had to spend all our energy regaining trust from our customers. The fact that my team and I were still in place helped this. It was a lost year and a hard time. But we got through it, and now it is not an issue.'

The high points, in contrast, are many. 'My proudest achievements are continuing the work of my father and moving Gallus into the digital printing world with Heidelberg,' says Rüesch. 'We have a place in the digital arena with products that suit the demands of different profiles of label converters. Heidelberg was looking for growth markets, and the digital label market was one of the biggest areas of growth, so our digital technology development with them was a hugely important achievement.'

Rüesch sees Gallus' legacy as a series of pioneering presses in different technology areas. 'Our T180 press set the world standard in combination printing. We were also a pioneer in UV flexo technology, with the industry's first fully servo-driven flexo

press. The RCS330 set a benchmark in roll-to-roll label printing. And our Labelfire hybrid press was launched in 2014. Ten years later, hybrid technology is in fashion. So, we set many benchmarks. My father traveled around the world, so Gallus was early in establishing a global network of customers.

'The label industry allows a very close relationship between supplier and customer. I see this with Gallus but also with our competitors. There is something special about the industry.'

Gallus CEO Dario Urbinati is clear that Heidelberg's acquisition of the company in 2014 has been 'hugely beneficial'. Urbinati joined Gallus in 2007, when Heidelberg was a minority shareholder, and spent nine years with the company before stints at Omet and Actega. He rejoined Gallus as head of sales and service in 2021 before becoming CEO in 2022.

'We had attempted several times as a smaller company to enter the digital space,' he recalls. 'Gallus had shown great ambition and determination to enter the sector. But the timing was not quite right, and the technology was not quite there.'

'Developing digital technology is a different game. It's not the same as conventional press development. The language is different. It is less mechatronic and requires a better understanding of chemistry and software. It is a challenging, expensive and long-term venture. Partnering with Heidelberg — and then later becoming fully owned by the company — was absolutely the correct decision. Gallus is an important pillar in the Heidelberg Group's packaging business, which offers long-term growth potential.'

Strategy

Urbinati's return to Gallus as CEO took place a year after the failed acquisition. 'It had been a difficult time. But it was the catalyst for a rethinking of our strategy. We spoke to our customers and listened to their challenges. They cited labor, input costs, sustainability and industry consolidation. We drilled down to how we could really address these concerns, and it became the starting point for a new development cycle focusing on smart, connected printing technology. We started designing products together with the customer, for the customer.'

'Previously, we primarily designed machines; now, we primarily design modules. If you have a modular framework, it is easier and cheaper for customers to adjust to an ever-changing production environment, and it provides greater investment security. A customer once asked me: "How can I buy a machine which depreciates over 10 years, when I don't



The Gallus One digital press

"We provide the instruments to the customer, and they compose their own symphony"

know what I'm going to print in five years?" I decided to address that challenge.

'The primary task was reducing the TCO barrier to profitable digital labels, which we tackled with the Gallus One. But ensuring long-term success is about more than just machinery. Modularity and flexibility by design must incorporate all the other elements, such as software, service and overall business model and strategy. By incorporating modules such as inkjet, flexo, screen, converting options, it allows standardization of the production environment while allowing flexibility of application, because you can add or remove modules as you please. We call it "System to Compose": we provide the instruments to the customer, and they compose their own symphony.'

'In the last couple of years, this new strategy has been put into reality, so I believe that out of a challenging situation came a very positive outcome. The teams at both Gallus and Heidelberg worked together better than ever to adjust to our customers' challenges.'

'Our success since the new strategy was implemented shows it's the right path. We want System to Compose to set a new industry standard. It's an open system designed for collaboration. We have more than 20 industry partners showing their technology in our Experience Center in St Gallen: Esko, Martin Automatic, Actega, Prati and many more.'

'We have some tremendous products in our pipeline. System to Compose will continue to be updated with new technologies and options for our customers. We have a drive to automate our industry to bring ease of use and flexibility to our products and systems. I am excited by our upcoming technology, and I'm sure the industry will be too.'

A consolidating industry

Two key factors are driving the continued consolidation of the label industry, according to Ferdi Rüesch: a generation shift among converting businesses and the influx of private equity investment into the sector.

'In the 1970s, many industry pioneers founded successful businesses. The second generation then took over 25-odd years later, in the mid-1990s. Now another generation change is happening as that second-generation retires,' he says. 'Secondly, private equity investors have been moving into the industry. From a private equity point of view, the label sector is still fragmented and ripe for consolidation. So there are two significant drivers.'

Rüesch points out that in the US, the tax system encourages the sale of businesses rather than passing them down to the next generation. 'This attitude towards business is now coming to Europe through private equity investment.'

It remains important to carve a niche, he believes. 'Small and niche is good; big and profitable is good. It is the medium-sized companies that are under pressure. The converting industry is still very strong in local and regional markets, but it can be harder to compete in the international market.'



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Bluepoint Tags and Labels: Growth through sustainability

Driven by a clear mission to make a meaningful impact, UK-based Bluepoint Tags and Labels is now a leading name in the tags and labels market. Piotr Wnuk reports

Founded in 2017 by Rob Burton and Iain Pringle, Bluepoint Tags and Labels was born out of a desire to do things differently. Both had long careers in the tags and labels industry, having now worked together for over 30 years, including during their tenure at Longcombe Labels in South Devon. Their work ethic and vision marked their journey for what a customer-centric, innovative label manufacturer could achieve.

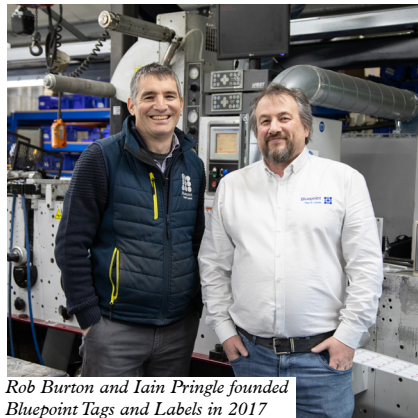
'We both wanted to do things differently,' says Pringle. 'With our extensive knowledge and passion for the industry, we were confident we could offer more than just labels; we could offer a service with a true focus on innovation and customer satisfaction.'

In 2017, Bluepoint Tags and Labels was born. Now based in Totnes, Devon, the company has grown steadily over the years, securing a turnover fast approaching 3 million GBP (3.7 million USD), a testament to the team's dedication and relentless focus on delivering high-quality products. Their story has been one of gradual growth, overcoming the challenges of starting from scratch and competing with established players in the sector.

The first orders came through word of mouth and referrals, as Bluepoint built a reputation for producing tough, reliable tags for harsh environments. With their first press, a second-hand Mark Andy 2200, Burton and Pringle were able to hit the ground running, taking on jobs from industries such as steel, construction and horticulture. But it wasn't just about the machinery. They knew that to succeed, they had to focus on building long-term relationships with customers as well as suppliers.

'We knew that the key to success was in developing strong customer relationships and offering value beyond just the label itself,' says Burton.

The growth was not without its challenges. Early on, they faced issues with expensive machinery and high tooling costs and the nature of the work itself — creating tough, durable tags and labels for demanding environments — meant that every order had to be delivered with precision. The barriers to entry in this industry were high, and starting from



Rob Burton and Iain Pringle founded Bluepoint Tags and Labels in 2017

the ground up meant investing heavily in equipment and materials.

'There were moments where it felt overwhelming, tight margins, cash flow challenges and all the complexities that come with starting a business,' recalls Pringle.

Despite the challenges, its experience and commitment to customer satisfaction allowed Bluepoint to grow rapidly. Within four months of launching, and thanks to a fast uptake in their products, Burton and Pringle ordered a second Mark Andy press to keep up with growing demand. The business moved from a small unit at Exeter Airport, affectionately known as the 'Tin Shed,' to a larger 4,000sqft factory in Totnes by 2019.

This expansion marked the start of a period of significant machinery investment. In 2020, Bluepoint invested further into its production, which included a third complete press. This new machinery came just as the Covid-19 pandemic disrupted operations worldwide, but Bluepoint's agility and commitment to customers allowed it to weather the storm.

Growth driven by innovation and customer service

Burton and Pringle credit the company's growth to a combination of factors. 'First and foremost, we've always emphasized customer service. That's been the cornerstone of our business,' notes Pringle. 'But also, we've never stopped investing in the business. We continually look for new technologies and materials to enhance our offerings.'

The company has quickly embraced new

"We knew we could do things differently. With our extensive knowledge and passion for the industry, we were confident we could offer more than just labels"

developments in the industry, including sustainability practices that have become increasingly important in recent years.

The rapid expansion also saw the company diversifying its product range. From industrial tags for the horticulture, steel and chemicals industries to more specialized tags for the food production sector, Bluepoint became a reliable partner for customers who needed durable and well-designed labels.

'Our growth didn't just come from customer acquisition; it came from listening to our customers and adapting to meet their needs,' Burton states.

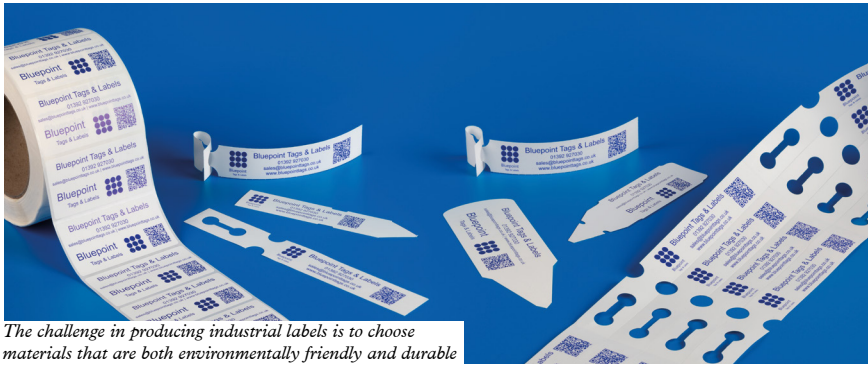
Focus on sustainability

Sustainability has been a focus for Bluepoint Tags and Labels since its inception, but it has taken on even more significance in recent years. The company is keenly aware of the environmental impact of the labels and tags industry, which relies heavily on synthetic materials and plastics.

'We're well aware of the challenges the industry faces in terms of sustainability,' says Pringle. 'But we also believe that we can make a real difference by using recycled and recyclable materials wherever possible.'

Bluepoint's commitment to sustainability is evident in its wide range of sustainable products. Its Recyclaband product, for example, is a wristband made from a PVC-free, sustainably sourced, paper-based stock.

In other applications where the ultimate longevity of plastics isn't required, the company is already utilizing sustainably-sourced, fully recyclable paper-based products that offer a genuine



The challenge in producing industrial labels is to choose materials that are both environmentally friendly and durable

alternative to synthetic materials.

Elsewhere, Bluepoint is using a repurposed glassine liner on several of its product lines, seeing significant carbon savings by utilizing materials in their second life.

Burton and Pringle's choice of materials is not only environmentally friendly but also durable, ensuring that they can still perform well in harsh industrial environments.

'We've been searching for sustainable materials for years, and the market is starting to catch up. Where compostable materials can be used, they are,' Pringle explains.

Bluepoint is committed to keeping plastics in the circular economy for as long

as possible while continuing the search for a sustainable plastic alternative that can withstand the tough demands of industrial environments.

However, to counter the use of unavoidable synthetic materials, Bluepoint has, for a long time, been looking to reduce its own impact on the environment; although there are many carbon offsetting schemes available to businesses, Burton and Pringle chose to make a real difference in the heart of their factory.

In 2024, Bluepoint invested significantly in solar energy by installing solar panels on its factory roof. As a heavy energy user, the company was keen to reduce its reliance on external electricity and lower its carbon footprint.

"With 2.83 MWh being generated from the solar panels in the last three months alone, we've already saved 608.1 kg of CO₂, equivalent to planting 37 trees"

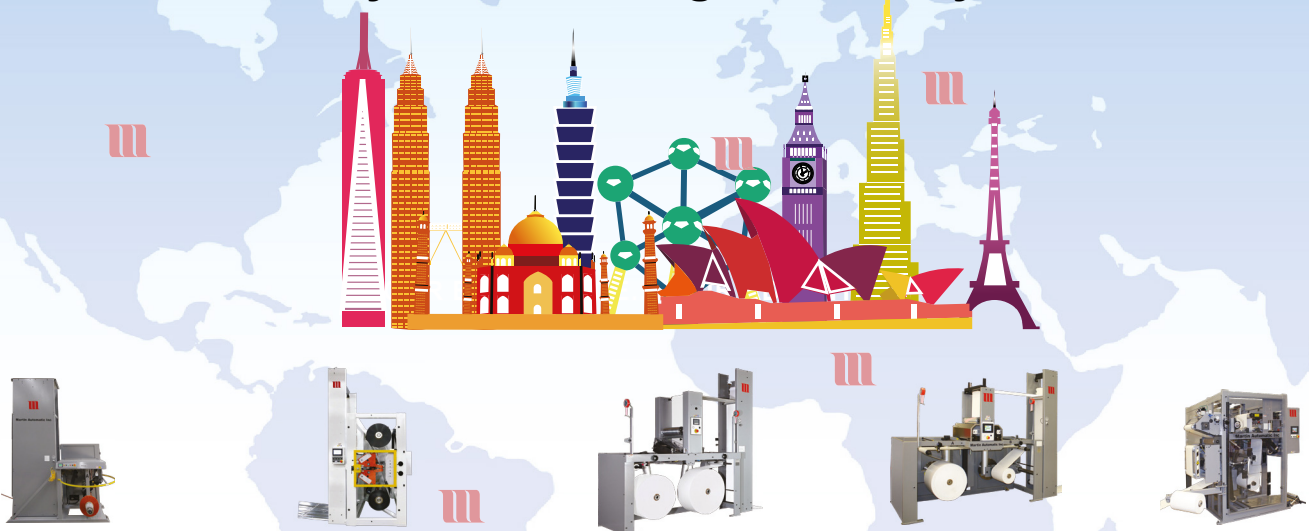
The solar panels have already started to show results. Despite the investment finalized in the middle of the dark, wet Devon winter, the panels already generate 10 percent of the factory's electricity needs.

'With 2.83 MWh being generated in the last three months alone, we've already saved 608.1kg of CO₂, equivalent to planting 37 trees,' says Pringle, highlighting the impact of their solar investment.

When the sunny summer days arrive, the company projects that 100 percent of its energy use will come from its own solar-generated electricity, with an estimated excess of 20 percent being fed back into the grid - seeing a project saving in annual energy costs of more than 40 percent.

In addition to the solar panels,

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Bluepoint has switched to low-energy LED lighting throughout the factory installed EV charging points and switched to a heatpump for factory heating.

'It's all about making a real difference,' Pringle explains. 'We want to do our part in reducing carbon emissions, but we also want to show that it's possible to save money while doing so. The savings on energy costs allow us to reinvest in the business and pass those savings on to our customers.'

Further plans for the company's sustainability initiatives include the complete transition of all company vehicles to electric vehicles (EVs) by 2025. The company's commitment to sustainability is motivated by environmental concerns and the desire to offer customers more eco-friendly options.

'We know that sustainability is increasingly important to our customers, and we want to be able to offer them products that align with their values,' adds Burton.

Expanding horizons

Looking ahead, Bluepoint Tags and Labels has big plans. The company is focused on expanding its reseller base and increasing export sales.

'We've had great success in the UK market, but now we want to extend our reach to international markets,' comments Pringle. 'We're currently working on appointing agents in overseas territories and exploring new opportunities for growth.'

As for the future of product development, Bluepoint is committed to continuing to innovate in the tags and labels sector. The company does not stop exploring new materials and technologies to offer even more sustainable options for its customers.

Further to this, Burton and Pringle have recently invested in a BGM Elite eDSR semi-automated turret rewind machine, adding further automation and efficiencies to the production line.

'We're constantly looking for ways to improve our products and services,' highlights Pringle. 'Whether it's through new materials, better production processes, or by offering more personalized solutions for our customers, we're always looking to push the boundaries.'

With a strong foundation in place and an eye on the future, Bluepoint is well-positioned to continue growing and evolving in the fast-paced and ever-changing tags and labels industry.

The next chapter for the company is all about scaling its operations, both in terms of product offerings and geographical reach.

'We're excited about the opportunities ahead. There's a lot of potential for growth, and we're ready to seize it,' shares Burton.

Since its founding in 2017, Bluepoint Tags and Labels has come a long way. What started as a small business in a 'tin shed' has grown into a successful company with a multi-million-pound turnover. Despite the challenges faced along the way, the company's commitment to quality products, customer service and sustainability has been key to its success.

'The biggest reward for us has been seeing how far we've come. It's been an exciting journey, from working out of a small unit to expanding into a larger factory, all made possible by the fantastic team we have here.'

'We're not done yet, though. We've got big plans for the future, and we can't wait to see where this journey takes us,' concludes Pringle.



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Nosco adds HP Indigo V12 to further its digital journey

The Wisconsin-based full-service pharmaceutical label and packaging company chooses an HP Indigo V12 to uphold its brand promise. Chelsea McDougall reports

Nosco, a full-service pharmaceutical label and packaging company, is located on a sprawling 2,400-acre facility in Pleasant Prairie, Wisconsin, between the Chicago and Milwaukee metro areas.

From the outside, the 271,000sqft building looks like many of the other businesses in the manufacturing park where it's located. But inside, something entirely different is happening.

Inside its headquarters and innovation center, Nosco operates more like a Silicon Valley tech company. The facility houses a fully integrated customer innovation hub and a 'Maker Space' for customer R&D and packaging design. The company's state-of-the-art equipment produces what Nosco describes in a promise to its customers as 'printed packaging that helps our customers save lives, promote health and encourage happiness'.

That brand promise is a tall order for any business, but Nosco lives and breathes it. During the pandemic, it printed labels for the Covid-19 vaccine; it is involved in major pharmaceutical launches nearly every week for prescription drugs that remedy everything from obesity to over-the-counter medications.

Nosco's brand promise translates to a business model that allows the company to continue investing in new equipment and technology – particularly if it fosters greater automation and cost-effectiveness.

This includes its latest investment in an HP Indigo V12 installed in May 2024.

'Our HP Indigo V12 digital press has been a game-changer in delivering high-quality digital labels with unmatched speed and precision,' says Nosco president Craig Curran. 'This press reflects our commitment to leading in the packaging industry, offering advanced capabilities that help our customers achieve their goals efficiently and creatively.'

Digital journey

Nosco services more than 450 customers across various industries, but its primary focus is in the pharmaceutical, natural health and consumer markets. It is one of only about seven US companies specializing in pharmaceutical packaging and is unique in that it can offer its customers a full suite of printed products. The company manufactures in four core markets: labels, flexible packaging, folding cartons and pharmaceutical inserts.

In addition to the HP Indigo V12, Nosco has a slew of equipment from HP Indigo, including nine other machines for labels, cartons and flexible packaging. Nosco has cultivated a close relationship with HP since beginning its digital journey in 2005 and has recently hosted an open house to showcase its V12 to HP customers.

'We're quite vested in the digital print platform,' Curran says. 'I preach the Gospel all the time about why we use digital. The first and foremost reason is that we're minimizing the support infrastructure flexo takes,' like platemaking, plate mounting, ink mixing and other consumables involved with setting up a flexo job.

'And if you think about it,' Curran continues, 'that's where many problems and mistakes happen in the business. For me, getting rid of that support structure was important.'

It's not to say Nosco's flexo assets ended up in the trash heap. The company relies on Mark Andy and MPS equipment to print its



The HP Indigo V12 installed at Nosco

"This press reflects our commitment to leading in the packaging industry, offering advanced capabilities that help our customers achieve their goals efficiently and creatively"

flexo jobs. But it's the 'digital first' mentality where both Nosco and HP Indigo align.

'The labels industry, the way I see it, is the first one to go all the way into the digital revolution,' says Noam Zilbersthai, VP and general manager at HP. 'The V12, powered by the new LEPx technology, will help us on the pathway to a digital revolution.'

'We call it the digital-first mindset right now. When you go to print, the mindset is whether the job will be produced on flexo or analog equipment. Let's consider digital if it's a small volume, if it's low volume or short runs. But now, the HP Indigo V12 enables us to go to unprecedented speeds with productivity and efficiencies that we have never experienced before.'

Nosco says its HP Indigo V12 is running label jobs over 15,000ft. Nosco's press can run up to 400ft/min in six colors. Jobs shorter than 15,000ft will be run on other HP Indigo equipment at Nosco sites. 'That's a pretty broad window there, but that's the impact of speed of 400ft/min that creates that window. The machine has been productive for us. It produces what two to three HP Indigo 6Ks can produce in a day. We're excited to take our medium to long runs and move them over to the HP Indigo V12,' Curran says.

Finishing on the HP Indigo V12 occurs nearline on A B Graphic and Grafotronic equipment.

Nosco is a subsidiary of Holden Industries, which has been employee-owned since 2007 and has more than 650 employees. Nosco moved to its Wisconsin location in 2021, and also has facilities in Illinois, New York and Pennsylvania.



Scan the QR code to learn more about Nosco



From distributor to manufacturer: 50 years of Repacorp

Since becoming the sole owner of Repacorp decades ago, Rick Heint has led the company with a mindset of constant change and reinvestment. Selah Zighelboim reports

When Rick Heint became the sole owner of Repacorp in 1990, the company did not manufacture labels.

Instead, it was a firm representing printing companies as a distributor, hence the name 'Repacorp'. Under Heint's leadership, the company changed direction and bought its first press just a few years later.

Repacorp has since grown. It now operates 45 flexo presses and 12 digital presses. It has expanded into RFID and flexible packaging and boasts one of the country's most extensive stock label programs, with over 800 items in its catalog. Repacorp now has approximately 60m USD in annual sales and employs more than 200 people.

Today, Heint estimates that about 30 percent of its business is blank labels, while printed labels, RFID and more, make up the remaining 70 percent. Repacorp sells through resellers, and its products are used in the manufacturing, medical, food and beverage, nutraceuticals and cannabis industries.

'We're getting into almost every industry,' Heint says.

Heint is the CEO of Repacorp. His brother, Tony Heint, joined the company as a salesman in 1988 and now serves as president. Rick Heint's three children, Rochelle Heint Bednarczyk, Andy Heint and Nick Heint, work as vice presidents of MIS, digital and shrink sleeve labeling, respectively.

'I always thought that if we could ever get this company to 25 million US dollars, we would have really accomplished something,' Rick Heint says. 'When we hit 25 million USD, I couldn't believe it, then 30, then 40, then 45, then 50, then 55, then 60. Who knows where it will go from here?'

History

Rick Heint joined Repacorp as a salesman in 1978, four years after its founding. The initial owner, Jim Adams, had worked for Avery Dennison, which was shifting to focus on its automotive business at the time. As a result, Avery Dennison passed its other customers on to other companies, including Repacorp, which Adams founded

in 1974 to handle this business from Avery Dennison.

Repacorp started as a reseller for converters. After becoming the sole owner, Rick Heint transitioned the company from reselling into label manufacturing because he was frustrated with the service he got from the converters Repacorp represented. Some of these companies would deliver late or make other mistakes.

'I finally said, "I can do this myself,"' Rick Heint adds.

In 1992, the company bought its first press, a Markem LP 8400, a 4-color thermal transfer press that used rotary dies and could also laminate.

From there, Rick Heint continuously grew and reinvested in the company.

Rick Heint started with a stock blank label program. Whenever his clients asked him for a new type of blank label, he added it to Repacorp's stock label offerings. Advertising helped grow the stock label program as well. The program now includes thermal transfer labels, direct thermal labels, RFID labels, laser sheets, 'Made in the USA' labels and much more.

'Every time I got an order for a thermal or thermal transfer label, I added it to my catalog,' Rick Heint recalls. 'Now we have

4x1s. Now we have 4x2s. Now we have 4x3s, because people need it.'

He expanded into printed labels because that's what customers wanted.

Giving clients what they want has been a key component of Repacorp's business approach. This same mentality shaped the company's process for adding new technology, which it did often.

'Every time we turned around, there was something new,' Heint says. 'We'd go to the trade shows and say we've got to get into that. We kept trying to create more product lines because we were selling through resellers and distributors, (to) give them more to sell, and we had to be more competitive.'

Change and reinvestment

Rick Heint estimates that 50 percent of the company's revenue comes from its flexo presses, 30 percent from digital technology, 10 percent from RFID, and everything else combined makes up about 10 percent.

Repacorp's 57 flexo and digital presses include Mark Andy, Durst, Xeikon and Bobst machines. Its facilities house fan folders, turrets and trim-away systems.

Heint says that, outside of Repacorp's presses and finishing equipment, some of

"Every time we turned around, there was something new. We'd go to the trade shows, and we'd say we got to get into that"



L-R: Nick Heint, Rochelle Heint Bednarczyk, Andy Heint, Rick Heint and Tony Heint



Martin Automatic machinery at Repacorp's building in Tipp City

the company's most crucial machinery is its platemaking machines, which it has at three facilities. If a plate breaks, Repacorp can make a new one in an hour rather than waiting several days for a new one.

The company's newest machine is a 2.3m USD Bobst hybrid press. The press has seven colors for digital and five for flexo and has automatic die changers. It runs at 300 ft/min, is capable of 1,200 DPI and can print up to 20in wide.

New ventures

Repacorp got into RFID in 2005. The company had its own RFID press custom-built from a Comco press that could print six colors. It was a machine that no one else had. At the time, Walmart had started requiring RFID tags for its products but reversed this requirement in 2007, leading many converters to stop producing RFID labels. Repacorp continued with the technology, as its RFID press could also print regular labels, and the company was supplying the Department of Defense with RFID labels. Repacorp now has five RFID machines.

Repacorp began its shift into digital in 2007. EFI had recently acquired UV inkjet manufacturer Jetrion — its first venture into the labels market — and approached Repacorp with a partnership opportunity to test out its new digital label equipment. Jetrion also had a contact that could provide Repacorp with laser die-cutters, of which Repacorp was an early adopter.

Repacorp's digital offerings have since grown. The company can now provide orders of at least 100 labels and can ship out anywhere from two days to two weeks, depending on the customer's location and the press schedule.

'The good thing about our equipment mix is that the digital allows us to grow our flexo,' says Andy Heinel, vice president of digital printing. 'As the product grows on the digital, eventually it moves into flexo

equipment because flexo can run faster and wider.'

