– EST 1978 –

LABELS & LABELING

THE WORLD OF PACKAGE PRINTING

LABELEXPO EUROPE 2025 REVIEW

First show in Barcelona set to reshape the label industry

MARKET FOCUS: WORKFLOW INTEGRATION

Software suppliers tackle industry's perfect storm



VOLUME 47 | ISSUE # 4 | OCT - DEC 2025

WWW.LABELSANDLABELING.COM

HEIDELBERG

gallus
A HEIDELBERG GROUP COMPANY

Printing the Pace

With the New Gallus Five



One System. Built for Speed. Ready for Anything.

Fast. Flexible. Future-ready. You want it all? Now you can have it all.
With the new Gallus Five, we proudly introduce a new benchmark in label printing. This modular hybrid machine delivers maximum speed, top-tier quality, and unmatched flexibility. 100 m/min? Easy. Next-gen ink formulation? Absolutely. Inline embellishment? Standard. Fast changeovers? Built-in. Lower energy use, less waste, high-speed output – all in a single pass. No extra setup. No second run. Say hello to Gallus Five. And welcome to the new rhythm of modern label printing.

g5 Gallus Five

Find out more:
gallus-group.com

Gallus Ferd. Rüesch AG, Harzbüchelstrasse 34, 9016 St. Gallen
gallus@heidelberg.com, www.gallus-group.com

UNIVERSAL ENGRAVING
A UEI GROUP COMPANY

Overland Park, Kansas, USA
+1 913 541 0503
Engraved Die Company

UNIVERSAL ENGRAVING DE MEXICO, S. de R.L. de C.V.
A UEI GROUP COMPANY

Querétaro, México
+52 442 670 1185
Engraved Die Company

U·E·I Falcontec
A UEI GROUP COMPANY

Halesowen, England
+44 (0) 121 550 1076
Engraved Die Company

INFINITY FOILS, INCORPORATED
A UEI GROUP COMPANY

Lenexa, Kansas, USA
+1 913 888 7340
Foil Company

INFINITY FOILS, de Mexico S. de R.L. de C.V.
A UEI GROUP COMPANY

Querétaro, México
+52 442 670 1185
Foil Company



INGENUITY LEADS TO INNOVATION

We are the EXPERTS in ENHANCEMENT offering the ultimate products for foil stamping and embossing.

Our companies are unrivaled in the manufacture and supply of premiere foil stamping and embossing dies, high-quality stamping foils, and makeready products.

We have years of expertise and have forged ahead as innovative leaders, creating countless solutions, opportunities, and masterpieces.

Our newest innovative products to increase productivity and profitability:

- NW SpeedChase® NXT™ System - for easy and efficient die and counter lockup. Job changeovers in less than one minute!
- Many new lines of Hot, Cold and Digital Foils, as well as Makeready Supplies.

SCREEN

Embrace Digital Efficiency and Automation with **Inkjet Label Printing**



Truepress LABEL 350UV SAI S

RELIABILITY
- Dependable performance
- Trusted platform
- Easy maintenance

PRODUCTIVITY
- High machine uptime
- High volume label printing
- Consistently high print speed