Digital also opened the company to other avenues, such as shrink sleeves and flexible packaging, the latter of which is the newest undertaking.

Getting into new ventures is no simple task, Andy Heinel notes. Doing so requires huge amounts of learning and time, as well as significant financial investment.

Flexible packaging, Repacorp's newest business area, was particularly challenging to enter because of the new equipment needed. Repacorp has a 30-inch HP press for flexible packaging printing and other machinery for finishing, pouching and zippering. Acquiring its flexible packaging technology cost Repacorp more than 5M USD.

Buying new equipment has become more expensive over the years. Repacorp benefits from Rick Heinel's long-term priority of reinvesting in the company.

'We're a privately held company still, so every dollar that we put into it, it's not private equity money. It's our money that we're reinvesting back into the company, our employees and ourselves,' Andy Heinel says.

Repacorp has also grown through acquisitions like OEI, Aladdin Label and T&T Graphics. These acquisitions have also added locations — in addition to its headquarters in Tipp City, Ohio, Repacorp has offices and facilities in Miamisburg, Ohio; Franklin, Wisconsin; and Phoenix, Arizona.

Whenever the company makes a new acquisition, the team considers what it will add — new equipment, location, customer base — and, of course, how much it will cost. Repacorp anticipates acquiring more and potentially adding another location farther south.

That constant reinvestment in the company, and the constant change to meet the demands of the day, is a principle that

"We're a privately held company still, so every dollar that we put into it, it's not private equity money. It's our money that we're reinvesting back into the company and our employees and ourselves"

has guided Rick Heinel's leadership. The company has invested between 3 and 5M USD annually for the past seven or eight years.

'You have got to constantly look at what people need and what their packaging needs are and what their labeling needs are,' Rick Heinel says. 'If we would have stayed in blank labels, we'd have been out of business years ago.'

A family enterprise

Rick Heinel had quadruple bypass surgery last fall. He returned to the office on October 15, 2024, about six weeks after the surgery.

That same day was his 70th birthday, and his grandchildren came to his office to wish him a happy birthday.

Heinel says seeing his family when he comes to work is the main reason he hasn't retired yet. However, after his bypass surgery, he thinks he'll retire within the next two years.

Rick Heinel never intended for Repacorp to become a family business.

His brother, Tony Heinel, joined the business right after graduating from The Ohio State University, about a decade after he did.

Then, his daughter Rochelle Heinel joined. She had been working at a different company and didn't like it, so she asked her father more than once for a job working for him. Andy Heinel came on board next, and finally, Nick Heinel.

'If they weren't involved in the company, I would have sold it by now,' Rick Heinel says. 'I keep coming to work because I get to work with my family. I get to share with them and learn what they're doing.'



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Beontag opens new Ohio facility

The 80m USD factory is expected to be able to ship up to 2.9b sqft of graphic and label materials by the end of 2025. Selah Zighelboim reports

Beontag's new 80m USD manufacturing facility in Trotwood, Ohio, does not only represent the company's biggest investment into the US market. The 200,000sqft facility is also Beontag's biggest investment in its international expansion.

Beontag, a global provider of pressure-sensitive adhesives and smart tag technologies such as RFID and NFC, has rapidly grown over the past decade, adding locations worldwide. It is now the second-largest RFID label manufacturer in the world. The company has a presence in over 40 countries, over 2,000 employees and more than 20 facilities.

Beontag is also welcoming a new CEO. Alejandro Quiroz Centeno brings 30 years of experience and a background as an international business leader at companies including Prysmian, IDEX Corporation and Aptiv. He is replacing Ricardo Lobo, who served as CEO for nine years.

With the new Ohio factory, Beontag aims to enhance its presence in the US and scale up production with more efficient coaters, slitters and sheeters for roll labelstock, as well as with RFID technology.

By the end of 2025, the facility is expected to be able to ship up to 2.9 billion sqft of graphic and label materials and 3 billion RFID tags annually and to employ more than 300 workers.

The facility already has an 80in coater in production. When fully operational, the coater will be able to produce 50 million feet of material monthly. Beontag has also invested in its first round of slitters and sheeters, which are already operational.

Beontag has also acquired a second coater and RFID equipment, expected to be in operation by the end of Q1 of 2025. The facility has room for a third coater as well, which Beontag wants to add eventually. The Trotwood building's RFID facility is opening in March.

The factory is expected to quadruple Beontag's output capacity in North America.

Beontag has long been exporting products to clients in the US, particularly RFID products. This facility will allow them to provide those clients with better service.

'We knew that to maximize our potential with planned North American expansion, we would need to expand and enhance our operations with state-of-the-art equipment, the best people and a commitment to best-in-class facilities for



From left: Ricardo Lobo, Suchi Srinivasan, Pedro Christ and Guilherme Bruschi cut the ribbon at the grand opening of Beontag's new facility in Ohio

"We knew that to maximize our potential with planned North American expansion, we would need to expand and enhance our operations"

a wide variety of solutions,' says Thiago Horta, chief operating officer at Beontag.

Grand opening

The new Trotwood, Ohio, facility hosted a grand opening on October 16, 2024. Suppliers, customers, shareholders and local officials attended the event, where they viewed the facility's machinery and learned about Beontag.

Lobo, who served as Beontag's CEO at the time, started the event with a speech about the company's values: community, sustainability and advancing women's roles in the printing industry.

Yvette Paige, mayor of Trotwood, attended the ceremony. Paige hopes the new facility will bring generational wealth to Trotwood, a suburb of Dayton with a population of just over 20,000.

'What you see today did not look like this years ago. We had an industrial farm that was barren,' Paige said.

'But now look at it,' she continued. 'We are exploding in Trotwood, but we couldn't do it without the partners that wanted to come here and be with us.'

Global growth

Beontag, which marked its 40th anniversary last year, is going through a period of growth as it transitions from a Brazilian company to a global one.

This transformation began in 2011, when BTG Pactual, a Brazilian financial business, invested in the company. Beontag was

known then as CCRR; it changed its name to Beontag in 2021. The company had formed from a merger between labelstock manufacturer Colacril and converter RR Etiquetas. BTG Pactual's investment enabled the company's growth — first into RFID production and then into a series of acquisitions.

The company's first acquisitions were in Brazil with a materials distributor Syntpaper and office label converter Pimaco. Then, it expanded globally, acquiring Digital Tags in France, LabID in Italy and more, eventually adding the Ohio-based Technicote in 2022.

The Technicote acquisition was Beontag's first foray into the North American labelstock market. Technicote's former facilities in Ohio and Indiana and a California distribution center now operate under the Beontag brand. Technicote's Miamisburg, Ohio, site has been discontinued, and its operations and expertise have been consolidated into the new Trotwood facility.

Beontag identified the location for this new Trotwood factory in late 2023. The location was chosen due to its proximity to Technicote's former facility in Miamisburg, Ohio, the quality of the facility itself and support from local officials.



Scan the QR code to learn more about Beontag



Market focus: Mexico

With Labelexpo Mexico 2025 taking place in Guadalajara in April, James Quirk looks at the challenges and opportunities driving this unique market

The label market in Mexico is somewhat of an outlier compared to the rest of Latin America. A country of more than 130 million people, Mexico has a large domestic consumer base and a robust manufacturing sector. It also boasts a strong export industry and the presence of the world's largest consumer market, the US, to its north, which gives the Mexican label sector a unique dynamic.

It is increasingly common to find label converting operations often, but not always, part of international groups, boasting world-class technology and production quality and geared to serving the US market.

And yet it is also a market in need of professionalization, according to the FTA Mexico, which was founded 18 months ago to address the issue.

Growth in Mexico has been strong in recent years, particularly due to the nearshoring trend, which has seen international brands set up factories in Mexico to serve the US market with shorter supply chains.

Growth

According to Mordor Intelligence, the value of the label market in Mexico is estimated at 1.31 billion USD in 2025. It is expected to reach 1.62 billion USD by 2030, at a CAGR of 4.24 percent during the forecast period (2025-2030). The analyst cites food, beverage and cosmetics as sectors particularly driving growth.

Data from Mexico's National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI) has shown growth in the food and beverage sectors in recent years. It estimated the food industry's production value in 2022 to be just over 13 percent higher than the previous year, while the beverage sector grew by 14 percent in the same period. Such rises in domestic production boost demand for labels and packaging.

Export markets have also been booming in recent years. According to the World Trade Organization, in 2022, Mexico exported goods valued at around 578.19 billion USD, a 54.6 percent increase from 2016.

The nearshoring trend has grown significantly since the pandemic and is a contributing factor to rising exports. Local label converters are taking advantage, with increasing numbers producing labels for goods destined for export to the US.

'The nearshoring trend has brought international manufacturers to Mexico, and this has been a benefit to the economy and a benefit to label converters who can label these products for export to the US,' says Keren Becerra, operations director of Mexican label converter Etiquetas Lobo Impresores and president of Anpack, the Latin American association of packaging and labels manufacturers. 'There are even converters in Mexico who export most of their production across the border. Border cities are showing strong economic growth. It has increased demand not only for prime labels for sectors such as pharma, cosmetics and electronics but also for logistics labels.'

A knock-on effect of this trend, according to FTA Mexico president Martin Maldonado, is increasing pressure on the local industry to professionalize its processes, operations and people.

'The industry in Mexico is still in need of professionalization in terms of training and certifications,' he explains. 'The nearshoring trend has added pressure to professionalize because the global brands who have set up manufacturing facilities in Mexico to serve the US market require converters to meet certain quality and

Anpack to host awards during Labelexpo Mexico

Anpack, the Latin American association of manufacturers of packaging and labels, was born out of, and has replaced, AmetiQ, whose focus was purely on the label sector. It has 50 converter members. 'We wanted to widen the focus to include packaging converters as well,' explains Keren Becerra, president of the association. Anpack is part of the L9 Group of global label associations, and is a member since last year of the Mexican Consejo Coordinador Empresarial (CCE), which brings together associations from different manufacturing sectors to lobby government and share best practice.

Anpack, as an association partner of Labelexpo Mexico, will hold an awards ceremony alongside Label Pack magazine on the second evening of the show, and winners will be entered into the World Label Awards.

"Mexican converters are investing in technology. There is a strong trend toward growth"

operational standards in order to guarantee the quality of their products.'

It was in recognition of this need for professionalization that FTA Mexico, headquartered in Guadalajara, was founded in 2023. The initiative was driven by a group of industry suppliers, led by DuPont, which pitched the FTA in the US to set up a branch of the Flexographic Technical Association in Mexico. Among its 42 supplier members are Comexi, Esko, Flint Group, Gallus, Hybrid Software and Mark Andy.

'These are top-level companies who understood the importance of an association such as the FTA and knew the benefits of the technical education and standards that it could bring to the Mexican market,' says Maldonado.

'Due to Mexico's proximity to the US, the FTA was always a reference point for the local industry. Converters here have always been keen to be a part of it, but there is often a language barrier, which makes it hard to take advantage of the conferences, studies and research. And there is the problem of distance.'

FTA Mexico will certify converters and host forums and roadshows around the country. It has the same objectives and philosophy as its US counterpart, says Maldonado: to aid the professionalization of companies and individuals in the country's flexo sector to grow the local industry.

Legacy

If nearshoring is a legacy of the pandemic, so too is strong growth in online sales with the knock-on effect of increased demand for shipping labels.

'Online shopping has been booming in Mexico since the pandemic,' says Becerra. In 2023, Mexico's retail market surged to 314.2 billion USD, a 22 percent increase from the previous year, as reported by Euromonitor. The country's e-commerce retail sales rose from 28.3 billion USD in 2022 to 36.3 billion USD in 2023. A steady growth trajectory is now widely anticipated, with a CAGR of



Labelexpo Mexico 2025 will take place in Guadalajara in April

12 percent expected to propel e-commerce retail sales to 66.3 billion USD by 2028.

A further shift in the local market has occurred since the pandemic. With commercial print businesses struggling during lockdowns, many wider web converters moved into label and packaging production.

'There are many more label converters operating in the market in recent years. There has been an explosion in competition,' says Becerra. 'Many commercial printers have moved into label production, seeing opportunities in the market. Their businesses suffered greatly during the pandemic, whereas the label sector remained strong. This encouraged them to explore the market and diversify into label printing.'

'Part of the motivation is the same as what has encouraged label converters to move into sectors such as flexible packaging — helping to serve existing clients with the products they need. The result has been an increasing homogenization of the market.'

Etiquetas Lobo Impresores, for its part, serves a diverse array of end-user sectors, with Becerra citing food and pharmaceuticals as particularly important markets. Its export business has also been rising in recent years, she reports.

A strong tequila export industry is a driver of interest in GM's high-specification finishing equipment, says the company's global sales manager, Jos Kabouw, who describes Mexico as a 'crazily competitive market with many players.' GM is represented in Mexico by local agent EXI.

'Labor continues to be cheap but highly skilled, so as a result, there is not a high level of automation,' says Kabouw. 'For example, converters in Europe and the US have been quick to adopt GM's auto-knife box for automatic setting of the slitting knives, but it has been a bit slower in Mexico. Speed is often not crucial for local converters. Usually, the natural trend is for converters to install faster machines, but this doesn't happen quite so much in Mexico.'

'The local economy benefits from the many Mexicans who work

“Many commercial printers have moved into label production, seeing opportunities in the market”

in the US and send the money to family back home,' he continues. 'This helps to generate wealth and increase consumption. So, despite a political background that is like many other countries in Latin America, Mexico is not affected the same way.'

'The US is a big export market, and this increases quality demands on Mexican converters, which in turn raises the quality standards in Mexico itself,' Kabouw says. 'I've visited many label converters in Mexico and the US, and the Mexican companies often work to better standards. The top level of converters in Mexico are world-class in technology and production, but not in automation, due to the cheap and skilled labor force at their disposal.'

FTA president Martin Maldonado, who has more than 25 years of experience in the Mexican printing industry, believes there is optimism in the local market. 'Mexican converters are investing in technology. There is a strong trend towards growth, which can be seen in the number of sales into the country by equipment manufacturers.'

One crucial challenge Maldonado identifies is recruitment.

'There is a struggle to attract young people into the sector. There are many factors, but one has been a lack of representation from the industry to promote itself to students and show them what it has to offer. FTA Mexico has set up agreements with six universities and various local governments to get closer to young people and attract them to a career in the industry.'

FTA Mexico, an association partner of the show, will exhibit at Labelexpo Mexico 2025 and promote its industry initiatives and events. 'We are very happy to be partnering with Labelexpo Mexico. We want to support it and see it continue to grow. There was a lack of this type of industry-focused event in Mexico.'

Labelexpo Mexico 2025 preview webinar

Labels & Labeling hosted a Labelexpo Mexico 2025 preview webinar on March 25, which discussed trends in the local label market and the technology exhibited at the show. Visit www.labelsandlabeling.com/videos to watch the recording.



Labelexpo Mexico will be hosted April 1-3 at Expo Guadalajara. Scan the QR code to learn more





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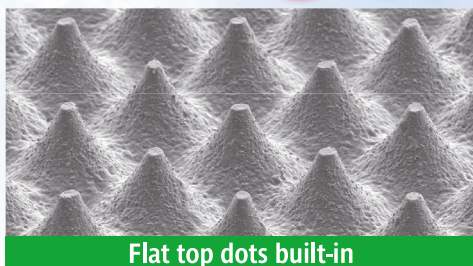


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Growing against all odds

During nearly 50 years as a family-run business, Argentine converter Borsellino Impresos has created a culture of hard work, high quality and extraordinary levels of diversification. James Quirk reports

When Pedro Borsellino, co-founder and sales manager of the Rosario, Argentina-based converter that bears his family name, gives a presentation to prospective clients, he always begins with the same slide: an image of turbulent seas and crashing waves with the words 'Crecer contra viento y marea'. The Spanish idiom translates literally as 'growing against wind and waves' and carries the sense of growing against all the odds. Over the past five decades, the company has borne all the economic chaos Argentina has thrown at it — hyperinflation, import restrictions and currency controls — not only surviving but thriving.

From humble beginnings as a letterpress printer in the mid-1970s, Borsellino Impresos has grown into a fully integrated behemoth offering design, pre-press, printing and application services, with more than 120 different production lines covering everything from labels, shrink sleeves, flexible packaging and cartons through to point-of-sale promotions, brochures, envelopes, direct marketing materials and books. Now, it is preparing for the next phase of its relentless expansion, with a new 15,000sqm factory being added to its two existing facilities, which are due for inauguration later this year.

History

The history of Borsellino Impresos is not just that of a company but of a family, and even of the immigrant experience of fleeing

“We are printers, we know how to print. Because of this experience, it has always been easy for us to move into new markets”

poverty in Europe to find a better life in the new world.

Maria and Antonio Borsellino, Pedro's mother and father, arrived in Argentina from Sicily in 1950, equipped only with 'good immigrant values of the importance of education and hard work,' as Pedro Borsellino puts it. They were part of a wave of hundreds of thousands of Italians settling in the country in the aftermath of the Second World War.

Maria and Antonio bore two sons, Francisco and Pedro, who founded what was then known as Borsellino Hermanos as young men in their 20s, and two daughters, Antonia and Vicenta, who joined their brothers as partners in the company shortly afterward, as did Maria.

Beginning in 1976, the fledgling company's early years were spent printing basic products on old letterpress machines. Production, and diversification, ramped up in the early 1980s with the inauguration of the company's first proper plant and the installation of a Heidelberg Kord 64 offset press.

Borsellino Impresos added a continuous forms press later that decade to diversify further. The 1990s, by which time the company had also developed a thriving

editorial printing business with binding equipment from Muller Martini, saw it add new capabilities with the installation of its first 5-color offset press with in-line varnish before a move into label production took place with the addition of a Comco Cadet flexo machine.

In the 2000s, Borsellino Impresos invested in offset presses from Heidelberg and Gallus and added a second facility of 9,500sqm. It also moved into digital printing with the installation of sheet-fed and roll-fed HP Indigo presses. More recent investments have included flexo presses from Nilpeter, shrink sleeve production equipment from Karlville and finishing machines from Cartes and Rotoflex. Two additional machines are currently on order: another Nilpeter flexo press and the new HP Indigo 200K for flexible packaging production.

'We are the only company in Latin America that is completely integrated, offering everything that a brand needs from design through to when the product is on the supermarket shelf,' says Pedro Borsellino. 'We target smaller companies who need smaller runs of products with high quality and variable data. Our target is to offer the best campaigns. We want to



Borsellino Impresos began printing in-mold labels five years ago using materials from Yupo

print high-quality, beautifully finished products. Anyone who needs our services, we are happy to help them.'

Borsellino cites cosmetics and pharmaceuticals as particularly good markets, given their need for added value. However, the company's output is so diversified that there are almost no markets in which it doesn't participate. Borsellino is the sales manager, but he has no sales team to manage. 'We don't have salespeople: all our sales come from word of mouth,' he says. 'The only marketing strategy we have is to tell the truth, respect our clients and give them good service. Our advantage is that we print very well and with great quality.'

A recent venture has been a move into in-mold label production, for which Borsellino Impresos began a partnership with synthetic material manufacturer Yupo five years ago. 'We see a great deal of potential in in-mold label production,' says Pedro Borsellino. 'It is a very recyclable material, which is a big advantage. Yupo advised us how to print and cut the labels. They have provided great support.'

Flexible packaging is another format for which Borsellino has seen increased demand in recent years. 'Our label customers increasingly request flexible packaging instead of labels,' he says. 'As the materials become more recyclable, this will only continue. Brands like that it saves them money by eliminating the need for the rest of the packaging, glass for example.'

'We are printers, we know how to print,' says Pedro Borsellino of the company's philosophy of diversification. 'Because of this experience, it has always been easy for us to move into new markets. The challenge is how to finish the different products.'

'Diversification comes from our culture as a business and our desire to give our clients what they need. Whether it's one product or a million, it doesn't matter. So whenever they need some kind of printed product, they think of Borsellino. We also think about what the customers of our clients want, this helps to inform our business too. And of course, in an environment that can be economically unstable, diversification is a way of helping to protect the company.'

Family

Borsellino Impresos remains a family-run enterprise. Antonia Borsellino is administration manager, and Vicenta Borsellino oversees regulatory compliance. The four Borsellino siblings, Maria's children, are now three following the death of Francisco, who was operations manager as well as co-founder alongside his brother Pedro, last year. Maria, their mother, worked tirelessly in various roles until she died in 2019. Of the 11 members of the next generation, seven are working at the company.

Pedro Borsellino gives short shrift to the suggestion that some family-run converters can find the integration of the new generation a challenge. 'It hasn't been a problem,' he emphasizes. 'The culture of the company is non-negotiable. Anyone who doesn't want to work hard, the door is open and they can leave.'

He practices what he preaches. Approaching five decades in the business, Pedro Borsellino is in the office at 7 am every day. 'We were brought up in a hard-working immigrant culture,' he explains. 'My parents were always working.'

Borsellino Impresos consistently reinvests much of its profit into the business. This has facilitated its expansive investments in new technology over the years and funding a further widening of its footprint: a new 15,000sqm factory will be inaugurated in the middle of 2025. The move is prompting a reorganization of the production spaces.

The company's original factory will continue to house letterpress presses and application equipment. The second 9,500sqm site will be dedicated to all commercial production, while the new facility will produce labels, shrink sleeves and flexible packaging.



Francisco Borsellino passed away last year. Maria Borsellino died in 2019

“The culture of the company is non-negotiable. Anyone who doesn't want to work hard, the door is open and they can leave”



Clockwise from left: Antonia Borsellino, Vicenta Borsellino, Francisco Borsellino, Pedro Borsellino and Maria Borsellino

Export hope under new government

The election last year of president Javier Milei, a libertarian economist who has brought down previously rampant inflation, cut trade restrictions and eased currency controls, has been greeted with optimism by label converters in Argentina. 'With the new government, we have the opportunity to open ourselves up to the rest of Latin America and the rest of the world,' says Pedro Borsellino. 'I want us to continue to grow as a company, and we have high hopes for the export market. We are ready to sell to anywhere in the world. We used to have clients in Paraguay and Brazil, but it became impossible to export the goods and to receive money from abroad. Now, with the new government, there is hope.'



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SHEET-FED AUTOMATION PUSHES IML AND WET GLUE FORWARD



Sheet-fed technology for the production of wet glue and in-mold labels has moved forward in leaps and bounds in terms of automation, efficiency and the ability to add value during in-line production. Andy Thomas-Emans reports

The great bulk of in-mold (IML) and wet glue labels are printed on sheet-fed offset presses. For some high-volume markets such as metallized beer labels, gravure is the preferred choice, and there is some in-line flexo production of IML. Still, generally, sheet-fed offset is dominant for both wet glue and in-mold labeling formats.

Wet glue labels are experiencing strong growth in industrialized markets. 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 over year from 2013.

Finat's quarterly Radar survey of trends in the European market showed wet glue labels surged by 14.6 percent year over year in Q3 2024, though this was still slightly behind Q3 2022 levels. This represents lingering economic uncertainties and cautious consumer spending, which are impacting the broader package printing sector. The beer segment in Europe is the

biggest driver of wet-glue growth, bolstered by continued demand for premium and non-alcoholic beer categories.

IML continues to be a strong niche market. It's share of the global labels market has hovered unchanged at around 2 percent for many years, with the European IML market estimated to total around 24,000 tons per year. Finat's Q3 Radar report shows IML recording a modest year-on-year growth of 0.5 percent.

In Europe, food remains the largest end-use segment for IML, largely due to its extensive application in products such as margarines, yellow fats, ice creams, yogurts and salads, where the IML format dominates. A slowdown in the food segment primarily impacted year-on-year growth in Europe. At the same time, industrial chemicals, the second-largest application for IML, experienced a slight upturn in demand driven by the ongoing post-pandemic recovery in this sector.

Sustainability is expected to drive the growth of IML in Europe as brands look for

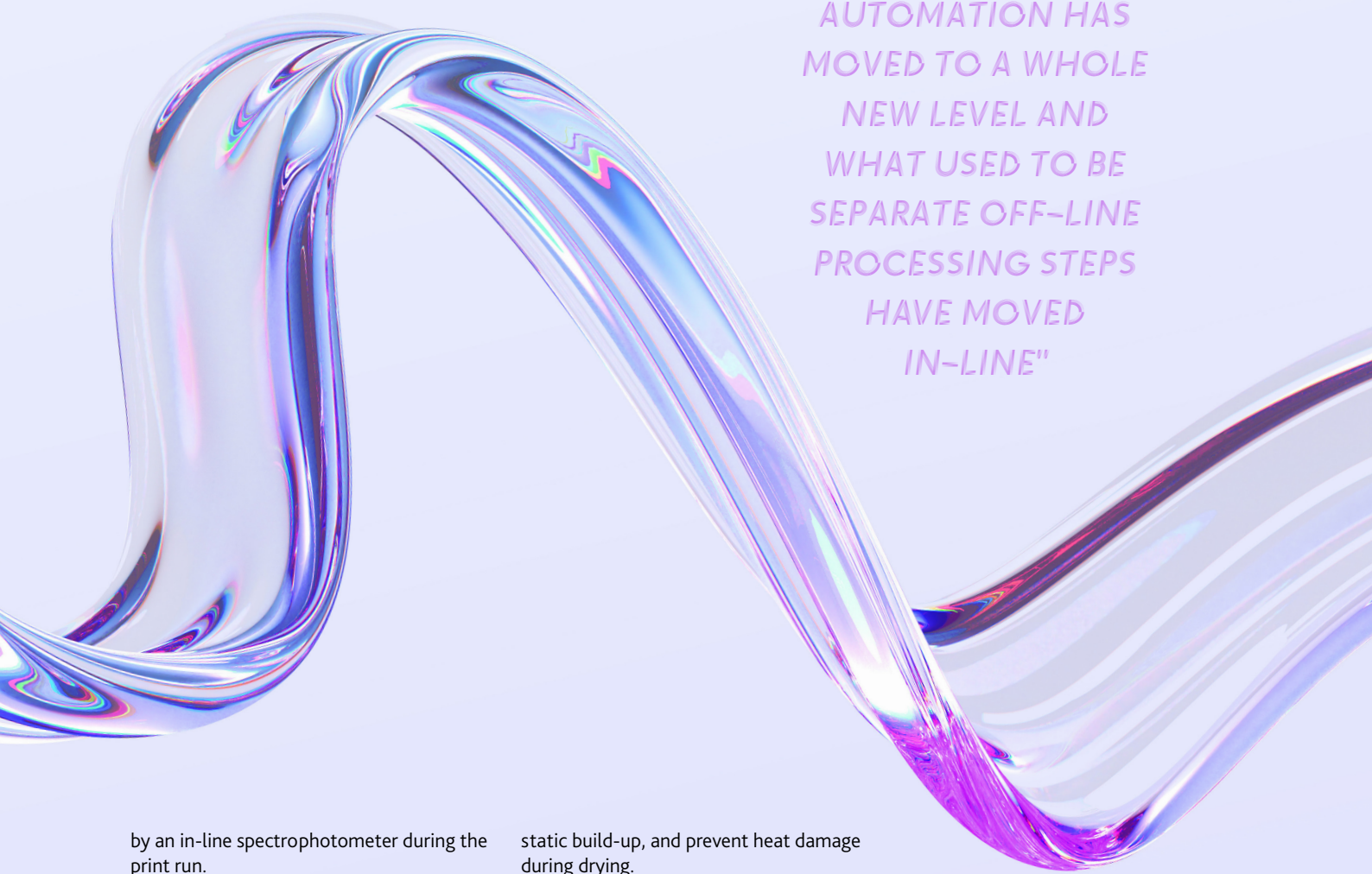
mono-material packaging. Sustainability concerns could also boost wet glue label growth.