AUTOMATION
- Seamless integration
- Streamline production
- Maximum efficiency



SCREEN Europe
+31 (0)20 456 78 00
sales@screeneurope.com

screeneurope.com

L&L – *Meet the team*

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



Chelsea McDougall
Managing editor



Andy Thomas-Emans
Strategic director



Piotr Wnuk
Senior digital editor



Akanksha Meena
Global brands editor



Will Drysdale
Europe editor



Selah Zighelboim
North America editor



Adyasha Sinha
India editor



Yolanda Wang
Head of content, China



James Quirk
Latin America correspondent



Yukiko Suzuki
Japan correspondent



Anton Pretorius
South Africa correspondent



Vicki Strull
Branding and design columnist



Rosalyn Bandy
Sustainability columnist



Lois Ritarossi
Sales and marketing columnist



Tasha Ventimiglia
Group director, L&L and Americas



Tim Gordon
Account director

Editorial

Chelsea McDougall, *Managing editor*
Andy Thomas-Emans, *Strategic director*
Piotr Wnuk, *Senior digital editor*
Akanksha Meena, *Global brands editor*
Will Drysdale, *Europe editor*
Selah Zighelboim, *North America editor*
Adyasha Sinha, *India editor*
Yolanda Wang, *Head of content, China*
James Quirk, *Latin America correspondent*
Yukiko Suzuki, *Japan correspondent*
Anton Pretorius, *South Africa correspondent*
Lois Ritarossi, *Sales and marketing columnist*
Vicki Strull, *Branding and design columnist*
Rosalyn Bandy, *Sustainability columnist*

E: *editorial@labelsandlabeling.com*

Advertising

Randy Kessler, *Digital advertisting director*
Stefani De Abreu Pinto, *Advertising sales executive*
Tim Gordon, *Account director*
Alexa Rode-Hilbert, *Account director*
Mirco Mazzarella, *Account director*
Richard Quirk, *Account director*

E: *advertising@labelsandlabeling.com*

Design

Victoria Bone, *Designer*
Laura Burns, *Designer*
Simon Taljaard, *Designer*

E: *design@labelsandlabeling.com*

Production

James Wenman, *Design and production manager*

E: *production@labelsandlabeling.com*

Marketing

Yvonne Nartey, *Marketing director*
George Kontos, *Head of digital marketing*
Alice Kosse, *Marketing executive*

T: *+44 (0)20 8846 2825*
E: *marketing@labelsandlabeling.com*

Management

Jade Grace, *Managing director*
Chelsea McDougall, *Group content director*
Tasha Ventimiglia, *Group director, L&L and Americas*
Andrew Galloway, *Group director, EMEAA*
Kevin Liu, *Group director, China*

Publishers

Informa Markets,
240 Blackfriars Road, London, SE1 8EF,
United Kingdom

Other offices

USA: Informa PLC, 6300 N River Road,
Suite 301 Rosemont, IL 60018, United States

China: Informa Markets
29/F,K11 Atelier, 300 Middle Huai Hai Road
Huangpu District, Shanghai, 200021 China

India: Informa Markets, Private Limited, 9th Floor,
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

Contents

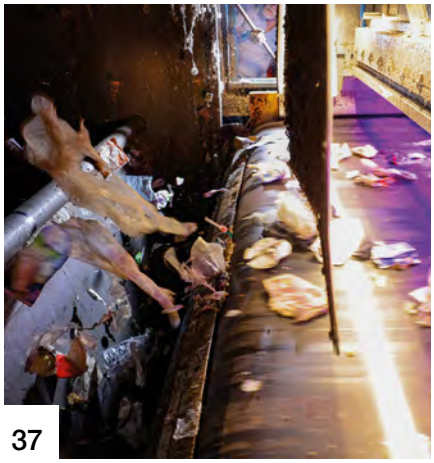


20


24



31


37


43

Regulars

7 Editor's welcome

8 Installations

10 Label & packaging showcase

13 Andy Thomas-Emans column

15 Sales and marketing column

16 Branding and design

19 Guest column: Jan De Roeck

128 Label trends

Cover stories

20 The critical role of cryogenic labels in modern science
In an environment where temperatures drop as low as -196 deg C, cryogenic labels must maintain the integrity of precious preserved data where ordinary labels fail

24 Software suppliers tackle industry's perfect storm
Workflow integration separates market leaders from struggling converters, with automation shifting from optional to essential

73 Labelexpo Europe 2025 review
In this special section, discover all the key innovations, emerging trends and standout exhibitors that defined Labelexpo Europe 2025