TECHNOLOGY LANDSCAPE

The sheet-fed offset technology landscape has undergone an enormous change since L&L looked at the technology in depth a decade ago. Press speeds have almost doubled, up to 22,000 sheets/hour (s/h), yielding a printed area equivalent to 2.4 soccer pitches every hour. Automation has moved to a whole new level, and what used to be separate off-line processing steps have moved in-line.

Sheet-fed offset presses dedicated to label printing might typically consist of more than seven print units, a flexo coater or double coater, an extended delivery and optionally an in-line cold foil unit.

Seven print units allow label converters to move from a CMYK+spot color workflow to an extended color gamut (ECG) workflow, where Pantone colors are simulated from CMYK+OGV and controlled



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IN-LINE"

by an in-line spectrophotometer during the print run.

This allows multiple SKUs with any number of Pantone colors to be ganged across the same sheet, allowing efficient handling of shorter runs.

Print units do not have to be washed up between jobs, dramatically cutting changeover times.

CIP4-driven ink key automation and pre-set computer-controlled dampening curves have further reduced make-ready times and waste.

The technical requirements for in-mold labels and wet glue cut and stack are very different from a printing point of view. Label papers, supplied either in sheets or from the reel, are generally between 70 and 90 g/sqm, coated and uncoated, while in-mold films are supplied as a reel stock with a thickness of 50-90 microns in white or transparent variants.

Modern sheet-fed presses can rapidly switch from sheet feeding to reel-based production and back again with minimal manual intervention.

In-mold label films require specially configured sheet handling and drying packages to protect the film, eliminate

static build-up, and prevent heat damage during drying.

Post printing, press manufacturers like Heidelberg and KBA have also developed off-line rotary die-cutting and automated blanking technologies.

Rotary cutting delivers major productivity gains compared to flatbed, while automated blanking removes the manual stripping element from the sheet processing workflow.

Heidelberg and KBA are two of the leading players in the 3B format sheet-fed offset wet glue/IML sector, and looking at their print and processing technology in more detail helps illustrate the broader points outlined above.

KOENIG & BAUER

Koenig & Bauer's commitment to the labels sector is demonstrated by a specially configured Rapida 106 X at its Radebeul Customer Experience Centre. Printing at 22,000 s/h, the press is configured with an RS 106 X reel-to-sheet feeder, seven printing units, an in-line coater, extended delivery and a cold foil module.

In-line flexo coaters are now standard equipment on offset presses specified for

labels. These flexo units have reached a high level of automation to match the rest of the modern offset press system.

On the Rapida 106 X, all functions of the CPC+ fully automatic coating plate changer can be controlled from the press console. There is essentially no longer a difference between printing and coating plate changing: all manual intervention is eliminated, no tools are required, and changing times are identical.

The AniloxLoader, meanwhile, allows three different anilox rollers to be stored in the magazine on the coater and selected at the press of a button. The anilox rollers in the magazine can be swapped at any time to provide a high level of flexibility for different coating applications.

In-line cold foiling is another increasingly common addition to labels-specific sheet-fed offset presses. Koenig & Bauer has developed the FoilTronic cold foil module for this purpose, further extending finishing options to include 3D effects, anti-counterfeiting features and other

LABEL ACADEMY



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The label today is not only an information tool, but a vital product ambassador as brands compete to hold consumer attention. This has created huge demand for ever more creative embellishment and decoration techniques.

Label Embellishments and Special Applications explores the detail, with an in-depth overview of current enhancement techniques and processes, such as foiling, embossing, and new smart printing technologies.

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Rapida 106 X in a typical configuration for label production - seven printing units, RS 106 X reel-to-sheet feeder, cold foil module, in-line coater with AniloxLoader and extended delivery

"ROTARY CUTTING DELIVERS MAJOR PRODUCTIVITY GAINS COMPARED TO FLATBED, WHILE AUTOMATED BLANKING REMOVES THE MANUAL STRIPPING ELEMENT FROM THE SHEET PROCESSING WORKFLOW"



RS 106 X reel-to-sheet feeder in production with IML film



The hurdle delivery improves pile formation when printing on IML films and similar substrates

special effects used on both labels and folding cartons. Process automation features include automatic threading of the foil web.

For IML production Koenig & Bauer has developed an automated hurdle delivery, which provides for smear-free non-stop production, with small batches of printed IML labels gathered into separate piles. The individual hurdles are created automatically by the Rapida, leaving the operator to insert the supports and board. The unblocked pile can then be passed on for further processing.

ROTARY DIE-CUTTING

Off-line rotary die-cutting of label sheets is handled by the CutPRO X 106, running at speeds of up to 16,000 s/h. It handles both ultra-thin in-mold films and label papers of all kinds.

An anti-static film-handling package is optional. The 'Click & Cut' register pin system positions the process forms on the cylinder without additional manual intervention, reducing make-ready times to less than five minutes. The pile of die-cut sheets is immediately available for further processing.

On both in-mold and paper labels, it is often the case that small pieces of waste must be removed from within the blanks. To cater to this, Koenig & Bauer has developed a hole punching and extraction tool for the CutPRO X 106. In a separate die-cutting unit, waste elements ranging from 5 mm diameter can be cut out within or between the blanks and removed immediately, all in an in-line process.

The company's Master Blanker system then separates blanks from the remaining waste using programmable pins or a blanking tool.

The rotary die-cutter and blanker combination can handle the same throughput as several flat-bed die-cutters. The system delivers blank stacks for further processing or shipment to the customer.

HEIDELBERGER DRUCKMASCHINEN [HEIDELBERG]

Heidelberg has dedicated solutions for the printing and conversion both of wet glue and in-mold labels on its Speedmaster XL 106. The new Peak Performance Generation of the press presented at drupa last year prints at up to 21,000 s/h and is as an additional option supplied with the CutStar reel sheeter.

The IML Performance Equipment 4.0 package allows the press to handle the thin, lightweight materials found in IML applications. It includes special handling components on the feeder and delivery and optimized sheet travel to prevent creasing and stretching of substrates across the entire machine length.

This allows films from a thickness of 40 microns and grammages from 30 g/sqm to be processed at speeds up to 14,000 s/h.

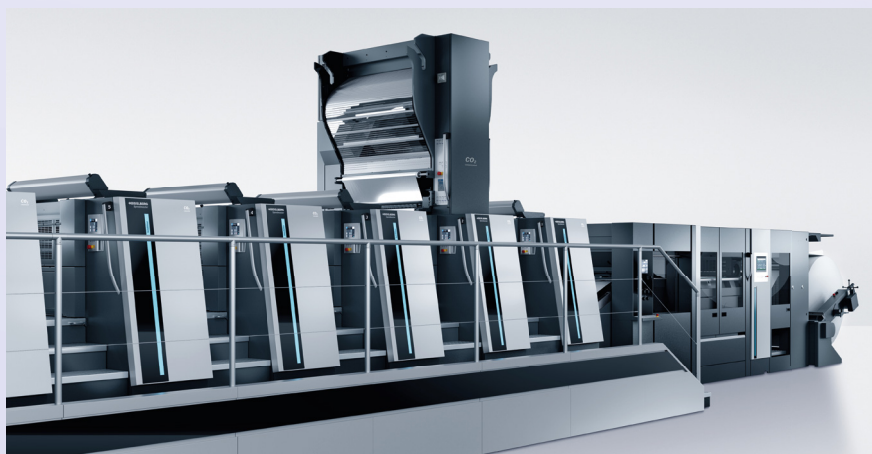
The DryStar Advanced dryers have ten drying zones to ensure optimum drying of IML labels. Hot air and infrared settings are adjustable in 1 percent increments to enable gentle processing of delicate materials and maintain register with thin plastic films. Alternatively, the drying section can be accommodated in an extended delivery, which is four times as long and equipped with the DryStar Combination ECO, which can reduce energy consumption by up to 40,000kWh a year.

On the press coating section, anilox roller and coating plate changes can be performed with various levels of automation, including semi- and fully-automatic coating plate changes using the AutoPlate Coating/Pro system. Fully automatic anilox roller changes are carried out using Heidelberg's Autoloader technology. The coating is changed from matte to gloss or vice versa fully automatically from the Coating Center

"THE TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS OF
IN-MOLD LABELS AND WET GLUE CUT AND
STACK FROM A PRINTING POINT OF VIEW
ARE VERY DIFFERENT"



Heidelberg Speedmaster XL106 with CutStar reel-to-sheeter, inline coating and Foilstar cold foil units



CutStar reel-to-sheeter and FoilStar inline cold foil module



XL106 coating unit with AutoPlate Coating Pro automation

located behind the press.

This is all a part of Heidelberg's Push to Stop automation mode on the coating unit, enabling parallel changeovers without manual intervention at the same time as other set-up processes and automatic cleaning functions are taking place.

For In-line foiling Heidelberg has developed the FoilStar cold transfer module.

The modified FoilStar Cure makes it possible to produce metallic effects with cold transfer on in-mold label material using LED-UV. The web guidance system is modified with a long wrap angle on the impression cylinder, allowing the transferred metallic pigment and UV adhesive to be bonded to the substrate by means of an LED UV interdeck dryer. This produces better adhesion of the metallic pigments along with high process stability and a higher metallic gloss. Up to six foil ribbons can be used with the entry level module, allowing for waste-saving production with or without indexing.

The Push to Stop concept also applies to the delivery, where an automated hurdle mode allows efficient small pile production. A movable belt table system allows reliable

pile separation and precise placement of the auxiliary pile.

We noted earlier that some label converters are shifting their focus to extended color gamut (ECG) printing to eliminate the need for washing up multiple spot colors between jobs. Heidelberg has developed the Prinect Multicolor Toolset to display different spot colors on one sheet as part of its automated color management workflow.

LABEL FINISHING

Heidelberg has also developed dedicated downstream label processing equipment.

The Speedmaster XL 106-D rotary die-cutter has been adapted for in-mold labels with improved anti-static equipment on the feeder, cylinder and delivery and stiffer die-cutting cylinders, allowing for production speeds up to 10,000 s/h.

The Speedmaster 106-DD twin-unit die-cutter adds another important IML production step.

The first unit places an injection hole using a die on a magnetic cylinder down to 5 mm diameter, with waste removed by an additional extraction system.

The Speedmaster XL 106-D can optionally be connected to the CutStar reel sheeter, allowing registered die-cutting of preprinted rolls.

Waste stripping can be handled automatically by the Kawahara TXS-1100 blanking machine, now available through Heidelberg. The Kawahara TXS-1100 is a powerful off-line machine which addresses both in-mold label and folding carton post-press applications. It has a blanking cycle of 30 seconds for a pile of die-cut sheets up to 80 mm high.

The TXS-1100 operates using a system of upper and lower pin beds to match the required label shape, configured using templates. It is optionally configurable with a direct pallet infeed and a conveyor for removing the die-cut blank pile.



Wet glue and IML conversion technology is expected to feature heavily at Labelexpo Europe 2025. Scan the QR code to learn more





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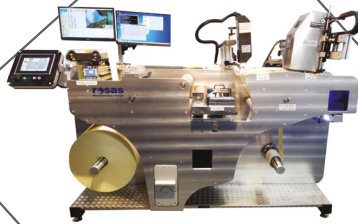
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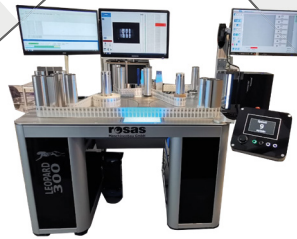
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Eco-friendly paper holograms on the rise

In an era where sustainability and security are paramount, the label printing industry is witnessing a transformative innovation: paper holograms. Adyasha Sinha reports

Paper holograms made with eco-friendly materials are emerging as game-changers across the pharmaceuticals, nutraceuticals, food and beverage and automotive industries. These labels address environmental concerns while also providing a robust defense against counterfeit products for which holograms are best known.

Regulatory mandates, consumer preferences and corporate sustainability goals drive the rising demand for sustainable packaging and labeling. At the same time, counterfeiting continues to pose a significant threat to brand integrity and consumer safety.

The global hologram label market is experiencing robust growth. According to Allied Market Research, the hologram market size was valued at 5.3 billion USD in 2022 and is projected to reach 11.1 billion USD by 2030, growing at a CAGR of 9.3 percent during the forecast period. The increasing demand for secure packaging, driven by the rise in e-commerce and counterfeit goods, has fueled this market expansion.

Sustainability

Paper holograms can offer an alternative to alleviate environmental concerns. Unlike traditional holographic labels made with PET and other plastic substrates for their durability and optical clarity, paper holograms are crafted from biodegradable and recyclable materials, reducing their environmental footprint and aligning with the sustainability goals of many brands.

Several factors drive the growing popularity of biodegradable holograms.

Global regulatory frameworks increasingly favor sustainable packaging alternatives. In the European Union, the Single-Use Plastics Directive has accelerated the shift toward biodegradable materials.

Companies increasingly use sustainable packaging alternatives to enhance their brand image and appeal to environmentally conscious consumers.

Shobhit Gupta, joint managing director at Holostik, observes: 'Brands began to realize that adopting paper holograms was not just about compliance but also a powerful way to connect with



Biodegradable hologram sample

"The convergence of sustainability and security is reshaping the future of labeling"

environmentally conscious consumers.'

Holostik, an Indian company, transitioned to paper holograms instead of plastic, eliminating polyester from its process entirely. In addition to holograms, the company provides security inks and security printing, variable data from barcodes, QR codes, alphanumeric numbers and more.

Ankit Gupta, joint managing director at Holostik, explains: 'The shift to paper holograms was a natural progression as the industry sought to balance performance with environmental responsibility. The challenge was ensuring that paper holograms could match their plastic counterparts' optical brilliance and security features.'

3D AG is a company that produces compostable custom holographic labels with biodegradable cellulose film. The labels are made from plant-based cellulose material, which is 100 percent biodegradable and breaks down into natural components in composting facilities. The company's biodegradable hologram label 'Holo-Sprout' can withstand various environments while breaking down in compost conditions (extreme heat, moisture and pressure).

Aleksandar Milutinovic, head of client solutions at 3D AG, states: 'Eco-friendly

and sustainable holograms align with current and upcoming regulations, making them a future-proof option for global markets. Sustainability is not just a buzzword but a responsibility we all share.'

Cold foil materials specialist K Laser Technology's new sustainable substrate products, Viridian Eco-Paper and Eco-Paperboard, feature 150 holographic patterns and can be used to create a range of folding cartons, mailers, hang tags, postcards and labels.

'The key lies in sustainability, with the products allowing foil designers, product designers and printers to have the best of both worlds: green packaging with stylish holographic effects,' says Nicole Rivera, director of administration and marketing at K Laser Technology.

Pre-printed with a registered hologram, Viridian Eco-Paper and Eco-Paperboard enable users to create premium designs by overprinting the substrate with white ink using various screens of opacity to cover, reveal and colorize the holographic underlayer in a single pass.

Challenges ahead

While eco-friendly holograms represent a significant advancement, their adoption is not entirely smooth sailing. Some hurdles that need to be addressed include the cost of production, compatibility with existing packaging lines and consumer awareness.

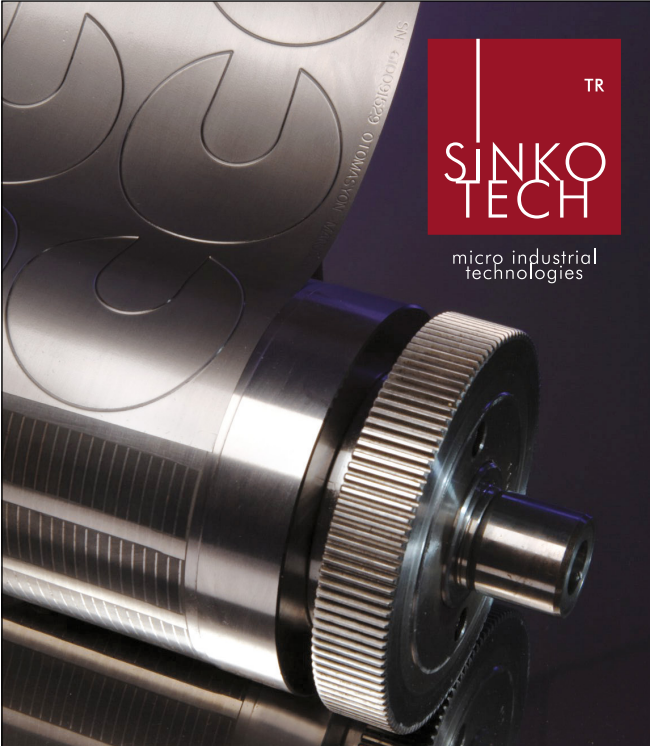
The rise of eco-friendly holograms signifies a pivotal moment in the labeling industry.


As brands across sectors strive to meet sustainability goals and combat counterfeiting, the demand for innovative options like paper holograms is set to grow exponentially.

Rivera concludes: 'The convergence of sustainability and security is reshaping the future of labeling. Eco-friendly and sustainable holograms are more than a trend; they're a testament to the industry's commitment to innovation and responsibility.'

Scan the QR code to read about Holostik's Optashield anti-counterfeiting technology







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Inside Metropolis Coffee's packaging process

Chicago-based brand Metropolis Coffee Company's innovative packaging strategies balance storytelling and flexibility while actively pursuing sustainable practices, Akanksha Meena reports

Metropolis Coffee Company, a family-owned business founded by Tony and Jeff Dreyfuss, has been in the specialty coffee industry for over 21 years. Known for its high quality, the brand emphasizes traceable sourcing to support farmers while bringing organic beans to coffee lovers across Illinois.

Metropolis has successfully expanded into Costco and is now available in almost every major retail chain in the Midwest. Known for its consistency, the company ensures the quality of its coffee year-round through careful curation under the watchful eye of its expert roasters.

Metropolis roasts approximately 1000,000 pounds of coffee annually at its 18,000 sqft roastery along the North Branch of the Chicago River. The company also operates a flagship café in Edgewater, a vibrant neighborhood on Chicago's northeast side. While the café has remained a community hub for over 20 years, the heart of Metropolis' business lies in its wholesale, private label and roasting operations.

Revamped packaging

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Metropolis Coffee faced significant challenges, with an 80 percent decline in business as Chicago's hospitality sector and offices shut down. Despite these setbacks, the company used the downtime to reimagine its packaging and storytelling. These efforts helped the business recover and boost growth by 20 percent compared to pre-pandemic levels.

'Grocery doubled for us during COVID because everybody was buying their coffee to drink at home,' says Anne Djerai, CEO of Metropolis Coffee Company. 'And our old packaging was not standing out on the shelf. The packaging had muted colors, and the lettering was tiny.'

Recognizing the need for a more substantial shelf presence, branding studio EightySeven, led by brand director and founder Maxwell Billings, revamped the brand's story, its packaging and presentation to align with the business's larger goals and stand out in a new and exciting way.

'We used our storytelling expertise and understanding of consumer behavior

"Compostable materials need to be designed in a specific way to break down properly. However, when you fill the bag with coffee that has a certain weight, it can cause the material to weaken and break"

to design packaging that would stand out on the shelf,' says Billings. 'Working directly with the leadership team, we quickly refined key elements of the brand to establish a new presentation for Metropolis, starting with color.'

EightySeven analyzed the shelf to understand the existing color environment on the shelf and explored how the brand could use contrast to stand out. The designers strategized with color while emphasizing the 'M' logo on the pouches as a unifying mark for Metropolis. The team reimaged existing brand elements to be more consistent and easily recognizable in the aisle, making it easier to spot Metropolis products.

Djerai emphasizes that specialty coffee is a luxury, and customers are willing to pay more for a premium product. Packaging must reflect that value with thoughtful details that make it feel like a gift — something that stands out, whether it's a unique logo, intricate design or striking color.

The redesign

Metropolis embraces its Chicago roots by incorporating the city's identity into its branding. The back of the bags features a 'Proudly Roasted in Chicago' sign-off with four Chicago stars, instantly recognizable by locals.

'Coming to the Metropolis roastery, you can feel how much creativity flows through



Metropolis uses metallized polyethylene with a heat seal at the top of the pouch and a reusable zipper

this team and organization,' adds Billings. 'We wanted to bring that to life through their packaging experience. By weaving storytelling and design into every part of the package, customers uncover different layers, from the meaning behind Metropolis to key messaging, coming together to create an immersive experience.'

The designers finished off with a subtle surprise on the bottom of the pouch, a brand-focused story reintroducing Metropolis to craft coffee lovers.

Metropolis employs several techniques to ensure quality from roastery to shelf, including nitro flushing its coffee. Since the coffee will not be used immediately, especially on a grocery shelf with an extended shelf life, the pouches feature a one-way valve to push out the oxygen using nitrogen. The coffee naturally releases gas after roasting, therefore without the valve, the bag could explode.

Currently, the brand uses metallized polyethylene with a heat seal at the top of the bag and a reusable zipper, allowing customers to reseal the bags after opening to keep the coffee as fresh as possible.

'Previously, brands used EVOH for its cost-effectiveness and thicker structure, but during COVID, supply issues with plastics plants and aluminum mines forced a material shift. Now, we use a different type of metallized polyethylene, which has a foil-like appearance but is less dense. This helps maintain the critical oxygen

“In the packaging space, these creative choices, like a foil or finish paired with a story and vision can instantly give people a feeling for the product”

barrier necessary for preserving freshness. When coffee is exposed to air, it goes stale, which impacts the flavor. This is specifically true for ground coffee, so the packaging has to have a barrier to keep it fresh,’ Djerai explains.

The pouches feature labels categorizing the brand’s products into 12 to 15 different roast blends, making it easy for customers to tell them apart. The labels provided flexibility, allowing all coffees to fit into the light or dark roast categories.

Metropolis also supports its wholesale customers with lower minimum order quantities (MOQs) than most specialty roasters. When a customer cannot meet the MOQ for custom bags, Metropolis works directly with them to find practical alternatives, such as using stock bags or simplified options.

Additionally, the company leaned heavily into the single-serve coffee market, launching innovative projects such as the first compostable espresso capsules in North America. The new packaging design also prioritized flexibility to accommodate



The brand’s packaging feature special spot gloss effects on the logo ‘M’, the paneling on the sides and the text on the back to create a premium look

collaborations with other brands while maintaining consistency in design across packaging formats. These efforts positioned Metropolis for continued growth and new opportunities in the post-COVID market.

The brand’s packaging is currently produced in Korea and China, while the espresso capsules are made in Germany.

Compostable packaging

Metropolis is at the forefront of sustainable practices, such as using compostable material in its packaging. However, Djerai notes some current limitations to applying those materials across its entire product line, specifically with whole bean coffee.

‘The challenge is ensuring the bag material is strong enough to handle the beans’ weight. Compostable materials need to be designed in a specific way to break down easily. But, when the bag is filled with coffee, the weight can weaken or even break the material,’ she says.

‘We can use compostable materials for smaller quantities and formats, which is why we offer a lot of fraction packs made



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from compostable materials. But when it comes to larger packages, especially those over a couple of pounds, that's where we face challenges. We'll switch when we identify a solution but, we use a metallized polyethylene material for now.'

The coffee pouches can't be recycled because they combine metallized and plastic properties, which must be separated for recycling.

'Another challenge is that, particularly in Chicago, there are no city-funded recycling programs — everything ends up in the landfill unless you have a private recycling service,' Djerai adds.

However, the brand is heavily involved in offsetting these challenges through other sustainable means, such as using compostable materials wherever possible, especially in its espresso capsules. Traditional coffee pods made with plastic or aluminum are challenging to recycle. To reduce its environmental footprint, Metropolis espresso capsules are commercially compostable and certified by both BPI and by the Compost Manufacturing Alliance (CMA), meaning they'll be accepted at any commercial compost facility.

'Regarding the Metropolis capsule

line, every aspect of the packaging is designed with sustainability in mind. While some brands use more extravagant techniques, Metropolis has developed a technology where not only is the capsule home compostable or commercially compostable, but the box they come in is also made from recycled cardboard. As a brand, it's great to see Metropolis going above and beyond to make these sustainable choices,' Billings says.

Designer's perspective

From a design perspective, Billings says that the production technique can be a tool when telling a story on a shelf.

'When brands are intentional, it shows. Bringing different types of finishes and textures to the packaging experience is essential. It's another sensory way to connect with people.'

He explains: 'With the Metropolis packaging system, we created touches of contrasting finishes to grab attention. Pairing a soft touch with the spot gloss on the 'M' and the paneling on the sides creates accents that catch your interest. In the packaging space, these creative choices can instantly give people a feeling for the product.'

'What excites me technology-wise is anything that can introduce new finishes and textures, however subtle, that can add up to a unique experience. Let's say you're a food or beverage brand focused on the golfer's lifestyle. Where can you introduce textures of a dimpled golf ball, leather grip or other sensory parts of the experience to tie with your product? Those subtle storytelling opportunities are where brands can connect with people and separate themselves from the competition,' he adds.