Features

31 OPM Group honored as Converter of the Year

35 Reynders pioneers recyclable metallic labels

37 Digital watermarks prove their worth in real-world trials

43 Lauterbach Group undergoes digital transformation

46 Amtech and Label Traxx grow with PE investment

49 Labels as a strategic tool

50 Valley bridges US, Mexico manufacturing boom

53 Legacy and growth at Etiketten



53



69



73

Labelexpo Europe 2025 review

73 Introduction

74 Labelexpo rebrands

77 Show floor sales

83 Global Label Awards

87 Press technology

95 Finishing and converting

103 Materials

109 Inks and coatings

113 Workflow and inspection

117 Dies and tooling

119 Plates and platemaking

120 Ancillary equipment

125 Chinese exhibitors

57 DE Converter cements leadership with Gallus

59 Prateek Graphics secures Epson SurePress

61 Pravesha Industries chooses inspection from Lucid Imaging

63 S Kumar eyes East Africa expansion with Zonten

65 Indonesian converter's bold flexo investment pays off

69 Flora transforms Xinma's operations

71 Dongding builds flexible service with digital printing

Online contents

labelsandlabeling.com



L&L Global Awards (video)

The L&L Global Award winners reflect on their achievement



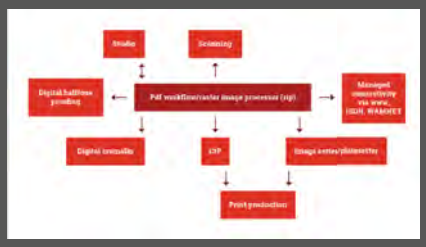
Read L&L Issue 3 online (magazine)

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



The age of automation (feature)

Automated presses and robotic machines enter label production



Preparation for printing (Label Academy)

Finalizing and producing working files from the design to the production

AeroLED®2

Air-cooled UV LED Curing System

Next generation LED

Higher power UV LED for printing, coating and converting applications



Power up...
and print faster with AeroLED2

+30% Electrical Power*

+30% UV Dose*

+40% UV Irradiance*

*Versus an original AeroLED system

ArcLED

Patented Interchangeable Technology

ArcLED interchangeable UV technology enables UV Arc & LED lamps to be used side by side on your press, for ultimate flexibility.

gewuv.com/aeroled2

Contact us:
sales@gewuv.com

UK +44 1737 824 500
Germany +49 7022 303 9769
USA +1 440 237 4439

GEW ...engineering UV

L&L looks back (L&L issue 2, 2019)



Chinese converters share digital experiences

Leading China-based converters Synway, Tongyuan, Rongo and Tongyuan share their challenges, successes and future strategies for digital printing with L&L China editor Miranda Ming



Study shows strong market for industrial labels

A recent study commissioned by PPG is the first in the detail that takes an in-depth look at the industrial labeling scene. Chelsea McDougall reports



Securing the future of your business through diversification

Hans Poortinga, manager of the MPS Systems Technology & Expertise Center, looks at how label converters can be successful by diversifying their product range.



BGM, E+L unite for integrated inspection finishing system

Two new suppliers have begun to offer an integrated package that combines their respective technologies. David Pittman reports.

P59 Yolanda Wang reported that leading Chinese converters were adopting digital presses to manage growing demand for short runs, customized products and variable data security labels. The move to digital print, despite the overall low market penetration, was motivated by the inefficiency in handling small orders in conventional print.

P83 Chelsea McDougall analyzed a PPG-commissioned study revealing a strong, but nuanced North American industrial labels market. The article detailed how challenges, including high scrap rates, recyclability and ink adhesion, were driving suppliers to innovate and respond with specialized technology.

P91 Hans Poortinga, manager of the MPS Systems Technology and Expertise Center, emphasized that diversification is crucial for converters to secure their future and open new revenue streams by branching into new packaging formats such as flexible packaging and folding cartons.