In an industry where sustainability has become standard practice, Metropolis Coffee continues to grind away as it seeks new ways to integrate the latest compostable materials into its offerings. This aligns with the growing discussion around the coffee industry's impact and the demand by consumers for responsible, eco-friendly packaging without compromising the quality or performance of its products.



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Sky Labels expands production

Nairobi, Kenya-based Sky Labels, is undergoing a significant transformation as it prepares to move into a newly expanded factory. Akanksha Meena reports



Sky Labels team at its factory in Nairobi, Kenya

The origins of Sky Labels trace back to the 1990s when NT Mehta, chairman, acquired a modest label manufacturing company with just five employees. Today, the company with a team of over 50, supplies labels in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, Ethiopia and other parts of Africa across cosmetics, healthcare, food, beverage and pharma segments.

With its current space proving too small to meet growing demands, the company plans to move to a bigger facility to enhance its operations.

'This new factory is designed to be more streamlined with lean manufacturing principles, which is crucial for staying competitive in the market,' says Mehta. 'We always invest in the latest machinery to remain relevant in the market. The entire production team is involved when it comes to making decisions about the investment, especially when it comes to machines.'

The new factory, spanning over 30,000sqft, is an upgrade from its current 15,000-20,000sqft premises. With all necessary plans and approvals in place, the construction began in February 2025.

With a robust machinery portfolio that includes Konica Minolta's AccurioLabel 230 (the first machine installed in East Africa in 2023) and Multitec flexo presses (8-color and 6-color), the company continues to prioritize high-quality output. Another 6-color press is also on its way. Sky Labels also operates two letterpress machines and provides digital printing to service growing demand for short-run and quick-turnaround jobs. The company houses finishing capabilities and plans to add platemaking to streamline production.

Market trends and demand

The labeling market in East Africa is experiencing significant growth, with increasing demand for value addition and customization.

"The complete production team is involved when it comes to making decisions about the investment, especially when it comes to investing in machines"

'Sky Labels focuses more on cosmetics and beverage brands, which typically prefer robust designs paired with unique shapes,' says Palak Dave, operations director. 'Materials such as semi-gloss, polypropylene (PP) and tamper-evident labels are in high demand. However, sustainability is yet to gain traction in the region, largely due to the high cost involved with sustainable products, with small brands dominating the market focus.'

Customers often expect deliveries within two to three days, at most, a week. The company's investment in advanced machinery, 24/7 operations, and team collaboration in decision-making enable it to meet these expectations effectively.

'Our unique model allows us to deliver the highest print quality, offer economical value pricing, the best customer service and the shortest lead times in the market with sustainability at the forefront; it's how printing should be,' says Chintan N. Mehta, head of business development.

Anti-counterfeiting is another growth area for Sky Labels. The company sources tamper-evident materials from Avery Dennison to provide void-material labels.

Challenges

The converters in East Africa face several challenges with the biggest of which is rising competitiveness. As the packaging segment grows, an increasing number of offset printers are entering the market.

The label market in Africa is seeing new entrants every year, with many using cost-effective machines. With more than 35 label converters already operating in

Nairobi, the competition is fierce, driving price wars and customer poaching.

Converters offer competitive pricing to capture market share, leading to reduced profit margins. As a result, many are diversifying into new product segments, such as stand-up flexible packaging with zippers, for better profitability.

Many converters now export to other countries within East Africa, intensifying regional competition.

Workforce challenges also persist. Retaining talent is difficult, as trained employees often leave for better opportunities. The company addresses this by hiring a mix of experienced professionals, offering training, internal promotions and various benefits for career growth.

Sky Labels recognizes the need to embrace sustainable practices despite current market hesitations. While the company already uses solar power and is interested in adopting UV LED inks, regional suppliers have yet to meet the demand. Dave estimates it could take another 5-10 years for the market to fully embrace these eco-friendly products.

Sky Labels' expansion into a larger facility, investment in advanced machinery, exploring new segments such as flexible packaging and bringing complete operations in-house position it to thrive in a competitive and evolving market.



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South Africa's evolving label market

Sustainability and highly embellished labels are trends dominating this dynamic region, Anton Pretorius reports

In the high-stakes race for shelf appeal, wine, beer and spirits labels have become strategic weapons in brand storytelling and consumer persuasion. In South Africa, the label printing industry is experiencing a dramatic shake-up, driven by global innovation and the relentless pressure to meet local market demands.

Thomas Veenstra, owner of RAM Labels in Cape Town, South Africa, captures this evolution succinctly: 'In this market, it's the fine details that capture attention. Premium decoration transforms labels into high-impact visuals that bring brands to life, drawing consumers in at first glance.'

While South Africa's labeling industry has traditionally lagged behind global standards, a wave of innovation is rapidly closing this gap. Modern trends are pushing converters and brands to embrace premium tactile finishes, such as uncoated papers, rich foils in gold and purple, and glow-in-the-dark inks. These aren't just aesthetic enhancements; they're strategic tools. As Veenstra explains, such elements heighten sensory experiences, reinforce authenticity and combat counterfeiting.

'A well-designed label doesn't just enhance the bottle's look; it builds trust, communicates value and defines a brand's character,' he says.

This push for innovation is mirrored in the wine labeling sector, where players like Rotolabel in Cape Town are driving transformative trends.

Grant Watson, national sales executive, highlights the rising demand for specialized materials. 'Brands are elevating their products through unique substrates, often importing bespoke materials to gain a competitive edge,' he notes. However, he warns that forecasting demand for these diverse material stocks remains a logistical challenge.

Beyond materials, the operational landscape is evolving rapidly. European regulations mandating the transition from 1D to 2D barcodes by 2027 have intensified time pressures.

Simultaneously, label aesthetics are undergoing a bold reinvention. While traditional designs retain their charm, a shift toward vibrant, contemporary visuals is gaining momentum. 'Even established wineries are trading classic crests for modern designs that resonate with today's consumers,' Watson says.

The potential integration of RFID tags marks another frontier. As Wicus Maritz, managing executive at Rotolabel, points out, RFID technology could provide consumers rich insights into a product's origin and journey. Yet, the high cost of these tags poses a challenge to widespread adoption.

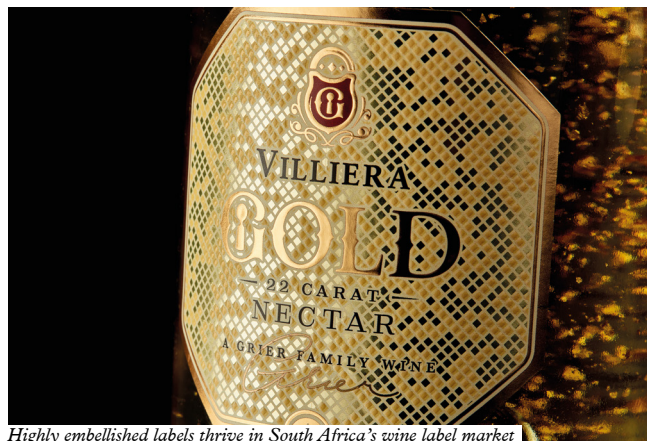
Adding to the complexity is the influx of new designers in the market, bringing fresh perspectives but requiring education on the entire label lifecycle.

'Designers need to understand how to balance creativity with practicality and cost-effectiveness,' Maritz explains.

Housekeeping

In the household product packaging space, choosing the right label substrate and adhesive is crucial, not only for a brand's image but also for enhancing recyclability.

The complexity of household product packaging lies in the variety of plastic containers used, including high-density polyethylene (HDPE), polypropylene (PP) and PET. Each material



Highly embellished labels thrive in South Africa's wine label market

"Sustainable materials and processes are no longer seen as premium options — they are becoming the norm"

demands specific adhesives and label substrates to ensure compatibility and recyclability.

'There's a lot of misunderstanding in the marketplace about the correct materials and adhesives to use,' Watson asserts. 'This is where we step in to educate and guide brands. It's not just about slapping a label on; it's about ensuring that label doesn't hinder the recycling process.'

Rotolabel is trialing UPM Raflatac's New Wave adhesive, designed for paper-based labels that cleanly separate from containers during the recycling process. 'New Wave allows the paper label to remove easily in plain water at just 40 deg C, leaving the PP or HDPE container uncontaminated and ready for recycling.'

Watson is optimistic when asked about the cost challenges of using sustainable adhesives. 'Sustainable materials and processes are no longer seen as premium options — they are becoming the norm. The cost of the label is relatively insignificant compared to the overall packaging, so it's really about educating brands to make informed choices,' he says.

Rotolabel's efforts extend beyond adhesives to post-consumer recycled (PCR) content in labeling. It was the first company in South Africa to introduce PCR content in labels for Woolworths' baby shampoo range. 'While incorporating PCR into labels is still in its infancy, it's a critical step towards a more sustainable future. The challenge lies in maintaining consistent quality, especially with color variation in PCR materials, but the technology is advancing,' he concludes.

Anton Pretorius is also editor of Packaging & Print Media (PPM), a publication magazine that covers the commercial print and packaging sectors. Scan the QR code to read more of his work



Kashpia Printing and Packaging marks growth with Mark Andy

Bangladesh-based converter extends its association with Flexo Image Graphics, India-based distributor of Mark Andy.
Adyasha Sinha reports

One of Bangladesh's leading packaging printing companies, Kashpia Printing and Packaging, has installed its second Mark Andy press, a Performance Series P7E. The company once again chose its long-time associate Flexo Image Graphics (FIG), a Mark Andy distributor in India, as the supplier of the press. The deal was sealed on the show floor of Labelexpo Europe in 2023.

A dream turned reality

Entrepreneur Mohammad Shahin Howlader founded Kashpia Print and Packaging in 2007 after 16 years of experience in the print industry. He identified a gap in the market for high-quality labels and flexible packaging. With a modest personal investment and a clear vision, he established Kashpia to deliver packaging tailored to the needs of Bangladesh's emerging industries.

Howlader started the business focusing on delivering service and quality. Kashpia manufactures and supplies corrugated boxes, folding cartons, self-adhesive labels, foil prints and holographic labels.

'I realized early on that the packaging industry in Bangladesh was poised for growth,' recalls Howlader. 'But there was a lack of modern equipment and technical know-how. I wanted Kashpia to bridge that gap and set new benchmarks for quality and innovation.'

Kashpia's commitment to excellence, the latest technology and timely delivery has earned it a reputation as one of the most trusted names in the Bangladeshi packaging industry. Today, it caters to diverse sectors, including food and beverage, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics and household products. Some of the big names in the industry, such as Unilever, Nestlé, Coca-Cola and PepsiCo are its clients.

Making a 'mark'

Mark Andy's press was not new to Kashpia. When the time came

"This investment is a testament to our dedication to staying ahead of industry trends"

to look for another technology to meet the growing demand for high-quality labels and flexible packaging, Howlader and his team didn't think twice. The company already owned a Mark Andy P7 and was familiar with the platform. The decision was also influenced by the need to enhance efficiency, reduce waste and deliver superior print quality. Howlader states: 'The Mark Andy P7E aligns perfectly with our mission of adopting cutting-edge technology to exceed customer expectations. Its versatility and performance are unmatched.'

The 330mm (13in) P7E flexo printing press has UV curing, cold foil and other modern features.

The acquisition was facilitated through FIG, Kashpia's long-standing partner. FIG has brought advanced flexographic technology and machinery to India, enabling companies like Kashpia to stay ahead of the curve. It also represents some of the leading international brands such as Mark Andy, Rhyguan, Luster, Rotoflex, Dym and DCM ATN.

'The P7E is designed to address converters' evolving needs,' explains Gourav Roy, managing director of FIG. 'Its advanced features improve print quality and optimize production workflows, enabling businesses to stay competitive in a dynamic market.'

Partnership

Kashpia's collaboration with FIG dates back to 2010, when the company first ventured into flexographic printing. FIG provided the equipment, training and support needed to optimize production. This partnership has been pivotal in Kashpia's growth, ensuring easy integration of new technologies and processes.



The Mark Andy press at Kashpia Printing and Packaging facility in Dhaka, Bangladesh



Shahin Howlader, founder of Kashpia Printing and Packaging, with Gourav Roy of Flexo Image Graphic at Labelexpo Europe 2023

“We have always been impressed by the professionalism and efficiency of FIG’s technical support team. They are just a phone call away”

FIG at Labelexpo India 2024

FIG celebrated its successful participation in Labelexpo India 2024, showcasing machines from Rhyguan and Luster, and securing major deals with top label and packaging companies.

According to Gourav Roy, managing director of FIG, Rhyguan and Luster machines and Mark Andy presses have been gaining ground in India. ‘Over the last few months, we have made some landmark installations of Rhyguan and Mark Andy machines, and serious inquiries keep coming,’ he says. ‘MBR Flexibles (Ahmedabad), PrintWrap (Chennai), and Dhanlakshmi Labels (Hyderabad), to mention a few, have recently upgraded their machine portfolios with Rhyguan and Mark Andy presses from FIG.’

With partner delegates from Mark Andy, Rhyguan, DCM ATN and others present at Labelexpo, FIG witnessed a crowd of new buyers at its booth.

Mumbai-based Barcom Industries purchased two Mark Andy presses. FIG has previously sold Mark Andy 830, Mark Andy Scout, a string of Mark Andy 2200 and Mark Andy Performance Series P5 presses to Barcom. The company was the first to install a Mark Andy Digital One in Asia in 2018. Apart from Mark Andy, Barcom’s other machines bought from FIG include Rotoflex inspection slitter rewinders with 100 percent detection systems, Rotoflex HSI label inspection, slitting and rewinding machines with 100 percent Nikka L1 inspection cameras and Rotoflex bi-directional pharma inspection system.

Gurugram-based Meraki Propack, FIG’s new customer, purchased a Rhyguan Top 520 dual die-cutting machine engineered for die-cutting labels in two steps and fitted with a servo-driven semi-rotary dual die-cutting unit that runs in full rotary mode. Its dual die-station features its own independent registration and tension control.

One of the leading providers of label and packaging products, Dehradun-headquartered Zircon Industries is yet another long-term FIG customer that booked five finishing systems from the French company DCM ATN, the first installations of the machines in India from FIG.

Mumbai-based Innovative Label Solutions also bought a Rhyguan Smart 450 slitter-rewinder with a Luster 100 percent camera from FIG.

‘Labelexpo India 2024 was positive, and the show’s overall atmosphere reflected the industry’s determination to drive a profound dynamic to make the printing and packaging industry more productive, innovative, and sustainable with the latest machines, equipment and technology,’ comments Roy.

‘It was one of the most successful editions of Labelexpo India for FIG,’ he adds. ‘On all three days of the show, we received an overwhelming response from trade visitors showing keen interest in all that we presented and demonstrated at our booth as technological advancements and innovations that inspired the printing, packaging, and label industries. We feel great that some landmark machine deals were announced during the show.’

Apart from the deals, FIG also announced its newly formed partnership with DCM ATN. Based in Nanterre, France, DCM ATN manufactures machines for printing, waxing and lamination, slitting, rewinding, rewinding and inspection and shrink sleeves.

‘FIG has been more than just a supplier; it has been a strategic partner,’ says Howlader. ‘Its expertise and guidance have played a crucial role in our journey. Apart from our newly ordered second Mark Andy narrow-web flexo printing press, we are already a user of some advanced machines from FIG, which includes our first Mark Andy press. We found FIG to be a reliable partner that constantly boosts growth in our business to a new level. We look forward to maintaining the continuity of this partnership.’

Commenting the collaboration, Roy remarks: ‘As a reputed packaging printing company in Bangladesh, Kashpia has already been using equipment supplied by FIG, and such a repeat Mark Andy press order we receive from the company boosts our confidence and morale. We hope the new Mark Andy press will fulfill its customers’ increasing demands for narrow web flexo jobs.’

Apart from the latest installation, other equipment at Kashpia’s facility includes a Mark Andy P7, Rotoflex HSI slitter rewinder and a KDS efficiency management system from FIG.

The partnership is not just on paper; it goes beyond, as Roy recalls: ‘After the installation, Kashpia sought some technical assistance. Our team of experts packed their bags at once, although we didn’t want to send them alone amid the political turmoil in Bangladesh. So, we accompanied our team. Considering the situation, Howlader invited us to stay at his residence and personally took care of our security. That’s the kind of association we have built with our clients.’

Howlader adds: ‘We have always been impressed by the professionalism and efficiency of FIG’s technical support team. They are just a phone call away. This has helped forge a different relationship with Gourav and his team. They are not just our suppliers; they are our family.’

Post-installations, FIG assists customers through a centralized customer support department operated from its head office in Delhi, connecting to Mumbai and Chennai branches. Its after-sales service and technical support are major factors that help clients choose FIG.

The company closed several sales of Mark Andy presses and finishing machines from Rhyguan and DCM ATN at Labelexpo India 2024.

A bright future ahead

With the addition of the Mark Andy P7E, Kashpia Print and Packaging is well-positioned to capitalize on emerging opportunities in Bangladesh’s packaging industry. The new press enhances the company’s capabilities and reinforces its commitment to innovation and customer satisfaction.

‘This investment is a testament to our dedication to staying ahead of industry trends,’ says Howlader. ‘We’re excited about the possibilities that the P7E brings and look forward to delivering even greater value to our clients.’

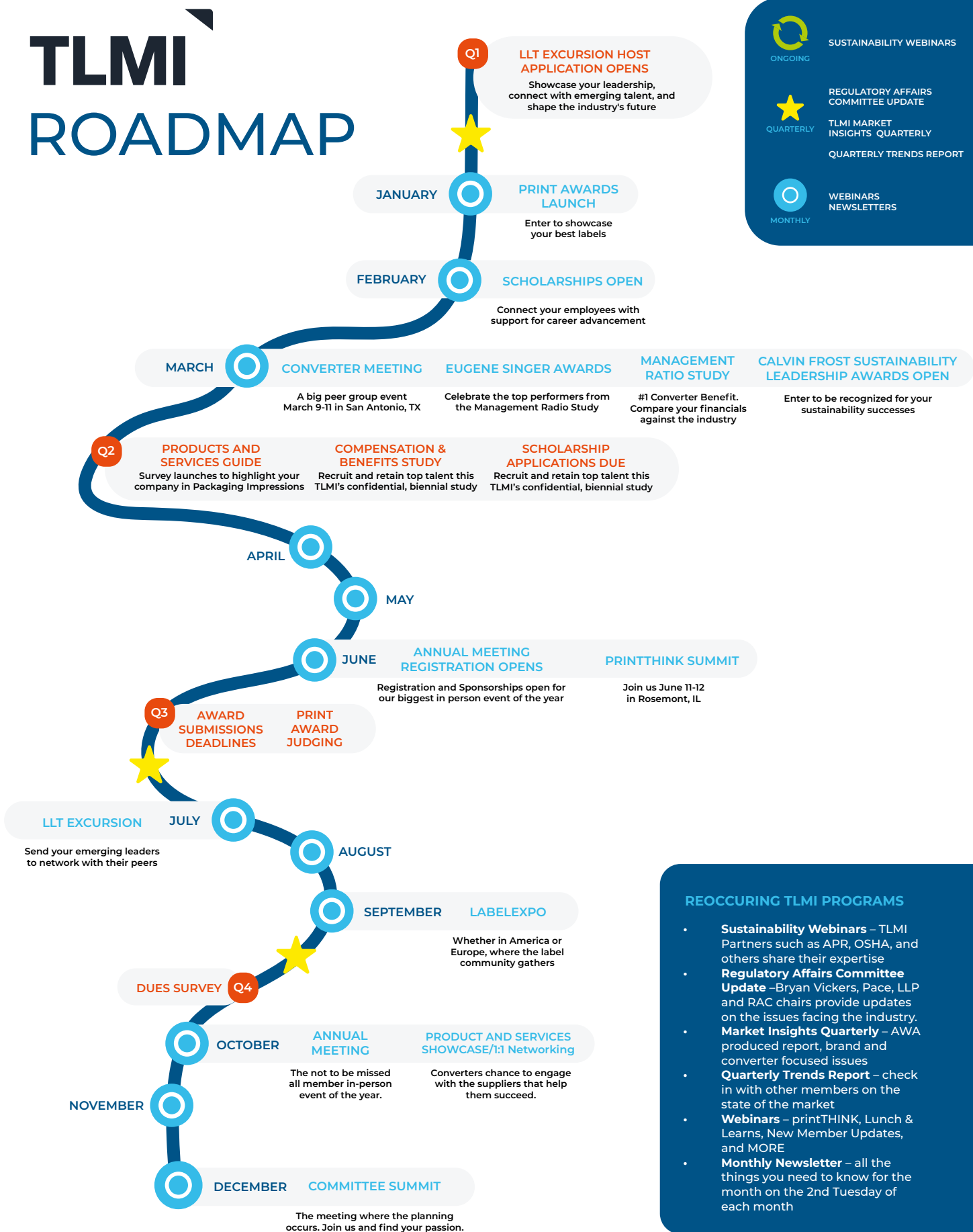
As Kashpia continues to set new benchmarks, its journey inspires other businesses in Bangladesh to embrace technology and drive growth. The installation of the Mark Andy P7E marks a milestone for Kashpia and a significant step forward for the country’s print packaging industry.



Scan the QR code to read about FIG’s latest installation at Vee Kay Industries.



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From signage to labels: The Idea Factory takes leap

Diversification and customer demand lead the Indian converter to venture into the label industry by investing in Monotech Systems' Jetsci Global KolorSmart+ UV inkjet press. Adyasha Sinha reports

Established in 2006, Jaipur-based The Idea Factory, founded by Yogesh Pradhan, initially specialized in printing outdoor and indoor advertising materials, dispensers, acrylic products, hoardings, flex and vinyl prints, retail marketing materials, LED signage and more. The company has recently diversified into the labels production by investing in Monotech Systems' Jetsci Global KolorSmart+ UV inkjet press.

Humble beginnings

Pradhan's fascination with the printing industry began in his youth, inspired by his father's work at Rajasthan Patrika, the region's leading daily newspaper. Determined to follow his passion, Pradhan pursued a diploma in printing technology. He recalls: 'I joined the college in 1994 and completed my diploma in printing technology in 1997. Post-college, I found my first job at TechNova Imaging Systems.'

After eight years of gaining extensive knowledge about printing quality, customer satisfaction and client service—and understanding its critical role in business success—Pradhan took the entrepreneurial plunge. 'It was a dream for me to start my own business. In 2006, I founded The Idea Factory to cater to client's branding and marketing needs, including signage boards and in-shop branding,' he shares.

Pradhan attributes his success in the signage printing industry to the adoption of the latest technologies. The Idea Factory's facility is equipped with cutting-edge machinery for the signage industry from HP, Epson and Roland.

The Idea Factory serves various industries, including banking, oil, telecom and FMCG. Its clientele includes established brands such as Samsung, MI, Colgate, Jockey, Google, Sab Miller, Johnson, CEAT Tires, Bridgestone and ICICI Bank.

Labels calling

In 2022, 14 years after founding The Idea Factory, Yogesh Pradhan set his sights on diversifying and expanding his business into the labels and packaging sector. This marked the birth of his second venture: Aart Stroke Labels and Packs. Pradhan explains: 'Labels and packaging is a rapidly growing segment, and we wanted to explore its potential. We conducted extensive market research to understand the industry landscape.'

Following an in-depth market study, Pradhan identified digital printing technology as the suitable option for label production. He shares: 'There's significant demand for small print jobs. Even large companies launching new products often begin with smaller quantities to test the market and create demand before scaling up.'

The challenge, however, was choosing the right digital machine. 'I evaluated several options. Then, one day, I came across a LinkedIn post by an old friend at Monotech Systems featuring a digital label printing machine. After learning more, I decided on the Jetsci KolorSmart+ machine, which we installed in April 2022,' he recalls.

Dinesh Thakur, general manager of sales at Jetsci Global, notes: 'The Idea Factory had specific requirements, and we ensured they were met. The KolorSmart+ is designed for label printers who want to enter the digital printing space at an affordable level without compromising on quality, efficiency, or substrate versatility.'



Akash Kumar, marketing head, Monotech Systems; Yogesh Pradhan, director, The Idea Factory; Neeraj Thappa, vice president – international business, Jetsci

"The market is moving toward small jobs, and customers need good packaging"

The KolorSmart+ is a 6-color UV inkjet press equipped with a flexo unit. Its UV technology allows compatibility with various substrates, making it well-suited for producing multiple SKUs and mid-length print runs.

With this press, Aart Stroke Labels and Packs produces a diverse portfolio, including product packaging, clear, waterproof and sheet labels. The company primarily serves clients in the cosmetics, pharmaceutical and health supplement industries.

'The market is shifting toward smaller print jobs, and customers demand high-quality packaging. With the KolorSmart+ installation, we can cater to a broader customer base seeking reliable and cost-effective digital printing products,' Pradhan highlights the strategic importance of this investment.

The path forward

The company is steadily progressing and preparing to take the next big step to meet high-volume customer demands. Pradhan explains: 'For larger volumes, we are focusing on flexo printing. Printing on materials like poly packs or flex packs is not feasible with offset technology, making flexo the best choice.'

At the same time, the company is aiming to deliver premium packaging services. Pradhan shares: 'To achieve premium quality, we are investing in a new technology that will be installed by mid-February 2025. This will enable us to provide high-quality packaging in smaller quantities—something that's not practical with flexo and can be prohibitively expensive with digital printing.'

Looking ahead, The Idea Factory is poised to expand its offerings by combining premium-quality labels and packaging with the scalability of flexo printing to address the needs of both high-volume and niche markets.



Scan the QR code to read about the Indian label Industry



Labelexpo India 2024 review

The Indian label and package printing industry stepped forward to showcase new conventional and digital press technologies in this record-breaking show. Andy Thomas-Emans, Akanksha Meena and Adyasha Sinha report.

Labelexpo India 2024 was the biggest and most vibrant show in the event's history, drawing 13,752 visitors and marking the country's emergence as a key player on the world stage. The event culminated with multiple press sales reported by Multitec, UV Graphic, RK Label, NBG and Webtech.

Labelexpo India 2024 attendance was up 14 percent from the 2022 edition, and covering one-third more exhibition space than the previous event. Indian label and package printing machinery suppliers concluded the show on a high note, as over 90 percent of exhibitors were Indian companies. Labelexpo India 2024 also attracted a record number of first-time exhibitors, 70 in total.

Flexo press technology

Notable flexo press technology trends included wider press widths up to 670 mm (26in), more automation, and a significant move towards LED-UV curing, often combined with mercury UV on the same press.

AUM demonstrated its 13in wide model 350M UV flexo press configured with eight colors and two die-cut units, cold foil and turnbar. The press operates at up to 100 m/min. The company also produces a servo-driven press, the 350S, operating at speeds up to 150 m/min.

Hontec India, a local company distributing the Chinese manufacturer's presses in the region, demonstrated a servo-driven Flexicon 350 press operating at up to 150 m/min on a wide range of materials, including shrink sleeves and Lamitube, for which the press is configured with 21.5in chill drums. The print unit is designed with a quick-change impression roll, adjustable for different material thicknesses and separate from the chill roller to avoid ink contamination.

The company also showed a Digifini converting line equipped with a flatbed die cutter and flexo coating unit, which can be equipped with a flatbed screen.

Moksha Label Printing Machinery demonstrated an 8-color Edifice 2SU flexo press printing at 100 m/min.

Multitec showcased a double servo mid-web S2 670 mm (26in), a 9-color press running on a 12-micron substrate at 200 m/min. The press featured LED and UV curing, an extended path in-line solvent drying unit, pre-register, auto-register, auto job settings, a movable turn bar and foiling.

“We have had a tremendous time at Labelexpo India. We are extremely proud to have done so well. We booked so many machines. This shows the booming Indian economy and incredible growth in the label industry”

Multitec also showed an 8-color 450 mm wide S2 press printing shrink sleeves live at the show. The machine was configured with hybrid LED UV systems, die-cut units, pre-register and auto-register, a movable turn bar, realm units, a peel-and-seal kit and foiling stations.

The S2 press can handle 10 to 450 microns at 200 m/min substrates. The company sold five machines at the show.

NBG Printographic launched its 450 mm wide press at the show. It is configured with 10 flexo units and two gravure stations at the front and back ends of the press line. The press is equipped with chill drums, LED-UV, and IR dryers for applications like high-gloss varnishes. The company clinched two sales at the event.

Orthotec promoted its print and finishing equipment range, including the D-Screen high-build inkjet varnish module, which can match the screen for tactile dot height.

Paper and Label Converting Technologies showed the Labelflex R2S full-servo and R1 flexo presses. The 450 mm wide R2S was configured with GEW AeroLED air-cooled LED curing units on the color units, mercury UV for the coating stations and chill drums. The press prints at 150 m/min on a wide range of substrates, from PS labels to light carton board, laminated tubes and unsupported film down to 12 microns. The mechanical R1 flexo press prints at 150 m/min and is designed for entry-level PS label and light carton board applications.

RK Label Printing Machinery demonstrated two in-line flexo presses. An 8-color 450 mm wide FMS press with twin die-cutting units was fitted with GEW AeroLED air-cooled LED-UV curing on the first five printing units and arc UV on the cold foil and coating stations. It was printing 38-micron shrink sleeves. The press is also fitted with IR units at each station in standard configuration.

A second 450 mm wide FMS sleeve-based press was configured with an in-line gravure unit printing with

water-based inks. The press was converting paper cups with a sheeter and conveyor. The gravure unit was used for metallics in this application.

The Printers' House (TPH) launched the Orient X-Press Flex in-line flexo press series with a 450 mm wide, 10-color sleeve-based machine, with each print unit driven by double servo drives. The press incorporated GEW LeoLED water-cooled LED lamps, allowing running speeds up to 200 m/min.

Alongside the Orient flexo press, TPH also launched Orient Jet, an UV inkjet press, developed in conjunction with Meteor Inkjet, a division of Hybrid Software. The proprietary ink delivery system and web handling technology were developed in India.

The press uses Epson 1,200 DPI inkjet heads with up to eight color channels operating at 75 m/min. TPH has also developed a water-based inkjet press operating at 200 m/min, the preferred format for digitally printing folding cartons. The Orient Jet press can be configured as a hybrid by adding flexo coating and converting modules.

UV Graphics launched its AI Ultraflex UFO-5 press in a 450 mm wide, 8-color dual servo configuration. The press runs materials from 8-micron film to 400 GSM folding cartons.

Abhay Dutta, director of UV Graphics, shares: 'The press showcased India's first indigenously developed servo-controlled vary gap system for die-cutting labels and IML.'

The press features hot and cold foil stamping, rotary screen, and in-line die-cutting. The AI functionality automatically calculates tension and print pressure parameters based on material type. The press includes a 100 percent defect detection system developed in cooperation with Deco Systems of Italy.

The UFO-5 was demonstrated running to 200 m/min with perfect register on 12-micron BOPP and curing through GEW LeoLED water-cooled LED-UV units.

The company also launched the entry-level Ultraflex EFO 370 8K, a basic 8-color machine retailing at around 116,000 USD.

Weigang demonstrated a 10-color ZJR-450 sleeve-equipped servo-driven UV flexo press. The press runs at 180 m/min and has chilled impression cylinders.

Digital presses

APL Machinery demonstrated its Quantum Jet 47 UV inkjet press, which uses Epson printheads printing at 70 m/min in up to seven colors (CMYKW+OGV).

APL also showcased a roll-to-roll screen printing press and the compact Afinia X350 digital press. The company introduced its LED UV systems for retrofitting label presses.

Arrow Digital introduced its ArrowJet UV single-pass UV LED inkjet printer, which operates at speeds up to 122 m/min (400 ft/min) at a resolution of 600 DPI using Kyocera heads. The maximum print width is 430 mm (17in).

The press uses a Fiery Impress print server and can be configured with up to seven colors, including White.

Arrow also showed its ArrowJet Bolt water-based pigment inkjet press, incorporating Memjet's latest DuraBolt press-wide module. The Bolt prints four colors in a compact dual print unit at a width of 324 mm. It prints at speeds of up to 150 m/min.

Domino launched a new digital integration module specific to the Indian market, the N610i-H, in partnership with flexo press manufacturer UV Graphic Technologies.

The 340 mm wide N610i-H is based on Domino's established N610i print engine with an Esko DFE and fixed 5-color engine (CMYK+W). The N610i-H was integrated into a UV Graphic Technologies

Dominator 370 hybrid press, incorporating two UV flexo stations, one laying down an in-line primer.

Selvaraj Venkatesh, managing director of **Durst's** distributor **Newgen Printronics**, says the Durst Tau press is gaining traction in India. The company was demonstrating the entry-level Tau 330 RSC E, which uses the same imaging technology as the company's top-of-the-range machines.

Venkatesh says the company sold a Durst Tau 340 RSC LM to Pondicherry-based Dolphin Graphics.

HP Indigo collaborated with local partner **Technova Imaging Systems** to exhibit an HP Indigo 6K Digital Press and its PrintOS automation ecosystem, which now includes a spot master module that allows users to reach spot colors within minutes.

Danish inkjet systems integrator **Markprint** demonstrated a mono piezo on-demand inkjet printer. The company integrates various inkjet heads depending on the application, including retrofits onto flexo presses to print 2D codes.

Monotech Systems demonstrated its Jetsci KolorSmart+ UV inkjet label press for the first time at Labelexpo India. The press can print on a wide range of materials, including paper, film and synthetic substrates. It has already been installed by 15 printers worldwide.

Pulisi, represented by **Intergraphic Sales and Services**, demonstrated the 330 mm (13in) wide Aobead Dsmart UV inkjet press configured with a flexo priming station, white and CMYK+OGV. The company sold two machines from the show floor.

Finishing and plate making

Increasing demand for personalized short-run labels drives demand for digital finishing, while automated finishing machines improve efficiency and minimize waste. The show featured sustainable

plate-making technologies focused on reducing environmental impact and enhancing production.

Esko promoted its complete range of products from pre-press to final platemaking systems.

Flexo Image Graphics (FIG)

demonstrated machines from **Rhyguan**, **DCM ATN**, **Mark Andy** and **Luster**. The company reported a successful show and sold five DCM ATN systems to Zircon, one Rhyguan Top 520 dual die-cutting machine to Meraki Propack, and two Rhyguan Smart 450 slitter rewinders with Luster 100 percent inspection cameras to Innovative Label and MD Graphics.

Gourav Roy, managing director of FIG, says: 'It was one of the most successful editions of Labelexpo India to date for FIG. On all three days of the show, we received an overwhelming response from visitors showing keen interest in our machines. We feel great that some landmark machine deals were announced during the show.'

Miraclon showcased the opportunities and benefits of modern flexo and how it enables converters to achieve their efficiency, sustainability and quality goals while maximizing returns. The booth showcased real-life case studies of commercial successes with Flexcel NX technology.

Monotech Systems unveiled the dSpark Hybrid+ digital embellishment system, which combines digital embellishments with converting and finishing, enabling converters to create premium labels with tactile textures, spot varnishing, holographic foils and embossing.

Nippon Color introduced the VD330 digital label die-cutter, featuring unwinding, laminating, half-cutting (up to four heads), matrix removal, slitting and rewinding/sheeting. With AI-driven automatic job changeover via CCD camera,



"Labelexpo India provides us the perfect platform to showcase these innovative label products and technology and connect with customers looking for high-performance, sustainable labeling materials"

it offers easy job transitions without any operator intervention.

S Kumar Multi Products, distributor of **Zonten Europe** in India, sold three Zonten ZMQ-370 and 450 intermittent/complete rotary finishing machines, seven Zonten HMQ-350 and 450 high-speed flatbed die-cutting and foiling machines, and eight Zonten HFQ-350 and 450 high-speed slitter rewinders.

Comments Manish Hansoti, managing director of S Kumar Multi Products: 'We have had a tremendous time at Labelexpo India. We are extremely proud to have done so well. We booked so many machines. This shows the booming Indian economy and incredible growth in the label industry. The show has exceeded our expectations, and we hope to come back bigger and stronger next edition.'

UV Graphics demonstrated reportedly India's first in-line roll-to-roll flatbed silk screen printing machine with digital foil embellishment for high-speed screen printing and embossed digital cold foil. It also showed Ultraflex UDF-370, which is claimed to be India's first semi- and full-rotary finishing press with two flexo print units, die-cutting, digital printing and digital foiling capabilities.

Another new launch, the Ultraflex USR+ slitter rewinder, comes with fully Indigenous 100 percent defect detection in partnership with Lucid Imaging.

The high-speed Pony flatbed machine was also displayed for hot foil stamping, embossing and die-cutting with integrated waste rewind and 100 percent inspection. The company also presented the Core Max 2000, a high-speed automated core cutting machine with multi-program functionality.

Vinsak showcased its Label-Decore embellishment and finishing machine, which features embossing, digital foiling, cast-and-cure effects and variable data printing with customizable options.

Xsys showcased its Nyloflex flexographic printing plates for labels, highlighting ongoing improvements to meet market demands, including compatibility with eco-substrates, higher printing speeds and expanded applications. A key example is the Nyloflex FTV flat-top dot plate, designed for printing tags, labels and flexible packaging.

Materials

Packaging material manufacturers focused on promoting eco-friendly material alternatives. The show featured post-consumer recycled (PCR) plastics, paper-based labels and compostable films. Water-based inks and labels that support recycling processes were also prominent at the show, as well as the development of RFID applications in label materials.



"Sustainability driven by regulation and consumer demand is the most significant trend"

Addon FilmTech presented its range of WF-grade PET shrink films. It included its CSP-grade version, compatible with the PET recycling process, and another variant, the RSF-grade, composed of 30 percent PCR.

'With our range of WF-grade PET shrink films, you get the widest application range window, from printing compatibility with all types of printing inks to choosing the primary container, which can be made from any materials like PE, PP, glass, PET, and metals, among others. The shrink sleeve tunnel can be a steam, hot-air, or electric tunnel,' informs Smit Patel, director of Addon FilmTech.

Avery Dennison's booth showcased various products, including the Sustainable ADvantage portfolio featuring labels designed to minimize material use and promote recycling and reuse.

Saurabh Agarwal, vice president and general manager of Avery Dennison's materials group for South Asia, emphasizes: 'Sustainability driven by regulation and consumer demand is the most significant trend.'

Cosmo Films showcased Cosmo Synthetic Paper, a durable, waterproof, and tear-resistant material that resembles traditional paper.

Kulbhushan Malik, global business head of Cosmo Films, says: 'Labelexpo India provides us the perfect platform to showcase these innovative label products and technology and connect with customers looking for high-performance, sustainable labeling materials.'

Chiripal Polyfilms presented its biodegradable BOPP, PCR PET, and in-mold and top-coated pressure-sensitive labels. The company's booth also highlighted face-stock labels and release liners.

Nitish Verma, general manager of sales and marketing at Chiripal, notes: 'One huge area of development is sustainable products. We offer post-consumer recycled PET film with 80 percent recycled content.'

DIC, Sakata and Flint Group showcased

its latest innovations in UV flexo inks and sustainability-driven products. Flint Group displayed its EkoCure dual-cure inks, which can cure under traditional UV Hg and UV LED lamps and Flexocure Ancora. This UV flexo ink meets industry standards for indirect food contact.

Henkel debuted Technomelt PS 8011, a high-performance hot melt PSA crafted for labelstock applications.

Another key product at its booth was its Aquence PSA range, a sustainable, water-based option designed for versatile applications. The booth also featured the Loctite Duro-Tak, Eco, and Re range of PSAs, emphasizing the company's dedication to reducing carbon emissions, minimizing waste and supporting high-quality recycling in label production.

Highlighting **Kurz India's** deep interest in sustainability, it has developed thinner transfer products that minimize material consumption to reduce its CO2 footprint. Its new KPW slim product, which was highlighted at the show, has a six-micron carrier (down from the previous 10-micron) and results in 50 percent material-saving efforts. The company also showcased its Silver Line portfolio.

Saiden Chemical and HB Fuller showcased their water—and solvent-based PSAs. HB Fuller also exhibited its hotmelt adhesive, Swiftmelt 1892.

Siegwerk showcased its non-low-migration Sicura Flex Dual Cure series, which complies with the EuPIA Exclusion Policy for Printing Inks.

The company also presented a portfolio of low-migration inks, including water-based, solvent-based, UV and EB products suitable for offset, gravure and flexo printing.



Scan the QR code to read about more trends from the Indian label market





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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.



polilux

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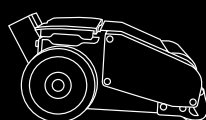
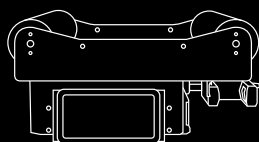
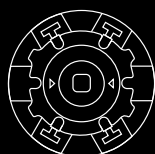
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Addressing gender gap in India's label industry

Despite the technological advancements and growth of the Indian packaging and labeling industry continues to struggle with the underrepresentation of women in technical and operational roles. Akanksha Meena reports

Despite advancements in India's label and flexible packaging sector, women remain underrepresented, especially in technical and operational roles. This gender gap limits diversity, innovation, and growth, particularly on the male-dominated shopfloor.

To address this challenge, Labelexpo India 2024 hosted a Women in Print luncheon, gathering women leaders from leading companies in the label industry. Led by Jade Grace, managing director of Labelexpo Global Series, the discussion revolved around the low representation of women and strategies to encourage their participation and success in the field.

Strategies shared

Sonal Sheth, director of Sheth Printograph, proposes a four-fold strategy to increase women's participation in the industry. 'Increasing awareness at the education level, where more young women are encouraged to take STEM as a subject, will create a pool of candidates to be absorbed in the corporate world,' she says.

'Management should change their mindset to include more women in their core functions of production, planning, design and R&D, rather than limiting them to marketing, finance and HR. Companies must also formulate conducive policies and incentive structures flexible for women.'

She adds that women should be offered equal representation in public forums and speaking opportunities, to showcase their intellect and capabilities.

Ashima Ahuja, director of Multitec, highlights the cultural barriers that discourage women from participating in shopfloor roles. 'Multitec is a traditional engineering company with a state-of-the-art machine shop and an expansive R&D division. We actively participate in job fairs at engineering colleges to recruit top talent, yet it's disappointing to see so few women opting for shopfloor experience. A successful R&D designer must work closely with the shop floor, but in India, this space remains predominantly male-dominated—a cultural barrier we need to address. Breaking this stereotype is vital to fostering diversity.'

The industry must focus on transforming mindsets at the grassroots level.



(L-R) Sonal Sheth, director, Sheth Printograph; Ashima Ahuja, director, Multitec; Jade Grace, managing director of Labelexpo Global Series; Priyanka Rathi, head of marcom, Holostik; Bhavprita Harshawardhan, director of digital solutions South Asia at Avery Dennison; Priyanka Singla, director- segment development and sustainability, label and graphic materials, South Asia, Avery Dennison India; Benita Paul, head of marketing - Asia, Siegwert; Isha Deshpande, director, Trigon Digipack; and Akanksha Meena, global brands editor at Labels & Labeling

“A successful R&D designer must work closely with the shopfloor, but in India, this space remains predominantly male-dominated – a cultural barrier we need to address”

Encouraging diversity and inclusion in engineering from an early stage will build a more equitable and innovative industry.

Bhavprita Harshawardhan, director of digital solutions at Avery Dennison in South Asia, adds: 'The industry must create visibility about its opportunities and equitable workplaces for women. Role model women leaders should become more visible and share their positive experiences in the industry. And companies should consciously create policies and workplaces more suitable for women.'

Priyanka Singla, director of segment development and sustainability, label and graphic materials, South Asia, Avery Dennison India, stressed that the industry needs women leadership more than ever. 'When any industry faces peculiar urgency around innovation, new ideas, inclusion, high profitability and upliftment across the value chain, it always benefits significantly when women assume leadership roles.'

She also notes that manufacturing setups are upgrading to bring in the latest technology and want young talent to join. To attract young talent, they also need to see empathetic leaders making decisions at these organizations.

Singla highlights companies such as Avery Dennison for setting an example. 'Several myths around our industry need to be busted, especially about difficult

working conditions or male-dominated teams. This onus is on the industry forerunners such as Avery Dennison, which has specific mandates to have 25 percent above manager-plus women employees and has put in place a rigorous mechanism to train in-house talent to take senior roles.'

Shagun Walia, head of marketing communication at Avery Dennison for South Asia and Southeast Asia, echoes the strides women have made at the company. 'Though historically underrepresented in manufacturing, women are now leading change in labels and print, driving innovation and progress. At Avery Dennison, we take immense pride in cultivating an environment where talent thrives, irrespective of gender. Women here are leading critical initiatives across strategy, operations, and innovation, proving that this industry holds vast opportunities for those with passion and vision.'

Achieving gender equality in India's label and packaging industry requires shifting mindsets, creating opportunities, and breaking stereotypes. Inclusive workplaces and strong female leadership will unlock the next generation's potential.



To read more from Labelexpo India 2024, turn to page 64

Adapting to change: PrintLounge powers up with digital production

A family-owned company in New Zealand has turned to digital innovation to meet the dynamic demands of the label industry, positioning itself for growth and agility, Piotr Wnuk reports

PrintLounge, an independent, family-owned and operated printer based on Auckland's North Shore, is celebrating a quarter-century in business this year.

'We provide complete print service for corporate clients and small business owners, graphic designers and advertising agencies, marketing specialists and individuals — simply anyone looking for quality print services,' says Greg Daniel, general manager at PrintLounge.

The company had long been recognized in the market for its expertise in offset printing, which formed the backbone of its operations. The company primarily operated sheet-fed presses, earning a solid reputation for quality and reliability.

However, in 2016, it took a significant step forward by purchasing its first Komori H-UV press, a move that marked the beginning of a significant transformation.

Building on this momentum, the company expanded into the LED-UV printing space, further modernized its digital equipment, and strategically diversified its production capabilities to enter the growing labels market.

'We've evolved into a commercial packaging company with a focus on digital printing that also produces roll labels,' says Daniel. 'When we initially ventured into roll labels, we were just testing the waters with a basic CMYK toner-based machine. However, it quickly became clear that we needed more — white ink capabilities and a broader color gamut were essential to meet our customers' demands.'

Steve Sheppard, owner of PrintLounge, made the pivotal decision to invest in the Durst Tau 340 RSC E LED during the closing hours of Labelexpo Europe 2023 in Brussels.

'We needed a machine that could take us beyond the capabilities of our existing label press, which was limited to CMYK and had a restricted color gamut,' Sheppard explains. 'We wanted to choose a path that set us apart from the competition, and that's why we went in this direction. It's proven to be a successful move.'

He adds, 'With the upgrade, we aimed to expand our color gamut and add white ink so we could print on clear and silver polypropylene stocks, opening up a much broader range of label jobs. Our previous machine served us well, but we started losing opportunities because it lacked orange, green, and white ink, all of which the Durst delivers.'

Before purchasing the Durst, Sheppard initially considered another press with a 600 DPI resolution, believing the Durst might be beyond his budget.

However, after further consideration, he recognized the value the Durst offered despite its slightly higher price point. The press stood out for its superior build quality, 1,200 DPI resolution, extended color gamut, and white ink capabilities.

'We conducted extensive research over a nine-month period, which included trips to Australia to inspect various machines in Melbourne and Brisbane,' Sheppard reflects. 'During my visits, I met with several printers using Durst machines, including the 1,200 DPI model and an older version. They all spoke highly of Durst's technology.'

Digitalization to meet customers' demands

After its installation a few months ago, PrintLounge became the

first converter to operate this machine in New Zealand.

The Durst Tau RSC 340 E LED label press was installed a few months ago to expand its capabilities further. It offers a print quality of 1,200 DPI running at 80m/min, at a native resolution and features Fuji Samba print heads and running speeds of 80m/min CMYK and 52m/min CMYKW.

'The speed is incredible, and it directly impacts the machine's overall performance,' Daniel notes. 'Everything has changed — from the stunning high resolution it achieves to the brilliant white it lays down — all at 50 m/min. And knowing we can upgrade it to 80m/min is just remarkable. All we are focusing on now is getting jobs out the door.'

According to Daniel, the new press has completely transformed PrintLounge's operations.

'The software powers the machine, and within minutes, we have ink usage data for a quote. Our pre-press team can make color corrections or any necessary adjustments with just the click of a button,' he says.

The press is equipped with the new HawkEye auto inspect and correct software, introduced at Labelexpo Europe 2023. This system includes a scanner, workstation and touchscreen monitor designed to detect and correct print issues like missing nozzles in real-time, in-line. In the rare case of a printhead nozzle malfunction, the integrated artificial intelligence (AI) automatically detects and localizes the problem without affecting speed. Nearby nozzles compensate by using larger drops, and no additional setup or special test patterns are required from operators.

“We wanted to choose a path that set us apart from the competition, and that’s why we went in this direction. It’s proven to be a successful move”



PrintLounge decided to purchase Durst Tau 340 RSC E LED during the closing hours of Labelexpo Europe 2023



The company's confidence in the Digicon has led to the acquisition of another unit from A B Graphic International

“Diversification is key to survival. You can't keep doing the same thing or you'll fall behind”

Sheppard is also very impressed with the experience of working with Durst workflow. The company pre-press specialists continue to discover new features, such as the ability to create die lines and manage white ink directly within the software. Tasks that are typically difficult with other pre-press software became effortless with just the click of a button.

The company, excited about the new machine, shared its enthusiasm with its followers on LinkedIn: 'Our latest press is now up and running. Our Durst Tau 340 RSC E LED is one impressive machine, upping our label production output and quality enormously. Training is complete, and jobs are flowing to completion. It's amazing that quality and speed can combine so effortlessly.'

'Since we installed the Durst, we have brought back in-house a number of customers that we previously had to outsource to other label companies,' notes Sheppard.

Finishing to match print quality

To meet the demands of new business and the increasing volume of orders, PrintLounge recognized the need to upgrade its finishing equipment to match the exceptional quality of its print output. This decision was driven by the growing importance of high-quality finishing, a need that brands have consistently emphasized. In response, PrintLounge carefully considered its options and ultimately decided to invest in A B Graphic's Digicon, a decision they have never regretted.

Daniel highlights the superior performance of the Digicon. 'It's an excellent piece of equipment with superb engineering, amazing service, and outstanding accuracy and speed,' he says.

This praise reflects the machine's technical capabilities and the reliable support provided by A B Graphic.

Daniel adds that the company's confidence in the Digicon has led to the acquisition of another unit. 'We've just purchased another machine from the Digicon Lite 3 Series, which will be arriving soon,' he says. Sheppard echoes this sentiment, expressing excitement about the company's second ABG machine.

'Our first machine has exceeded all expectations, which made it the obvious choice for us when it came time to invest in a second unit,' Sheppard explains. 'While we explored other options, we firmly believe that ABG offers the perfect solution for our current needs, as well as the future growth we anticipate in the label and packaging markets. This investment reflects our commitment to both quality and innovation, positioning us for success in a rapidly evolving industry.'

Looking back, Daniel reflects that when PrintLounge began developing its roll label section, they didn't fully understand the requirements—everything was completely new to them.

'We thought that one Digicon would suffice for our converting requirements. It's laughable now, but we quickly realized that something more nimble was required to keep up with production,' he says.

This ultimately led the company to invest in a Daco DT250, a table-mounted slitter rewinder. The decision to choose Daco Solutions was largely influenced by their close proximity to ABG, shared values, and numerous positive recommendations.

'This, along with the Digicon, managed our converting for a year until we realized we had outgrown both, prompting us to invest in another piece of finishing equipment from Daco Solutions,' adds Daniel.

The Daco PLR350 turret slitter rewinder was the answer, allowing PrintLounge to take jobs directly off the Digicon and finish them, as the company could now handle a 350mm web.

'The arrival of the Daco PLR350 was two weeks behind the arrival of our second Digicon and it has been revolutionary. For instance, we have one particular job that would take 1.5 days to slit and rewind. This is now accomplished in 4.5 hours,' notes Daniel. 'The arrival of the Durst Tau RSC E LED last year made us re-evaluate our conversion, as the output from that press was so much higher than that of our previous printer. I think that the Daco PLR350 has given us breathing space, and we are where we want to be for now.'

Diversification is key

As PrintLounge continues to innovate and expand, its strategic investment in digital technology, including the Durst Tau 340 RSC E LED press, reflects a commitment to staying ahead in an ever-evolving market. The company's dedication to improving its operations, from print quality to finishing, ensures it remains well-positioned to meet the growing demand for high-quality labels and packaging.

PrintLounge is setting a strong foundation for continued success in the competitive label and packaging industry, focusing on diversification, operational excellence and customer satisfaction. As the company embraces new technologies and refines its processes, it is not only keeping pace with industry changes but actively driving them, reaffirming its role as a forward-thinking leader in New Zealand's print market.

'We're definitely focused on diversifying here at PrintLounge,' Sheppard explains. 'Looking back 10 years, we didn't have a digital offering, but now it makes up a solid double-digit percentage of our turnover. Diversification is key to survival. You can't keep doing the same thing, or you'll fall behind.'

'Like many businesses, we started as a conventional printer, and now we offer commercial print, packaging, digital printing and roll labels. Our move into roll labels has been one of our best decisions, especially with the label market growing here in New Zealand.'

Labels and label-related products have become a significant focus for the company, growing exponentially and making for an exciting and rewarding journey. Looking ahead, the next step will likely involve enhancing label embellishments.

'This is an area we've been considering for some time, but the key questions are what to prioritize and how to approach it. We've always prided ourselves on being innovative, and we're eager to bring that spirit to the next phase of our growth,' concludes Daniel.



Scan the QR code to learn more about PrintLounge



Label Forum highlights Japanese innovation

Japanese digital printing technology was a highlight of the Label Forum Japan 2024. Yukiko Suzuki reports

Label Forum Japan 2024, held at the Tokyo Big Sight venue from October 23-25, attracted a record number of exhibiting companies, many of which showcased Japanese technology innovations.

Organized by Label Shimbun, the event hosted 108 companies and attracted 8,813 visitors, including label, flexible packaging and folding carton converters, printers, brand owners and industry suppliers.

As the only and largest label industry event in Japan, Label Forum Japan has been held every two years since 2008. It has become a well-established event for Japanese label industry professionals.

Label Forum featured live demonstrations of digital presses exhibited for the first time in Asia and Japan, as well as compact flexographic presses and intermittent letterpress aimed at improving production efficiency. In addition, many Japanese manufacturers exhibited the latest materials and technology, including sustainable labelstocks and a new eBeam (EB) curing system.

New exhibitors at the 2024 show accounted for 34 percent of the total. The percentage of companies showing equipment was 43 percent, one third of which was accounted for by international suppliers.

Digital

Japan is home to the highest number of digital print manufacturers worldwide. Many domestic manufacturers exhibited their equipment at Label Forum. Digital print made up 17 percent of all exhibitors.

Epson used the event to launch its new SurePress L-5034 water-based inkjet press, with a live demonstration that captured significant attention. Several Japanese label converters signed purchase contracts, and installations will begin later this year.

The new SurePress L-5034 water-based inkjet press uses a high-speed single-pass system instead of the multi-pass system of Epson's existing water-based inkjet models, enabling approximately four times faster printing speed.

The press uses Epson's newly designed 1,200 DPI print head. The AQ Optimizer and Hybrid Dryer, also newly developed, are designed to match offset print quality in a single pass.



Epson unveiled a new press at Label Forum

“Japan is home to the highest number of digital print manufacturers in the global market. Many domestic manufacturers exhibited their equipment at Label Forum”

More than 700 of Epson's SurePresses, both water-based and UV, operate worldwide, with over 130 in Japan.

Canon recently announced its entry into the label market with the debut of the LabelStream LS2000 water-based inkjet press. The company also showed the press at drupa and Labelexpo Americas 2024. At Label Fourm, Canon displayed an 8-inch-wide label printer.

Konica Minolta exhibited the AccurioLabel 400 toner press, and Twocat, a design system that utilizes AI image generation.

Echo Denki demonstrated an upgraded UV-based inkjet press, the PJ-170A. Despite its compact size, the machine uses a center drum for web transport and showed off its stable printing quality on both adhesive papers and film-based materials.

Exhibiting through its Japanese-owned parent company Brother, **Domino** discussed its N730i UV-based inkjet press, print bars and label printers.

CTC Japan introduced the fully customizable UV inkjet module, the Stream Jet. This module specializes in single-color printing and handles variable information. Applications range from powering smaller label presses to adding digital capability to high-speed flexo presses.

Oki Electric Industry exhibited the PLAVI Pro1050, a toner-based full-color

label printer, and the Pro330S, a compact model. With a resolution of 1,200 DPI, the company promoted its ability to handle small-lot labels. Kyoueishikou in Kyoto was the first label converter in Japan to install the PLAVI Pro1050 in 2019.

Mimaki Engineering demonstrated the UCJV300-75 print and cut UV-LED inkjet printer. The equipment combines the high productivity and high image quality of the flagship 330 Series with the company's UV printing technology to significantly improve productivity and image quality compared to previous models.

Roland DG demonstrated a range of print systems including a desktop-sized compact model and the production of water transfer decals.

Star Marketing Japan exhibited a wide variety of label printers. The company said that demand in the food delivery industry is increasing.

Net & Print, a label converter, also offers the NAPPASS series of label printers for the industrial sector. The printers can produce labels that meet Section 3 of the BS5609 standard.

Durst's distributor KK Iris demonstrated the TAU 340 RSC-E, which gained attention for its high-definition print samples featuring a 1,200 DPI resolution using UV inkjet technology. The TAU 340 RSC-E has a proven track record in various

“The event hosted 108 companies and attracted 8,813 visitors, including label, flexible packaging and folding carton converters, printers, brand owners and industry suppliers”

fields including security applications. ‘We are also aiming to increase the number of installations in the Japanese market,’ Durst says.

Screen GP Japan exhibited the Bizpress13R digital printing press from **Valloy** (Korea) in cooperation with Kanematsu. The company said it will focus on sales development in the Japanese market.

In addition, **Xeikon** and **HP** showed various label samples. **Anytron** (Bitek, Korea) and **Zeiser** (Germany, the Japanese distributor is Technowave) also exhibited.

Conventional and post press

Taiyo Kikai unveiled its newly developed ultra-compact flexo press, the TCR-200F Tutti, and the compact TCR-200 Tutti rotary letterpress. The ultra-compact flexo machine has a total length of 5.15m (6-color).

Sanjo Machine Works demonstrated its JNAS intermittent letterpress along with the CMAS color monitoring and adjustment system.

Among the many post-press machines exhibited at the show, **Iwasaki International** unveiled its R330 compact die-cutting machine. This equipment is based on an entirely new concept that combines flat-bed and rotary processes. It is compact, affordable, and does not require skilled labor.

Sanki Machinery demonstrated its SL-Auto slitter rewinder with a twin axis turret winding mechanism.

Comnet showed the new Combat laser die-cutting machine from Italian manufacturer SEI for the first time in Japan. The compact machine measures 2.3m.

Materials

Exhibitors presented a variety of new environmentally friendly and specialist self-adhesive materials for label printing, attracting the attention of label converters and Japanese brand owners.

Lintec presented environmentally friendly self-adhesive products including its MMP (monomaterial polyester) that uses polyester resin, the same material used for PET containers, for the labels base material and adhesive. The company promoted the labels as perfect for recycling since they adhere securely to the container and can be removed easily, with the ink peeling off along with the label.

Oji Tack introduced its Metal Tone Tack metallization technology offering a

high-intensity gloss and can be used in microwave ovens and metal detectors. The company also previewed paper-based thermal self-adhesive materials that are resistant to alcohol.

Label converters

Six label converters exhibited at the show, including Osaka Sealing Printing, Sato, Yukosha, Shinwa Label Printing, Net & Print and Toyo Label, showcasing their latest products to brand owners.

Osaka Sealing Printing exhibited advanced label products, including media for UV laser marking, heat-resistant thermal labels and flexible packaging printed using EB curing technology.

OSP Labelstock will exhibit self-adhesive materials for the first time at **Labelexpo Europe 2025**.

Sato displayed a wide variety of label samples. In addition to environmental initiatives such as the release liner recycling and linerless labels, the company displayed its electronic tags, giving visitors the chance to store information on NFC tags and read them using a smartphone.

Yukosha demonstrated its proprietary Steam Valve labeling system and received several inquiries from food packaging machinery manufacturers.

Shinwa Label Printing presented its ‘Sengan’ traceability service, which utilizes NFC labels. It showcased security labels on Japanese sake bottles, which attracted significant attention.

Toyo Label showed decorative transfer labels, which use a raised processing technology to create a tactile effect. This label is typically used on cosmetics, perfumes, liquor bottles, fishing tackle and machine nameplates. In recent years, overseas luxury perfume and champagne manufacturers have widely adopted it.

A ‘Label Pavilion’ was held alongside the main event in the label products area. It showcased new label products from 91 Japanese and international companies, drawing the attention of label users, brand owners, label converters and printers.

Label Shimbun is the company in the Japanese label market that has been publishing a trade newspaper since 1969. The company also releases a market research book on Japan’s label market every March.



Label Forum Japan will return from October 14 -16, 2026, at Tokyo Big Sight.

News

Valloy begins sale of Bizpress13R digital press in Japan

Valloy Incorporated has reported that it will sell its Bizpress13R digital roll label press in the Japanese domestic printing market in collaboration with Screen GP Japan and Kanematsu.

Through this collaboration, Valloy aims to expand the reach of digital printing machines and related products in the Japanese market by combining Screen GP Japan’s technical and sales capabilities and its nationwide network in Japan, and offer maintenance leveraging Kanematsu’s knowledge of nearly 30 years in the printer business and its overseas network.

The company has been selling the Bizpress13R toner digital label printing machine since October 23, 2024, through Kanematsu and Screen GP Japan with the aim of promoting digitalization in Japanese label printing industry, which is dominated by analog printing machines.

Konica Minolta Mechatronics achieves renewable electricity goal

Konica Minolta Mechatronics, Konica Minolta’s production site for digital printing systems in Japan, has achieved its goal of procuring 100 percent of its electricity from renewable sources. Consequently, all of Konica Minolta Group’s global production sites that manufacture MFPs and digital printing systems (excluding those of toner) have achieved the goal of procuring 100 percent of their electricity from renewable sources.

Konica Minolta Mechatronics installed a solar power generation system at its head office in 2021, which provides about 13 percent of the electricity required by the head office plant. The company attained the goal of procuring 100 percent of its electricity from renewable sources by purchasing and applying non-fossil certificates with tracking at its four sites in total, including the head office plant, in FY2024.

Labelexpo South China 2024

Four years since the last event, Labelexpo South China 2024 presented the latest technologies, materials and applications driving the label industry forward in China's industrial heartland. Yolanda Wang reports

Labelexpo South China 2024 broke all records with over 200 exhibitors, 45 percent more than the 2020 edition. It showcased digital and conventional presses, label and packaging materials, inks and coatings, pre-press and platemaking technologies, as well as finishing and inspection equipment.

Digital technology

Labelexpo South China 2024 saw the global launch of exciting new digital/hybrid press technologies, including a highly automated hybrid flexo-inkjet press developed jointly by **Spande** and **General Inkjet Printing**, while **Zonten** launched its first digital press, the ZTD-P5235.

Digital printing technology was a highlight of the show. International suppliers like HP and Epson and local suppliers like **Weigang**, **Runtianzhi**, **GIP (General Inkjet Printing Technology)**, **Pulisi**, **Haotian**, **Arojet** and **Zonten** showcased their latest digital presses.

HP Indigo showcased an ecosystem of technologies based around its 6K Digital Press. There were also several successful users at the company's booth, demonstrating a range of different applications using digital printing technology, such as **Wellking**, one of HP Indigo's established customers in the anti-counterfeiting label segment. 'We invested in our first HP Indigo 6600 in 2005, and in 2023, we invested in the HP Indigo 6K, thus transforming our business by combining holographic and data-driven anti-counterfeiting technology,' says Miss Zhang, president of Wellking.

Epson showcased its desktop digital printers and a new networking technology. The CW-C6030 is equipped with a label applicator to create an entire system for customized print and application of labels for bottled water or wine. The C7520G, combined with anti-counterfeiting software, enables prepack food manufacturers to print key information such as ingredients, origin, date and allergens on the label, and, at the same time, print anti-counterfeiting codes by linking to a secure data management server.

Zonten announced the debut of its ZTD-P5235 digital press, which uses Epson S3200 printheads with five colors (CMYK+W), covering about 85 percent of the Pantone color gamut. The opaque white allows printing on transparent and metallic materials.

Weigang showcased four presses, two of which were digital, the WG S350 Pro and WG S230. The WG S350 Pro digital UV inkjet press prints at speeds of up to 60 m/min offering a print width of up to 350 mm. Print resolution is up to 1,200 x 600 DPI, with 900 x 600 DPI and 600 x 600 DPI also available. The WG S350 Pro uses GGS graphic software from Hybrid Software, which handles the workflow, including color management. The compact WG S230 digital press can be used both for customized printing and proofing, with a print width of up to 230 mm. The machine supports a maximum roll diameter of 700 mm, reducing the time spent on material loading and unloading.

Haotian launched its new HGP-220/330 digital label press, which uniquely integrates both Kyocera and Xaar printheads.

Guangdong Arojet showcased its iHEM-330 and E-C-440 inkjet presses. The iHEM-330 prints up to eight colors. A range of modules are available, including flexo coating and foil stamping. The E-C-440 is a water-based inkjet press targeted at business and commercial printing applications on materials including coated paper, newsprint, coated board and rice

paper. 'We received eight orders at the show, which was beyond our expectations,' says Richard Liu, project manager of Guangzhou Arojet's labels division.

Hybrid printing technology, combining digital printing technology with traditional flexo printing, was also strongly highlighted at Labelexpo South China 2023.

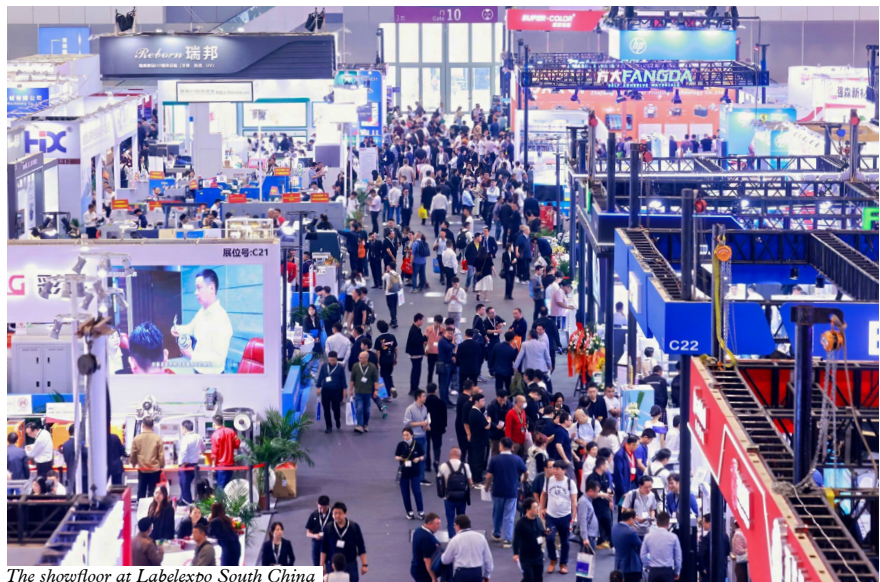
The first-time exhibitor **GIP** debuted its Label Modular series, developed in cooperation with flexo press specialist **Spande**. The Label Modular HD uses Kyocera print heads printing at a resolution of 1,200 x 1,200 DPI on a 520 mm print width. It prints in up to eight colors, CMYK+W and three spot colors.

The Label Modular adopts a highly modular design and can be configured with a range of units, including flexo printing and coating, cold/hot stamping, die-cutting and laminating.

'Our Label Modular Series hybrid label printer was very popular at this exhibition, attracting the attention of domestic and foreign label customers, and we signed several orders,' notes Huang Xuebin, CEO of GIP. The first Label Modular machine have been sold to AP Label, a Chinese label converter with a 24-year history.

Runtianzhi showed its Orca 350 press,

"The show demonstrated the strength of China's PS materials industry, with key trends including sustainability and the continued growth of thermal linerless labels"



The showfloor at Labelexpo South China



Label Modular HD press developed by GIP-Spande

“During the show, HanGlobal signed a strategic cooperation agreement with Esko and Fiery to deliver a customized Digital Front-End (DFE) for its LabStar series UV-inkjet label presses”

which prints at 1,200 x 1,200 DPI resolution at 100 m/min (328 ft/min) with seven colors (CMYKWOV). The press is configured with a flexo station for white or primer and a dedicated inkjet varnish unit for digital embellishment or spot coating. It can also be optionally configured with additional flexo, cold foil and laminating modules.

The company also showed its mono Swift 440 duplex for book production, operating at 140 m/min speed at 1,200 x 1,200 DPI resolution. The press handles paper from 45 to 157 grams, including adhesive paper, coated paper, newsprint and other paper types.

‘I think Labelexpo is not only a show for the label industry, but also for packaging and publishing industries,’ says Sunny Yu, vice general manager of Shenzhen Ruantianzhi. ‘That is why we also showed our book press. We finished with 14 machine orders during the three days, six for label printing and eight for book production, which is beyond our expectations.’

Weigang showcased its servo-driven ZJR S350 Pro Hybrid flexo/digital press which uses sleeve technology for the flexo units, all seamlessly integrated with the digital print engine, enabling one-pass 10-color printing.

Label Source showed its Hanlabel hybrid press, which was developed in cooperation with HanGlobal. The company’s stand-alone in-line flexo press has a total installation base exceeding 400 units in the global market. The Hanlabel hybrid press can be configured with a

range of modules, including flexo stations before or after the digital print unit, digital embossing/foil stamping, auto registration and in-line inspection.

During the show, **HanGlobal** signed a strategic cooperation agreement with Esko and Fiery to deliver a customized Digital Front-End (DFE) for its LabStar series UV-inkjet label presses. ‘This integration will empower label converters with superior automation and color accuracy, streamlining production workflows and accelerating time to market,’ notes Hanglobal.

Pulisi showcased its DSMART-220 and DPIM-330 digital presses. The Aobead DPIM-330F hybrid press supports web widths up to 520 mm, and hybrid options include flexo print/coating, digital cold foil, digital varnish, laminating, slitting and defect quality management. The entry-level DSMART-220 digital press offers a resolution of 1,200 x 600 DPI and printing speeds up to 60 m/min, with an optional 330 mm width.

The standard mode is CMYK, and white is optional.

‘We have just finished the 200th installation of Aobead digital presses in countries including China, the US, Russia, Mexico, India, South Korea and Malaysia, with 35.8 percent of the installations being overseas. During this show, we received 11 orders,’ shares Song Feifei, sales director of Pulisi.

Conventional presses

Labelexpo South China 2024 also saw

a strong representation of conventional presses, both intermittent offset and in-line flexo.

Weigang showed its intermittent offset technology. ‘Conventional printing is still the main technology in the Chinese label industry, both offset and flexo presses, which are also our flagship products for Weigang,’ says Zhou Xiang, general manager of Weigang.

Zonten showcased its TEBA-450 in-line flexo press, which is fully servo-driven. Modules include cold foil, silk screen, turn bar, delam and relam, die cutter, slitting and sheeter.

Omet promoted its KFlex modular press, which uses the Switch system to change between modules, allowing printers to adapt the press configuration to a range of production needs. Each print group has an independent servo drive of impression roll and plate cylinder, and the Vision-1 automatic register operates in both print and horizontal directions. The press can be configured with extended dryers for water-based inks and coatings.

Hontec presented its modular FlexiCon servo-driven press, available in a web width of 350 mm and supporting up to 12 colors. The press features a variety of capabilities such as cold foil application, delam/relam, lamination, glue killing, double-side printing and more. It operates up to 150 m/min and is compatible with substrates ranging from 12 µm films to 350 GSM paper. A standout feature is Industry 4.0 connectivity, with fully automatic operation enabled by EtherCat motion control from Beckhoff of Germany, ensuring highly accurate registration.

Hongsheng promoted its in-line flexo press and closed three orders during the show.

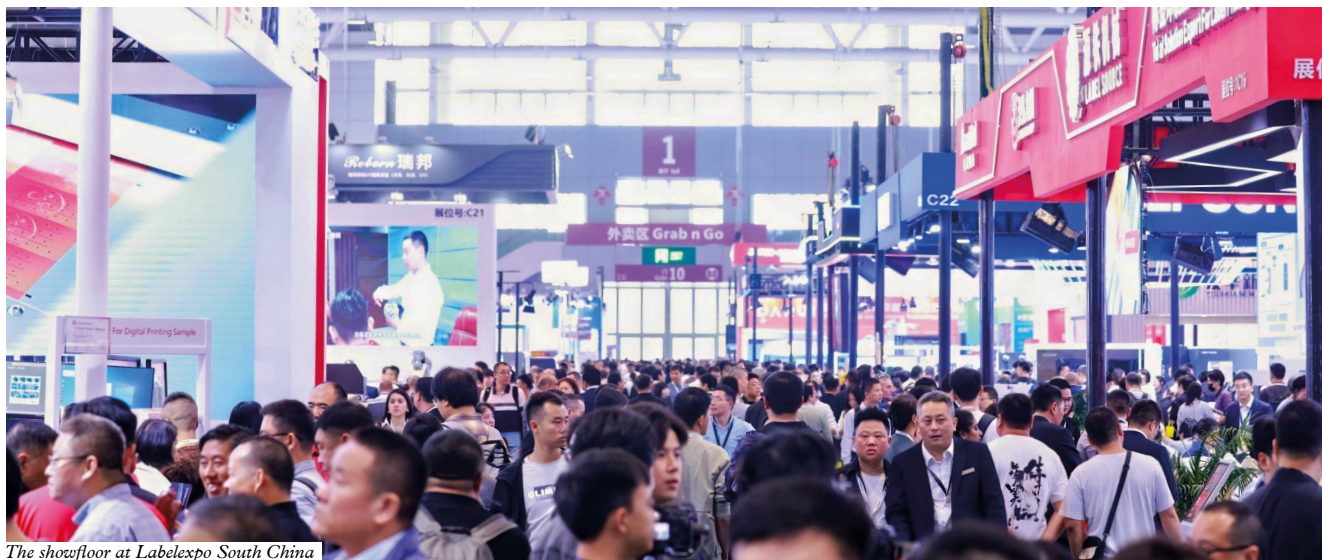
Caisheng showcased the CS-JQ350G offset press, which is capable of printing in semi-rotary mode at speeds of up to 60 m/min and 160 m/min in full rotary mode. The press includes cold foil stamping and an inspection camera.

Digital finishing technology

Another key trend at Labelexpo South China was digital finishing, which included die-cutting and embellishment technology.

Guangzhou SAPA, which specializes in hot stamping technology, showed its DMS product line designed for both flatbed and rotary applications for labels, pouches and folding cartons. Applications include Spot UV, 3D embossing, cast cure and holograms.

Darui showcased its J3 laser die-cutter, offering a linear cutting speeds of up to 50 m/min. It also features lamination, waste removal, slitting and sheeting. The company also showed its fully automated S



The showfloor at Labelexpo South China

“First-time exhibitor GIP debuted its Label Modular series developed in cooperation with flexo press specialist Spande”

Series digital plotter.

IECHO demonstrated the LCT350 laser die-cutting machine, which integrates automatic feeding, deviation correction and waste removal. The platform is suitable for different processing modes, such as roll-to-roll, roll-to-sheet and sheet-to-sheet. It will process materials, including self-adhesive labels and stickers, PP, PVC, cardboard and coated paper.

Ningbo Vorey showcased its toner-and inkjet-based digital presses along the full range of its digital die-cutters, from the desktop model VD240P to the production version of VD3350.

Reborn launched a new generation RBJ-Remix 3DW digital UV embellishment series. The machine is equipped with 2,000 m unwind and rewind units. The maximum printing speed is up to 55 m/min, depending on the substrate. The machine can apply tactile varnishes and Braille with fine text and lines and simulated hot stamping. Optional modules include a flexo coating unit, a digital cold foil unit, die-cutting, slitting and sheeting units.

Denchern showed DCFM370-SUPER series die-cutting machine, which is fully servo-driven and designed as a modular unit that can be combined with flatbed screen printing, flatbed hot stamping, semi-rotary flexo, semi-rotary die-cutting and slitting units.

Materials

The show demonstrated the strength of China's PS materials industry, with key trends including sustainability and the continued growth of thermal linerless labels for POS and retail applications. Materials suppliers included **Fedrigoni, Antac, Youhua, Soontomax, Piaozihua, Yupo, Likexin, Yinjinda, YG Group** and **Dangs**.

Fedrigoni highlighted its sustainable products, including Ri-Move PET and RF recyclable film.

'As China is a price-sensitive market, we focus a lot on value-adding into our products like the functionality and sustainability to help our customers to improve their competitive power, avoid vicious competition and make more profit,' shares Choy Wai Weng, general manager APAC at Fedrigoni Self-Adhesives.

Antac, a loyal follower of Labelexpo, promoted its thermal linerless labels for POS and retail applications.

'In my opinion, currently, Chinese companies are not focused on sustainability so much, or they don't want to use such materials because of the higher price and what they see as performance

differences with traditional materials. We are particularly promoting linerless labels to these companies,' comments Johnson Li for Antac.

RFID

A key feature of Labelexpo South China was the Smart Label Trail, which focused on all aspects of the fast-growing RFID label market. **CISC, CLS Auto, Hoaco, SDIOT, Dingtec, Voyantic** and **Zhilian Technology** took part in the trail and demonstrated the entire process of RFID label manufacturing.

Hoaco showed its RFID converting machine, including lamination, die-cutting, and rewinding and unwinding. The equipment is suitable for a wide range of applications, including alcohol, anti-counterfeit tags, e-train tickets, RFID clothing tags, RFID logistics tags, airport luggage tags and other multilayer composite RFID tags.

Voyantic demonstrated its RFID testing and quality assurance systems. The company specializes in RAIN RFID and NFC measurement and testing equipment for tag design, application development and production.

Xiamen SDIOT provides RFID tags and traceability management systems, focusing on supporting industries such as shoes and clothing, the book industry, warehousing and logistics and asset management. Services include label selection, antenna design, face label printing, adhesive selection, die cutting, personalized coding, performance inspection and data initialization to achieve a 'one-stop' service.

The second day of the show featured an RFID panel discussion, which discussed the opportunities and challenges for traditional label converters exploring the RFID business.

Other educational events included a candid panel discussion between leading label converters from China, Malaysia and India, a masterclass on PS label materials, and workshops on anti-counterfeiting and traceability label technologies.



The next Labelexpo show to take place in China is Labelexpo Asia 2025 in December. Scan the QR code to learn more



Livasta

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Features

Mono-materialized labelstock (same material) as the polyester container.

Designed for application to polyester surfaces, the material is constructed using the same material for the face film and the ADHESIVE.

Due to the unique surface treatment, the ink layer can be easily removed during the PET container recycling washing phase (warm alkaline water wash).

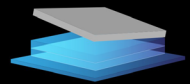
Advantages of mono-material labelstock compared to conventional labelstock

Conventional labelstock



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

Mono-material labelstock



Ink layer can be removed during recycling washing phase and all materials originate from the same chemical components so recycling efficiency increases.

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Doit installs first HP Indigo 200K in China

Flexible packaging specialist Doit has added new capacity to its existing fleet of HP Indigo presses to meet growing demands for short-run, just-in-time and personalized packaging. Yolanda Wang reports

Flexible packaging converter Doit has installed China's first HP Indigo 200K digital press to expand its digital production capabilities. The press joins an HP Indigo 20000 and HP Indigo 25K at the company.

Established in 2019 and headquartered in Foshan, Guangdong Province, Doit specializes in the digital printing of flexible packaging and supplies to both brand owners and conventional flexible packaging converters looking to outsource their short-run work.

Mrs Chai, COO of Doit, has more than 20 years of experience in the flexible packaging industry, most recently working for a gravure cylinder engraving company in South Asia.

Recalls Chai, 'At that time, I interacted with many traditional flexible packaging converters and gained a deep insight into the difficulties they encountered handling short-run flexible packaging products. Traditional gravure cylinder engraving not only takes a long time but also costs a lot. Aiming at this pain point, I pondered whether there was an alternative technology, just like the desktop printers in offices or stores, capable of effortlessly producing these short-run items.'

Chai first became aware of digital printing technology for flexible packaging in 2012.

'With the benefits of no plates, on-demand printing, and variable data capability, it precisely aligned with my vision. However, at that time, the technology was not yet mature.'

Chai closely monitored the progress of digital technology as it began to find commercial applications in the flexible packaging industry. Then, in 2019, she co-founded the Doit company with partners in Foshan, Guangdong Province, South China.

The company's philosophy was to leverage digital printing technology to offer short-run flexible packaging both to traditional flexible packaging converters, brand owners and print brokers. In the same year, Doit invested in its first digital press, an HP Indigo 20000.

'It took us only one month from the initial contact with HP to our decision to purchase,' Chai says. 'We conducted a comprehensive evaluation of the press in terms of its printing quality, performance and user feedback. Overall, it fully met all our requirements.'

After installing the HP Indigo 20000 in October 2019, Doit officially began operations.

'During the early phase, we did undergo a period of exploration,' recalls Chai. 'This was due to the many differences between digital printing and a traditional gravure workflow. Take pre-press file handling, for example, where the requirements of these two printing approaches vary significantly. Moreover, unlike the gravure process, which allows for manual ink adjustment, the inks for digital printing are fixed. Thankfully, our perseverance paid off. Through successive testing and adjustment, our technical and operational staff ultimately mastered the technology and began manufacturing flexible packaging products that met and exceeded our customers' expectations.'

Doit continued growing its business through the three years of the Covid-19 epidemic.

'To some extent, the pandemic even accelerated the market demand for small-batch flexible packaging products,' remarks



Mrs Chai, COO of Doit and Yolanda Wang, China editor L&L

"To some extent, the pandemic even accelerated the market demand for small-batch flexible packaging products"

Chai. 'Consequently, Doit's digital equipment gradually reached full capacity.'

This led Doit to invest in its second digital press in 2023, an HP Indigo 25k.

'By this time, we had gained recognition from our customers for our print quality, alongside increasing demands of brand owners for zero inventory, short delivery cycles and multi-version orders, and this quickly pushed the production capacity of the new press to saturation.'

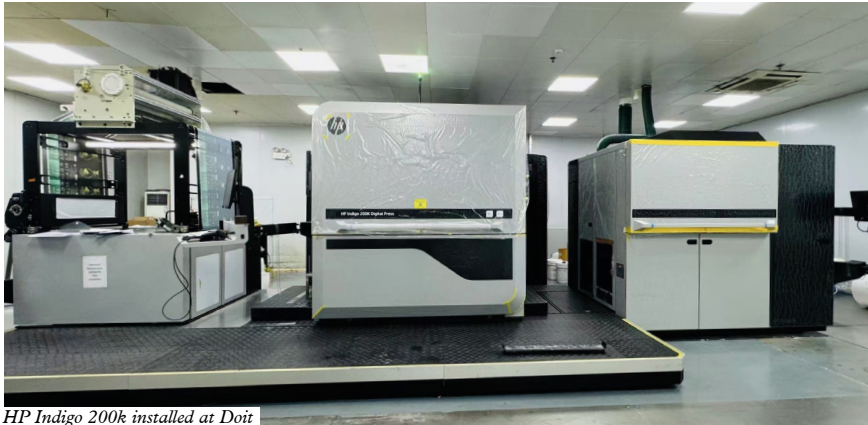
For Doit, digital printing technology complements analog production for flexible packaging production, allowing flexibility for small-run, personalized and sample orders.

Enhancing efficiency

In 2024, Doit purchased its third digital press, the recently launched HP Indigo 200K, to expand production capacity further.

'Currently, this new equipment has just finished debugging and will be operational shortly,' says Chai. 'Drawing on our experience of using the previous two HP digital presses, we anticipate that the new equipment will boost our production capacity by at least 50 percent or even more. This will significantly impact the company's productivity and delivery time.'

In the six years since it started operating, Chai has witnessed many changes in the short-run flexible packaging market in China.



HP Indigo 200k installed at Doit

“As the acceptance and application of digital printing technology in this market continues to rise, market competition has become increasingly intense”

‘As the acceptance and application of digital printing technology in this market continues to rise, market competition has become increasingly intense,’ she says. ‘Against the backdrop of a declining consumer market and an unstable international economic environment, brand owners now have new requirements for the quality and price of flexible packaging products. They demand higher quality products at lower costs, which has led to a continuous compression of the profit margins of flexible packaging converters. Fierce competition has emerged as a new development trend in the industry.’

The first countermeasure that Doit adopted was to boost the efficiency of its internal production processes.

‘For this new investment, what struck us is the improved printing speed of the HP Indigo 200K, which increased by about 30 percent compared to the HP Indigo 25K,’ says Chai. ‘We want to not only expand our production capacity but also provide customers with more efficient, lower cost and more flexible services and solutions with this machine.’

The company is now focused on streamlining its internal operations to reduce production cycle times and optimize resource utilization, thereby gaining a competitive edge in the highly competitive short-run flexible packaging market.

This strategic move not only addresses the immediate challenges of cost pressure and tight profit margins but also lays a solid foundation for Doit’s long-term sustainable development.

Materials innovation

Doit has been actively engaged in a series of far-reaching technological innovations both

in materials and applications with its HP Indigo presses. Many of these initiatives are pioneering in this industry, positioning Doit as a leader in the flexible packaging field.

To date, the company has successfully secured over 20 patents. These include patents for a high-barrier recyclable pack, which addresses the growing demand for environmentally friendly and durable packaging solutions.

Additionally, there is a patent for a flexible food pack equipped with a sealing device designed to better preserve the freshness and quality of food products. A patent has been obtained for a pack that enables easy identification of the tearing position, significantly enhancing user-friendliness and convenience during product usage.

Chai says Doit worked closely with HP during this period of rapid development. ‘The cooperation with HP always delighted and exceeded our expectations. Not only technological services, but HP also cooperates with us to explore new solutions for clients.’

For the future, Chai says Doit will ‘strive ceaselessly to break through the increasingly fierce price war’ by focusing on innovation, technology, quality and service.

‘By providing differentiated professional solutions, we not only serve our customers but also enhance the company’s market competitiveness, thus achieving a win-win situation.’



Labelexpo Asia in Shanghai returns in December 2025. Scan the QR code to learn more



News

Colink installs China’s first Domino N730i

Guangdong Kelin Digital Technology Co (Colink) has invested in the country’s first Domino N730i press. With this new installation, Colink aims to differentiate its premium label offering and meet evolving market needs.

The Domino N730i digital color label press features 1,200 DPI Brother Bitstar printhead technology and proprietary TPO-free inks, enabling Colink to produce fine details, including micro text and CJK characters, with high quality. The press is capable of high-resolution print at up to 70m/min across all colors, including high-opacity white.

‘Domino is a trusted name in the digital label printing market, and we were interested in experiencing the capabilities of the N730i and whether they would suit our needs,’ said Lan Qiang, general manager of Colink. ‘Our purchase decision was based on the quality and resolution of the labels and the press’ high-speed capabilities, which will allow us to differentiate our offering into premium labels and meet evolving market needs.’

Esko, Fiery and HanGlobal form strategic partnership

HanGlobal/Hanlabel is partnering with Esko and Fiery to deliver a customized Digital Front-End (DFE) for the LabStar series inkjet digital label presses. The partnership was announced at Labelexpo South China in December.

This collaboration integrates Esko’s color management expertise, Fiery’s DFEs and HanGlobal/Hanlabel’s digital label printing technology.

Together, the companies are addressing the evolving needs of label converters with an end-to-end technology that streamlines production workflows, enhances color precision and accelerates time to market.

The partnership’s centerpiece is the optimized compatibility between the LabStar series digital label presses and the combined Esko-Fiery products. This integration is said to empower label converters with superior automation, color accuracy and connectivity, redefining efficiency and performance in digital label printing.


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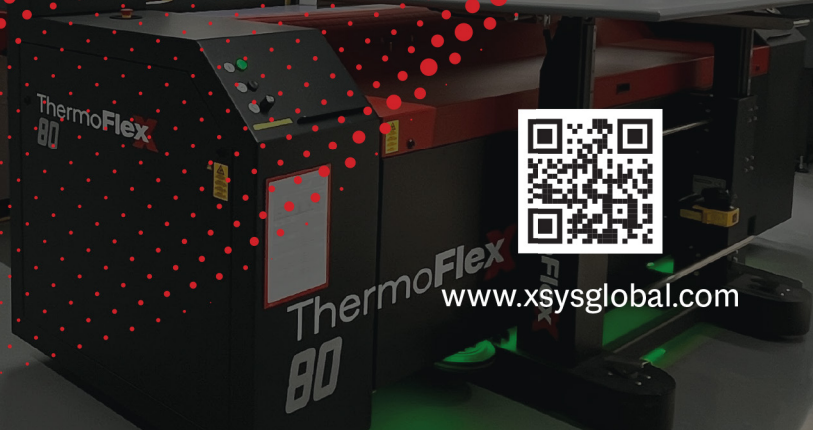
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Shengda Print explores new business with digital technology

Chinese printer Shengda Print has installed the first batch of five Durst Tau 510 RSCi digital label presses to bolster its short-run production capabilities and explore new business opportunities. Yolanda Wang reports

Established in 2000, the evolution of Shengda Print mirrors the historical development of China's wider printing industry. Starting out printing business cards, the company's product line soon expanded to encompass a diverse range of print, from brochures and magazines to labels.

However, as the print volumes of commercial products like business cards and magazines waned, the company ventured into new product segments, including labels. This has opened entirely new business opportunities for Shengda Print. For example, a project has it manufacturing around 100 million customized fans using self-adhesive labels to apply clients' logo and promotional information.

The past 24 years have witnessed remarkable growth at Shengda. In 2023, the company's turnover reached 2.85 billion RMB (400 million USD), of which the label business accounted for about 20 percent, the largest single product category.

The wide range of products printed by Shengda is mirrored in the variety of printing and finishing equipment, with parts of the factory set up for different products requiring their dedicated machinery.

This plant list includes sheet-fed offset presses, die-cutting machines, folding and gluing machines and platemaking machines. The Yongcheng factory, built in 2017 and operational in 2018, now houses over 100 printing and finishing machines.

Digital transformation

Shengda Print's unwavering focus is on short-run orders, capitalizing on China's booming online platforms and a younger generation of consumers.

'With millennials and Generation Z emerging as key consumers, the market has evolved,' says Cui Wenfeng, founder and chairman of Shengda Print. 'These new generations demand more personalized, customized, and short-run orders with variable data, which has driven growth in the digital printing sector. The rise of digital presses is meeting these changing expectations with greater flexibility and efficiency.'

Looking to expand its short-run label business, Shengda signed an agreement to purchase five Durst digital label presses



Cui Wenfeng, founder and chairman of Shengda Print

at Drupa 2024, a total investment of 50 million RMB (over 7 million USD).

Christoph Gamper, CEO of Durst Group, comments: 'The Durst Group has been at the forefront of digital printing technology research for 25 years. Since my first visit to China two decades ago, I've been continuously impressed by the country's rapid evolution and market growth.'

'This collaboration with Shengda marks our first partnership, but we quickly discovered shared values and visions for future development, which form the foundation of this promising cooperation.'

The first three Durst Tau 510 RSCi digital presses have now been installed at Shengda Print. The presses have a maximum printing speed of 100 m/min, print resolution of 1,200 x 1,200 DPI and a maximum Pantone coverage range of 95 percent.

'So far, the performance of these digital presses has fully met our expectations,' shares Wenfeng. 'They can not only meet our technical requirements for personalization of label products, but also operate at a very high speed. Taking into account aspects like time, labor, plates and raw materials that can equal savings, they offer distinct cost-effectiveness advantages over offset printing.'

Durst's Gamper shared his astonishment after visiting Shengda's Yongcheng factory, which in addition to its large fleet of equipment, employs 2,000 people. He was particularly impressed by the scale of the operation, its fine-tuned plant management, and the high level of automation. This experience further solidified Durst's confidence and

"These new generations demand more personalized, customized, and short-run orders with variable data, which has driven growth in the digital printing sector"

determination to deepen their exploration of the Chinese market.

Adds Henry Cheng, CEO of Durst China: 'We entered the Chinese market eight years ago with a focus on leveraging technological innovation to address our customers' real-world production challenges. Over this period, we've helped clients unlock new opportunities through digital printing technology and have already seen some successful implementations in China. Now, we're excited to support Shengda in becoming our next success story in this space.'

Durst has established a 24/7 service system for its local customers in China, thanks to its partnership with Haoxi, a trusted agent for over 12 years.

Says Haoxi: 'The collaboration with Shengda presents a unique challenge, as more than 95 percent of Shengda's orders come through the Internet, with a daily capacity of 80,000 orders. Its advanced internal ERP system, which governs the entire production process, is now integrated with the three new Durst digital presses to efficiently handle the massive volume of online orders.'

Adds Cui Wenfeng: 'Taking into account the current label business volume of Shengda Print and the potential of the Chinese market, the five digital label presses we have already ordered are far from enough. In the future, we will deepen our cooperation with Durst Group.'

Digital ecosystem

Durst is more than just a press supplier. The company has become an important partner



The first three Tau RSCi 500 presses installed at Shengda



Shengda installs first three Tau 510 RSCi presses

for Shengda in its overall digital transformation.

Martin Leitner, product manager for label and flexible packaging at Durst Group, explains: 'China is a very special and challenging market, with the ultimate pursuit of label quality and the strict control of costs. As a professional digital technology provider, Durst is fortunate to participate in the digital transformation of Shengda. In addition to high-speed, high-quality digital printing equipment, we also have comprehensive supporting software to help customers create a complete digital ecosystem.'

Investing in digital printing equipment is a small part of Shengda Print's digital transformation. A comprehensive ERP system now covers every process from online ordering, customer approval and production scheduling to pre-press file processing, platemaking, printing, finishing and packaging for delivery. Shengda Print has now achieved full process automation.

During the visit, L&L saw all printing plates in Shengda's factory being loaded automatically. The plates are transported to each press via automated robotic arms according to the production schedules defined by the ERP.

At the packing stage, the company is equipped with AGVs (Automated Guided Vehicles) to move finished products into stock.

Logistics hubs

As its business expanded, Shengda Print set up a centralized order processing center in Zhengzhou and four production plants in Yongcheng, Chengdu, Tianjin and Tianshui. These form a nationwide network that ensures prompt order delivery throughout China, with next-day delivery on most orders.

The company uses AI technology at the front end to solve customers' pain points in designing and specifying labels.

Cui Wenfeng says that an increasing part of the company's business comes from trade supply to other label converters. 'For some orders, the price is lower from us than what they produce by themselves.'

The company has established its own logistics hubs, which include highly efficient warehousing and inventory management

“More than 95 percent of Shengda's orders come through the Internet, with a daily capacity of 80,000 orders. Its advanced internal ERP system governs the entire production process to efficiently handle the massive volume of online orders”

systems. This works up and down the supply chain. Raw materials can be sourced and delivered in a timely manner, significantly reducing production lead times.

At the same time, optimized routing and advanced tracking technology guarantee the on-time delivery of finished products, even for urgent orders. Shengda runs its own fleet of 2,000 delivery vehicles, including large trucks and smaller vans.

Such is the flexibility of this system, which allows Shengda to supply its customers with raw materials and finished label products more efficiently than the OEM. Explains Wenfeng: 'most of our clients have a continuing demand for printing consumables and paper, but each time only a very small quantity, like just one can of ink. This puts huge pressure on their suppliers' delivery systems. However, for Shengda Print, relying on our existing logistics system – we don't need to expand warehouses or recruit extra staff – we can carry out these deliveries on the return journey of our regular shipments. This requires a massive data analysis system, which is precisely where Shengda's strength lies. Shengda is committed to becoming a comprehensive and innovative service-oriented company.'

This innovative logistics development sets a new benchmark in the labels industry.

Shengda Print now has plans to take this model outside China. 'We are actively formulating strategies,' says Wenfeng. 'With the continuous evolution of the Internet and logistics infrastructure, geographical boundaries are becoming less of a constraint.'

Armed with the rich production and service expertise amassed in the Chinese market, we are eager to extend our high-quality services to international clients, solidifying our position as a global industry player.'



Scan the QR to read more from the Chinese label market in Labels & Labeling





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2025 PREDICTIONS

What's in store for the year ahead? Here's a glimpse of what industry experts have to say. For the full article, scan the QR code on the last page. Article compiled by Piotr Wnuk

A B GRAPHIC INTERNATIONAL, MATTHEW BURTON, GLOBAL SALES DIRECTOR

Digital printing has firmly established itself as the standard technology for labels and packaging, with its prevalence growing rapidly. While traditional printing methods will remain relevant for years to come, the tipping point between the two is shifting at an unprecedented pace. Brands increasingly demand shorter lead times, reduced inventory levels and solutions to navigate a challenging labor market, pushing converters to adapt to heightened complexity and operational pressures. As a result, digital print is becoming the preferred choice, but this shift also highlights the need for advancements in finishing processes. Greater automation will be essential to manage labor costs effectively and streamline production.

Rising interest rates and persistent inflation will create financial pressures across the industry, and labor costs will remain a significant challenge. Companies must shift from labor-intensive to capital-intensive business models by embracing automation to navigate this. This investment will reduce reliance on manual labor and enhance efficiency and long-term competitiveness. Organizations that prioritize innovation and adaptability through technology will be best positioned to thrive in the evolving market.

ACTEGA, DR THOMAS SAWITOWSKI, SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT FOR FLEXIBLE PACKAGING

The industry is undergoing an unprecedented transformation in the pursuit of sustainability, driven by changing consumer expectations, tightening regulations, and rapid technological advancements. This shift is accelerating the adoption of greener products and technologies that reduce waste, improve recyclability and lower carbon footprints.

Regulations like the EU's Draft Packaging & Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR) are ushering in a new era of accountability. By 2030, plastic packaging components must meet specified minimum percentages of recycled materials. Additionally, initiatives like the Single-Use Plastics Directive (SUPD) aim to mitigate the environmental impact of packaging by banning certain materials and encouraging circular practices. Pursuing circular economy goals will accelerate innovation across the supply chain, forcing businesses to rethink packaging design, materials and recyclability.

On the other hand, businesses must now verify sustainability

claims and adopt lifecycle thinking with data to ensure genuine environmental impact. The industry's ability to reconcile growing regulations with genuine sustainability goals will shape its road ahead.

ALL4LABELS, PAOLA IANNONE, VICE PRESIDENT OF MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

The future of the labeling industry is poised for transformative growth, driven by several key trends that enhance operational efficiency and meet evolving consumer expectations.

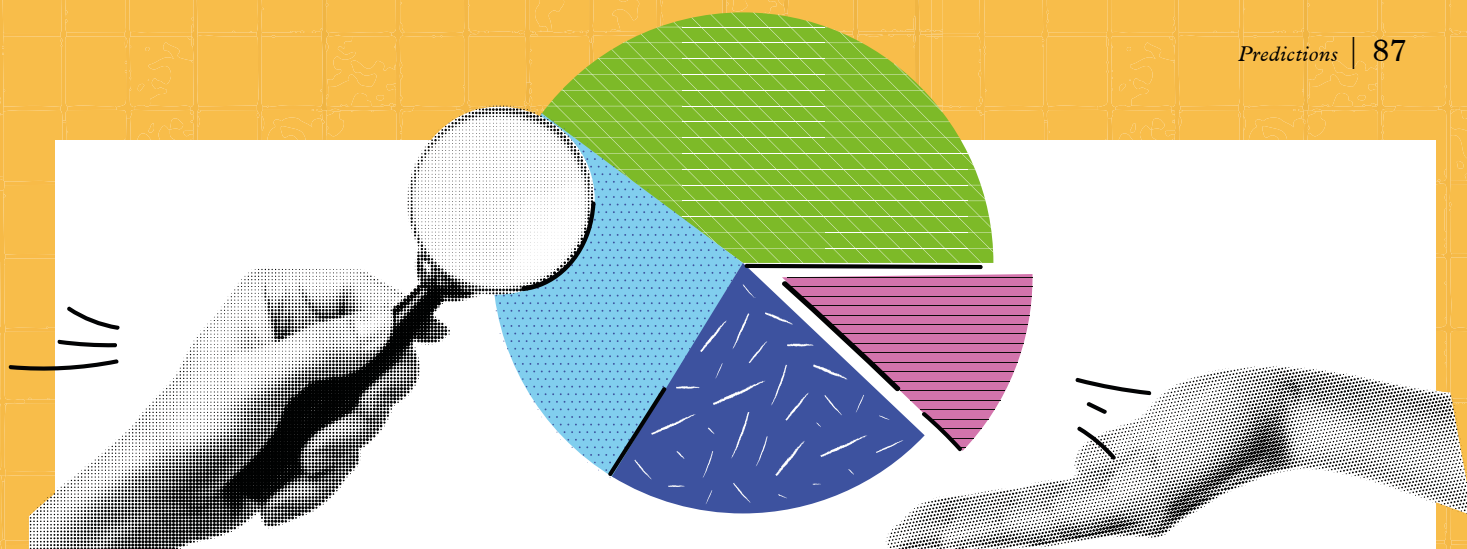
Leveraging digital technologies will streamline labeling processes, enabling businesses to adapt quickly to dynamic market demands while personalizing customer experiences. The integration of interconnection and automation is anticipated to shape the development of smart factories, allowing real-time data exchange and more efficient production workflows.

Additionally, a strong focus on sustainability will see an uptick in eco-friendly labeling technologies, promoting circularity with recycled and reusable materials and robust recycling initiatives that align with the increasing consumer preference for environmentally conscious products.

Lastly, the rise of smart and digital packaging technologies will respond to the growing demand for product authentication, enhancing brand trust and safety. This convergence of digital innovation, automation, sustainability and product integrity will bolster operational performance and foster a deeper connection between brands and consumers, positioning the labeling industry at the forefront of the global shift towards smarter and more responsible production practices.

AVERY DENNISON, ANH MARELLA, VICE PRESIDENT OF MARKETING

As 2025 approaches, the label and packaging industry is set for steady growth, driven by both challenges and opportunities. Supply chain disruptions and shifting government policies continue to shape the landscape, while advancements in sustainability, technology, and consumer-centric technologies propel industry transformation. Meanwhile, the focus on employee retention and upskilling is gaining momentum, ensuring a skilled, adaptable



workforce for the future.

With growing environmental awareness and tighter regulations, demand for sustainable packaging will increase. Brands are turning to eco-friendly materials to meet sustainability goals, reduce waste and align with consumer expectations.

Technologies like RFID and NFC are transforming the labeling and packaging industry. They enhance consumer engagement, improve supply chain transparency, and streamline operations. As adoption grows, these tools will set new benchmarks for efficiency and connectivity.

In 2025, the packaging industry has a chance to lead with innovation, sustainability and collaboration. By embracing technology, adapting to consumer needs, and committing to environmental responsibility, the industry can create a future that's both efficient and sustainable for future generations.

**BEONTAG, MAURO LERNER, GENERAL MANAGER
FOR GRAPHIC AND LABEL MATERIALS, LATAM**

This year, sustainability will become an even higher priority as we address the environmental impact of release liner waste, one of the key challenges in the pressure-sensitive label industry. Linerless technology is one of the technologies we are leveraging to tackle this issue, helping to reduce waste and improve efficiency.

We have been observing a growing demand for wash-off labels, particularly in the beverage sector. According to the Pressure-Sensitive Label Market Report 2024, conducted by AWA, this represents the second-largest global segment, holding 13 percent of the market share.

Additionally, this year, we will see a further increase in demand for eco-friendly and efficient technologies; our wash-off label offerings and special materials for wine production will reflect this demand. As countries continue introducing new regulations for more sustainable and less toxic materials, actively adapting to these guidelines will be essential for growth and compliance. Staying ahead of evolving legislation ensures that our products align with global sustainability goals and contribute to a cleaner, healthier future.

Additionally, I believe that this year, RFID technology will be a cornerstone of innovation, with converters increasingly seeking integrated solutions. Beontag is investing in identification and digital transformation technologies, such as RFID, NFC and BLE, which enable the sustainable connection of items worldwide.

**BOBST, PATRICK GRABER, MARKETING DIRECTOR
FOR NARROW-MID WEB PRODUCT LINE**

2024 was characterized by a turbulent external environment driven by economic and geopolitical events. Lack of skilled workforce

also continued to be an issue. Label converters reported declining overall volume, especially for the wine and spirits sector.

However, converters continued to invest in new equipment, seeking cost optimization, higher efficiency and productivity, enabled by new flexo, digital and all-in-one machines.

We believe this trend will continue in 2025, with a key focus on process integration and workflow and the adoption of technologies to enhance ease of use, output and overall shop floor efficiency. We believe all-in-one hybrid platforms will continue to gain momentum, with converters benefiting from fewer operators and processes, easier production planning, and the ability to develop ready-to-ship labels in one pass.

For in-line flexo, we foresee a gradual move to ECG printing, especially for mid-web presses, with digitalization and automation replacing older equipment and expanding capabilities. We believe the in-line flexo market will remain stable without major cannibalization by digital equipment, with more wide-web flex-pack companies moving into narrow-mid web flexo machines for shorter runs to improve their profitability.

Sustainability will be a major factor as converters, brand owners and manufacturers adapt to new laws and regulations. Similarly, the need for traceability and security product, such as RFID, coding and serialization, will increase.

**DOMINO, PAUL MYATT, REGIONAL SERVICE MANAGER
FOR THE APAC REGION**

Digital printing will continue its upward trajectory as businesses prioritize shorter lead times, personalized labels and reduced waste. Hybrid systems combining flexo and digital printing will see significant growth, enabling converters to balance cost efficiency and flexibility.

Sustainability will dominate decision-making across the supply chain. Recyclable materials, compostable adhesives and eco-friendly inks will become industry norms. Brands will demand certifications and transparency from label converters, pushing innovation in sustainable practices.

Smart labels incorporating RFID, NFC, and QR codes will become commonplace. These technologies will enhance supply chain traceability, improve inventory management, and enable customer interaction through digital experiences. The Internet of Things (IoT) will play a crucial role in expanding the use of smart labels across industries.

Automation will streamline operations, reducing reliance on manual processes. Artificial intelligence will optimize workflows, predict maintenance needs, and improve quality control, ensuring consistent and efficient production.

The e-commerce boom will drive demand for durable, high-quality labels that enhance brand visibility and provide essential information. Demand for pressure-sensitive labels,



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tamper-evident seals, and digitally personalized packaging will also increase sharply.

Stricter labeling regulations, particularly in food, pharmaceuticals and chemicals, will necessitate precise and compliant label technologies. This will create opportunities for innovation in areas like extended content labels and variable data printing.

Asia-Pacific will remain a growth hotspot, driven by expanding industrial and retail sectors. However, regional differences in material availability and consumer behavior will require localized strategies from global players.

DSLOOP, JULIANA PIVOTO, COMMUNITY SUCCESS MANAGER FOR AMERICAS

Surprisingly, our crystal ball tells us that customers will not ask for slower turnaround times. Shorter runs and tighter deadlines have become the new normal. Combine this pressure with the challenge of finding talent and that's why automation will play an important role in the industry going forward.

Automated workflows — from job intake to finishing and fulfillment — will be key to retaining profitability. Management Information Systems (MIS) and cloud-based dashboards will help manage real-time scheduling and capacity, reducing delays and waste. Intelligent finishing lines can handle tasks like die-cutting, laminating and folding with minimal manual intervention, boosting throughput and profitability.

AI's momentum was breathtaking in 2024, and 2025 will only be more of a whirlwind as every industry jumps in to harness the power of the technology.

Design tasks such as layout, color correction and personalization can now be partially or fully automated with AI. By reducing repetitive work, designers can focus on creativity and collaboration with clients — speeding up turnaround times.

It's not a question of whether or not AI will affect certain parts of your business; it's a question of when.

Brands and corporate clients demand rigorous reporting on emissions, waste reduction and energy consumption. While the administration change in the US may loosen some environmental regulations, global brands operating in Europe and US states that have enacted their own regulations will continue their goals to reduce their environmental impact.

Mandatory reporting and reductions will affect all those involved in the supply chain.

EDALE, JAMES BOUGHTON, MANAGING DIRECTOR

As we look to 2025 and beyond, automation will stay at the top of the business agenda and will be critical in future operations. This presents the opportunity for converters to tackle higher-value work with fewer skilled operators, which is a key advantage in today's challenging labor market, where many businesses struggle to build a consistent pipeline of new talent.

A further challenge we are seeing is when direct and indirect labor accounts for 32 percent of a business's production cost, as reported in the 2024 BPIF (British Printing Industry Federation) Printing Outlook report, and they need a solution where they can directly reduce the labor cost. Here, we expect to see accelerating interest in full end-to-end technologies. Automation-led technology can help to reduce operational pressure for printers and converters, streamlining and securing labor overheads.

The premium labels and cartons market continues to grow, particularly for luxury sectors like wines, spirits and cosmetics. Brands demand more sophisticated and intricate

embellishments and finishing effects to differentiate their products on the shelf. This trend shows no signs of slowing — if anything, we expect to see even more creative applications of foiling, tactile effects, and high-end finishing techniques in 2025.

What's interesting is how these trends intersect. Tomorrow's successful label and packaging converters will need production systems to deliver complex, high-value embellishments while maintaining efficiency and consistency through automation. In a market that demands superior print quality and color consistency, technology is providing the ideal response.

EMT INTERNATIONAL, JACOB LIIMATTA, DIRECTOR OF NEW PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

As 2025 approaches, the label printing industry is poised for significant innovation, driven by sustainability, technology and evolving market demands. Sustainability remains a critical focus, with manufacturers increasingly adopting recyclable materials, eco-friendly adhesives and energy-efficient processes like LED curing and water-based inks to meet environmental regulations, net-zero goals and growing consumer expectations for greener products.

Smart labeling technologies, including RFID and NFC, are set to expand, enhancing supply chain visibility, inventory management and consumer engagement. As IoT adoption grows, these solutions become essential in retail, healthcare and logistics industries.

Hybrid printing, which combines digital and flexographic capabilities, is gaining momentum by offering flexibility for short runs alongside cost efficiency for higher volumes, making them ideal for complex design requirements.

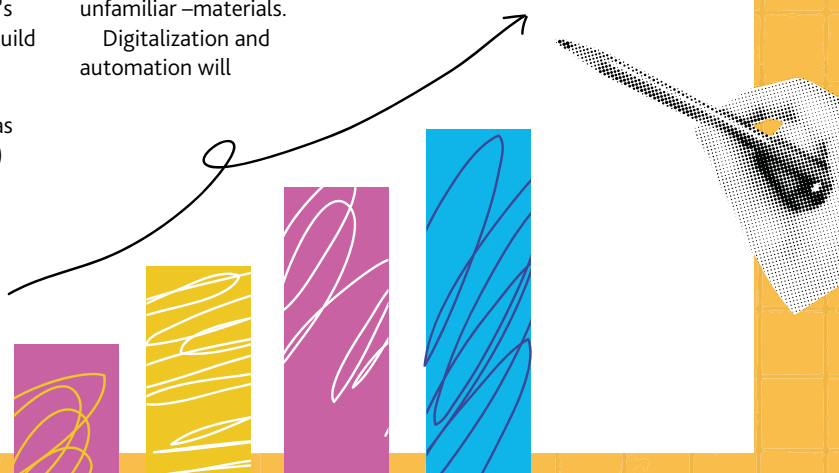
Beyond these advances, automation and AI continue to revolutionize label production through automated job setup and predictive maintenance, effectively addressing labor shortages while improving quality and efficiency. By embracing these trends, the label printing industry is set to become more sustainable, efficient and innovative in a rapidly evolving marketplace.

ENFOCUS, PIET DE PAUW, HEAD OF MARKETING

2025 will be dominated by sustainability as brands aim to meet their ESG goals for 2025 or make progress on their targets for 2030. That will be the foundation that affects every other trend, especially the push toward digitalization and the adoption of AI and automation.

We expect to see a lot of innovation around ink and substrate materials as businesses look to reduce their environmental impact. This means pre-press and reprographics will become all-important for label printers who must ensure color consistency, even when working with new — perhaps unfamiliar — materials.

Digitalization and automation will



become essential to ensure efficiency when working with new plant-based inks, recycled substrates, or energy-efficient curing processes.

Customers want sustainability, but not at the cost of compromised product quality and lead times, and they increasingly expect printers to accommodate short-run jobs for limited edition products, seasonal labels, and so on.

Ultimately, what will separate label printers in 2025 will be how efficiently they integrate digital workflows into their day-to-day processes.

ESKO, JAN DE ROECK, DIRECTOR OF MARKETING, INDUSTRY RELATIONS AND STRATEGY

Our latest research indicates that as we move into the new year, the most successful companies will be those that have not merely recognized the need to be a part of the modern labels and packaging market but instead are prepared and committed to thriving within it.

We have identified key trends and issues for the year ahead, including the continued growth in consumer demand for packaging sustainability, the ongoing adoption of enhanced cybersecurity protocols and further integration of the latest iterations of AI, automation, and digitalization in day-to-day packaging operations.

As technology developers, we understand that while sustainability and AI are today's buzzword mega trends, striving for them on their own merits does not benefit anyone. That's why we are committed to ensuring our efforts in sustainability and harnessing AI to drive business productivity and efficiency.

This will only become increasingly important as the year goes on, and even further developmental breakthroughs pay dividends. With our own commitment to prioritizing the rising need for more sustainable and responsible technologies, enhancing digital security, and embracing emerging technologies such as AI, we are excited about the possibilities in 2025.

FEDRIGONI SELF-ADHESIVES, MELISSA HARTON, MARKETING MANAGER FOR NORTH AMERICA

As 2025 approaches, Fedrigoni Self-Adhesives predicts a transformative year for the label and packaging industry, driven by sustainability, premiumization and operational efficiency.

Sustainability will remain paramount, with brands and converters seeking eco-friendly alternatives such as thinner



gauge materials, recycled content, and certified sustainable options like FSC-approved papers. The transition from plastic to paper substrates, where possible, will also gain traction, aligning with corporate environmental, social and governance (ESG) goals and consumer demand for greener products.

In the wine and spirits segment, shelf differentiation will continue to dominate, with converters and brands opting for premium label materials that capture attention and convey quality. Fedrigoni anticipates increased interest in textures, black stocks and unique finishes that enhance products' luxury appeal.

The trend toward SKU consolidation will shape inventory management strategies. Converters will prioritize versatile, stocked materials to reduce costs and enable just-in-time delivery. This shift allows businesses to remain agile in an evolving market.

GALLUS GROUP, DARIO URBINATI, CEO

2024 undoubtedly presented ongoing challenges for the label industry, from labor shortages to rising cost pressures. Despite this, significant growth opportunities in the label market continue to make the segment an attractive and promising one for Gallus and Heidelberg. Reflecting on the joint journey of the past year, we have seen growing interest across analog, hybrid and digital technologies, recognizing the importance and benefits of offset and flexo technologies while embracing the notable growth potential of digital.

The emergence of new digital technologies is set to be a defining trend in the year ahead, with rapid innovation driving significant transformation across

the market. Digital labels are poised for above-average growth. The global printed labels market is projected to reach 44.8 billion USD by the end of the year and continue its steady expansion through 2029.

New technologies are paving the way for digital inkjet to enter new market segments, unlocking fresh opportunities for converters. As this shift gains traction, the role of intelligent workflow becomes increasingly important. Particularly crucial in a challenging market climate, automating and streamlining production will be essential for achieving critical cost savings and boosting profitability.

GEW, ROBERT RAE, MANAGING DIRECTOR

The past year has been challenging in our core narrow web flexo market, and a good deal of uncertainty clouds the beginning of 2025. Europe has low growth, interest rates remain high, and conflict is causing continued uncertainty. However, in the US we see improving business confidence and signs of increased activity and consumables consumption, which gives cause for optimism.

The transition to LED is still the major trend, with more large-scale upgrade programs in the pipeline. LED's share of our UV production will be close to 50 percent by year-end. Further, LED-compatible coatings and functional products (e.g., silicones) are being developed at pace and are now commercially available. However, regulatory hurdles for UV inks and coatings are on the horizon, adding further challenges for formulators.

UV hotmelt is gaining momentum as a more sustainable alternative to the traditional solvent-based adhesives that dominate today's market.

Machinery automation and integration of controls and peripheral systems is a trend set to continue, with the clear lack of a younger skilled workforce for end users to recruit. This will usher in a need for sensors and more seamless communication between systems.'

HIFLOW SOLUTIONS, MARIUSZ SOSNOWSKI, CEO

The label converting industry is at a breaking point. Outdated systems, generic ERPs and legacy software no longer cut it. In 2025, the shift is clear: converters want tech that maximizes their existing resources, scales growth and insulates them from economic uncertainty.

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A guide to manufacture, handling and
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Edited by **Andy Thomas-Emans**

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INKS, COATINGS AND VARNISHES

For the converter, a clear understanding of the performance characteristics, handling and storage of inks and coatings is essential in today's legislation-drive label production process.

Inks, Coatings and Varnishes sets out to explain the entire inks and coatings value chain, from ink manufacture to the chemical properties of different ink systems, how they are dried or cured, and how inks and coatings are specified for different end use performance requirements. It is an essential resource for anyone involved in the label converting market.

The chapters in this book look at:

- + Ink systems and chemistries
- + Drying and curing systems
- + Proofing and testing procedures
- + Impact of legislation
- + Surface treatment and ink adhesion

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driven by AI-powered ERP systems, IoT-enabled shop floors, and automation tools tailored to the needs of label converters. Generic ERP systems can't meet the specific demands of label converting. Converters need industry-specific AI technologies and experts who understand their challenges.

AI, IoT, and real-time shop floor data collection are transforming the way converters optimize operations, reduce waste and stay competitive. But success hinges on knowing how and where to implement these tools.

HP INDIGO, ELI MAHAL, HEAD OF L&P MARKETING

In 2024, the labels and packaging industry rebounded from a challenging 2023, fueled by rising CPG demand.

As labor shortages persisted and brands sought more agile, sustainable supply chains, the industry adapted to a new era of efficiency.

2025 promises further transformation driven by automation, AI-powered tools, and high-productivity digital print. These technologies will address critical challenges such as labor shortages and complex production demands. Sustainability remains paramount, with a focus on circularity and reduced carbon emissions. HP's digital solutions, particularly attractive to younger generations, enable rapid scaling and environmental responsibility.

Digital printing continues to reshape the L&P landscape. HP Indigo empowers converters to navigate the shift from high-volume, low-mix to low-volume, high-mix production models. Digitally printed flexible packaging attracts converters and innovators aiming to tap the growing need for on-demand, sustainable pouches. Overall, digital production lines fed by streamlined workflow will elevate operational excellence, enabling converters to grow and diversify their business.

KOCHER+BECK, LARS BECK, MANAGING DIRECTOR

The production process of flexible dies and rotary tooling is a world of continuous improvement. Die-cutting technology has seen significant advancements despite the challenges presented within the 2024 supply chain.

These improvements are primarily due to the rise of digital equipment and advanced design software, which enable manufacturers to easily transition from producing one unique part to another with minimal effort. This increased agility makes die-cutting, particularly with flexible dies, an appealing option for on-demand production.

As we head into 2025, we will continue to see a shift toward more sustainable and eco-friendly manufacturing practices due to advancements in presses and substrates, which are becoming thinner and more recyclable in the converting industry. Customers will continue to request increased production speeds and wider presses, emphasizing the need for stability and accuracy within the die station.

KURZ, STÉPHANE ROYÈRE, HEAD OF BUSINESS AREA PACKAGING AND PRINT INTERNATIONAL SALES AND MARKETING

As we look ahead to 2025, the label industry is set to embrace a transformative phase driven by

evolving consumer expectations, technological advancements, and sustainability imperatives. At Kurz, we see three key trends shaping the future of labeling.

First, sustainability will remain a driving force. Brands are increasingly committed to reducing their environmental footprint, and labels are no exception. Circular materials, eco-friendly finishes, and recyclability will become standard.

Second, digitalization will redefine efficiency and customization. Smart labels equipped with QR codes, RFID, and NFC technology will provide enhanced consumer interaction and supply chain transparency. These technologies will enable brands to meet growing demands for transparency and interactivity while optimizing production processes.

Lastly, premiumization will grow. Even in an era of sustainability, brands strive to stand out. Advanced decoration techniques, including hot stamping, cold transfer, and increasingly popular digital embellishment, allow brands to combine tactile finishes with brilliant designs. Premium decoration will play a key role in capturing consumer attention.

LEMORAU, SÉRGIO RAMALHO, PRODUCTION MANAGER

2025 is calling, and it demands bold action. Europe's leading economies are under strain, global competition is fierce and challenges are mounting. But challenges are opportunities in disguise.

Artificial intelligence is no longer optional; it's essential. AI is the force that drives smarter, faster and more efficient operations. It doesn't replace humans; it empowers them. It minimizes mistakes, streamlines processes, and unlocks potential we didn't know we had. It's the spark that transforms ambition into results.

MPS SYSTEMS, RICHARD MIEDEMA, GLOBAL SALES DIRECTOR

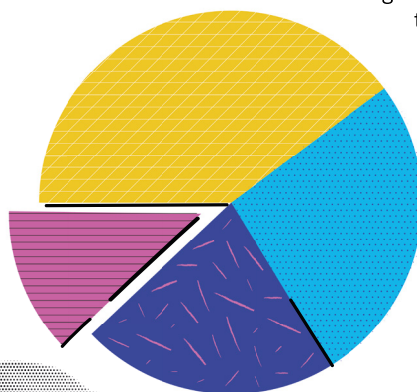
The label and packaging industry is seeing a notable shift. After the market peak during the Covid-19 epidemic, the high inflation after it, and the unpredictable global geopolitical situation, we have seen renewed confidence in the market, resulting in strong high-tech press demand. This signals a market rebound, with converters increasingly investing in future-proof technology.

Several factors are driving this momentum. Converters recognize the need for future-proof investments, and MPS delivers with its strong technological foundation and integration of AI and connectivity. Industry 5.0 is redefining standards: automation, ease of use, high-quality output, and production consistency are no longer differentiators but necessities.

Converters who embrace these advancements will gain a competitive edge. Leveraging AI-driven technology enhances efficiency and maintains high-quality output, streamlines operations, reduces waste, and optimizes productivity, ensuring businesses stay ahead in an evolving landscape.

The right technology partner plays a crucial role in this transformation. MPS continues to lead by offering innovative solutions that support long-term growth and operational excellence.

With the market showing positive signs of recovery, now is the time for converters to invest in smart, connected and efficient production technologies.



NILPETER UK, JOHN HAMMOND, SALES DIRECTOR

We see a continuation and deepening of the trends that dominate today: more automation, more digitalization, and the early days of AI integration.

As we approach 2025, converters and printers are up against tight turnaround times, rising costs, and the need for efficiency without compromising quality. At Nilpeter, we understand the challenges our industry is up against, including a shortage of skilled workers. The younger generation joining the industry today is naturally more equipped for the automation and digitalization shaping our machines. That's one of the reasons why we're investing heavily in our unique manufacturing setup. By embracing greater automation in our processes, we're ensuring that we stay ahead and ready to adapt to the ever-changing needs of the market.

We're seeing a significant rise in the demand for high-quality flexo printing across the world, particularly in segments like food and personal care. Flexo has proven itself a reliable and efficient solution, especially for mid-sized bridging the gap where digital and wide-web gravure printing fall short in cost-effectiveness.

Sustainability is a key focus for the entire industry. Flexo stands out because of its compatibility with solvent-free inks and recyclable materials, making it an ideal choice for businesses aiming to reduce their environmental footprint while maintaining excellent results.

Flexo printing today is about combining traditional strengths with modern innovations.

Features like real-time dashboards and advanced color registration, like our newly launched Vision solution, help converters work more efficiently while reducing waste and making the right decisions based on reliable, real-time data. These developments are making it easier to adapt to the increasing complexity of printing demands.

OMET, MARCO CALCAGNI, SALES AND MARKETING DIRECTOR

The global printing market continues to evolve rapidly, shaped by consolidated trends such as digitalization, sustainability and traceability, together with the ever-changing geopolitical scenario.

For 2025, I foresee significant growth in special applications and added-value configurations featuring hybrid technology, complex in-line converting and ancillary units, driven by the demand for constant seeking differentiation and faster turnarounds.

Omet's focus on innovation will remain pivotal, with our machines offering revolutionary efficiency, precision, and adaptability to meet these vital needs, helping our customers stay competitive in the market.

Strategic partnerships and collaborations will also define the future. Our work with Durst, exemplified by the success of our hybrid solutions, demonstrates how combining expertise can yield groundbreaking results. We anticipate a growing emphasis on sustainability, pushing us to innovate further in eco-friendly technologies and processes.

RRD, LISA PRUETT, PRESIDENT OF PACKAGING AND LABELS SEGMENT

The rapid automation of packaging and labeling operations has been a game-changer for companies grappling with labor shortages, rising and evolving consumer demands, and ambitious sustainability goals. In 2025, companies will prioritize the implementation of automation to fill skills gaps, meet stakeholder expectations and enhance productivity.

The latest generation of label presses and converting equipment features advancements in production speeds, make-ready time and overall operational efficiencies.

The labeling facilities of the future will also offer flexible layouts through modular

equipment and smaller footprints, helping companies remain agile to customer needs. Automation enables companies to fill labor gaps, allowing operators to focus less on repetitive and routine tasks and more on higher-level oversight.

Companies can also implement automation with sustainability in mind. The ability to closely monitor and re-calibrate lines to minimize waste, optimize efficiency and reduce energy consumption can significantly impact the carbon footprint of packaging and labeling operations. With 2025 and 2030 sustainability goals on the horizon for many, companies will be making automation a significant part of their sustainability strategies.

UPM RAFLATAC, TIMO KEKKI, SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT FOR MARKETS

This year promises both opportunities and challenges. We see the market remaining dynamic, with operators in the value chain needing the capability to perform under varying conditions, including volume development and raw material cycles. While we anticipate continued market growth, it is likely to occur at a slower pace.

In an uncertain and volatile operating environment, supply security, quality, and competitiveness will remain critical for our customers. Additionally, regulation and geopolitical factors will play a significant role in shaping industry dynamics, requiring agility and responsiveness to maintain a competitive supply for our customers and stakeholders.

The demand for packaging development will accelerate, with new innovations for sustainability being essential to advance the circular economy in packaging and reduce the CO2 footprint. These developments will help companies achieve their sustainability goals and comply with regulations.

Furthermore, we foresee emerging technologies, such as linerless solutions, providing new opportunities and benefits to our customers by enabling a broader and more versatile product portfolio.



This year, we've garnered a substantial volume of contributions from leaders in the label and packaging industry. Given the constraints of space in the magazine, we can only feature a curated selection of predictions, some in abridged formats. Scan the QR code to access the complete version of this article





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Label trends: European trends by label format and technology

In the latest Finat Radar report, the self-adhesive label industry saw a slowdown that mirrored the broader economic stagnation across Europe, signalling a cautious approach from label buyers and end users.

Self-adhesive labels



↑ **4.3%**

Growth in Europe

This segment is seeing growth from e-commerce and private label brands

Glue-applied labels



Will reach a value

19.7 billion USD

by 2030

CAGR of **4.5%** year over year

↑ **8.1%**

Growth in Europe in 2024

The beer segment in Europe is the biggest driver of wet-glue growth

Wraparound labels



Represents **49%** of the European glue-applied label market

This segment benefited from demand in canned food and bottled water.

In-mold labels



↑ **0.6%**

Growth in Europe in 2024

The food sector continues to be dominant for IML

Applications include: margarines, yellow fats, ice cream, yogurts and salads.

Sleeve labels



↑ **1.3%**

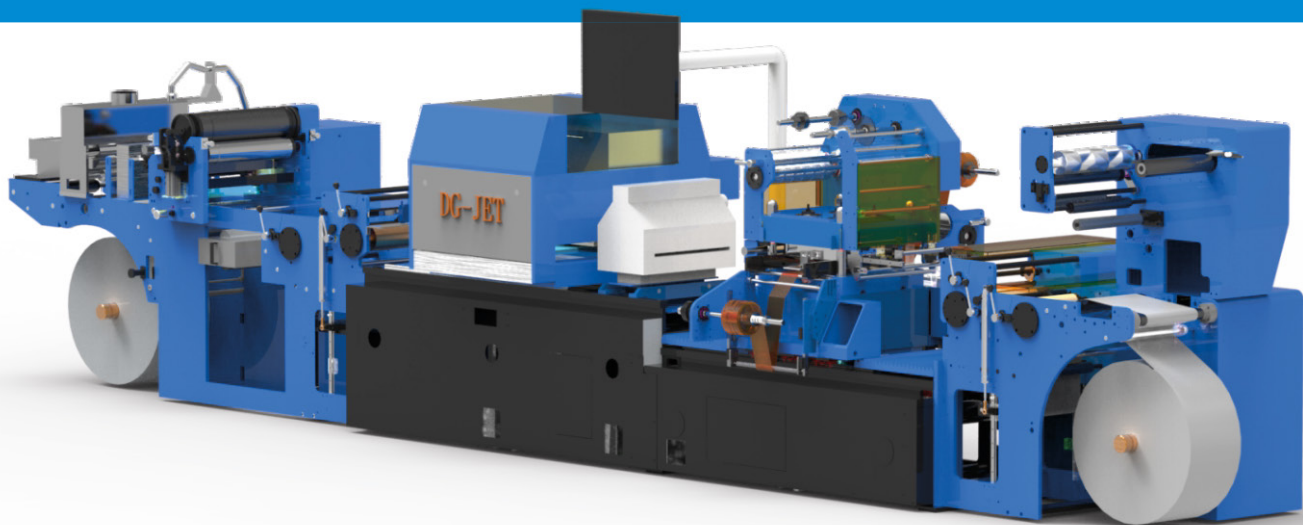
Growth in Europe in 2024

This segment is seeing a move toward sustainable materials, and a consumer preference for larger pack sizes.

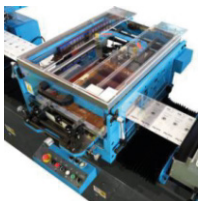
DG-SCREEN

DIGITAL EMBELLISHMENT

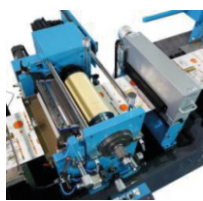
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Emboss/ Die-cut



Semi-rotary Die-cut



Full-rotary Hot-stamp

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