P99 David Pittman explored how Bar Graphic Machinery and Erhardt+Leimer brought their combined technologies to market by integrating them into a single line. The integration led to E+L's 200 percent SmartScan inspection system paired with BGM's iSR inspection slitter rewinder technology.

A Labelexpo Europe to remember

Editor's note

After four days of packed halls, live demonstrations and industry celebrations, Labelexpo Europe 2025 closed its doors on a show that signaled an industry poised for both growth and change.

It was a historic show for many reasons. First, the move to Barcelona set the stage for an exciting change in the show's 45-year history. And while the city provided the perfect backdrop for a show, high temperatures in Hall 3 cast an unfortunate shadow over an otherwise excellent edition. There were technical problems with the A/C units in Hall 3, creating a difficult situation for visitors, exhibitors and show organizers. While show organizers note that the problems were 'beyond Labelexpo's control', it is now incumbent on organizers to find a solution before returning to Fira Barcelona in 2027. Organizers say they are working with exhibitors and the venue on a post-event resolution.

"We do not decide which direction the industry moves, the industry decides that"

Another headline-making story was the news that Labelexpo will evolve its brand to represent a broader packaging community. From 2026 on, the show will be known as Loupe, and expand to mid-web, in-line printing and converting of flexible packaging and folding carton. As an acronym, LOUPE means **L**abels and **OU**ter **P**ackaging **E**mbellishment, but as an ethos, Loupe will maintain its core focus on labels.

The equipment on display at recent Labelexpo exhibitions indicates that the industry is already heading toward folding carton and flexible packaging production, so the show is making the logical step to follow suit. To quote Andy Thomas-Emans: 'We do not decide which direction the industry moves, the industry decides that.'

The name Labelexpo was a bit of a double-edged sword: incredibly successful on one hand, but limiting to only the label audience. To me, Loupe is a clever nod to the industry's focus on precision and detail in the pursuit of a perfect print.

Still, show organizers face a challenge. Labelexpo is a beloved brand, and there's comfort in the familiar. But the forward-thinking audience, like Esko's Jan De Roeck, recognizes the opportunities ahead. In a guest column on page 19, De Roeck writes: 'The rebranding of the event to Loupe underscores the widening application field of narrow web technology. Labels, by their very nature, will always require roll-to-roll production in narrow web. But if the same equipment can profitably produce other packaging formats, why wouldn't converters seize that opportunity?'

It could be seen as a bold decision to change the name of a revered brand, but as they say, fortune favors the bold. The rebrand to Loupe is a strategic move, and the true test of its success will be in the measurable results that follow.



Chelsea McDougall
Group managing editor

Installations

Heidelberg Gallus One

S&G Creative, US

S&G Creative, a full-service label, packaging and commercial printer in California, invested in a Heidelberg Gallus One digital hybrid label press. With this hybrid technology, S&G expects to halve turnaround times while delivering higher quality for both long- and short-run labels. The machine's superior ink laydown, 1,200 x 1,200 DPI resolution and advanced trapping were the real 'turning points' in co-owners Lee Garriott's and Geoff Schnitzer's decision to invest in the press. This is the first time that S&G has purchased a press from Heidelberg. 'Seeing the quality that is produced by the Gallus One only reinforces that it is the leading press on the market for both flexo and digital labels,' Garriott said.





Nilpeter FA-22

Etiplast, Costa Rica

Costa Rican converter Etiplast added a Nilpeter FA-22 flexo press to expand its production capabilities. The press will enable the converter to serve existing customers better while expanding into new segments and applications. This FA-22 press is specifically configured for flexible packaging. It has been equipped with solvent units to laminate in-line for one of its first applications: coffee bags, a key market in the region. Etiplast also plans to target the growing shrink sleeves segment, using white ink in solvent. 'We're always looking to offer our customers more flexibility, better efficiency and greater consistency. This new press allows us to do exactly that,' said Adolfo Madrigal, operations manager at Etiplast.

Domino N730i

Cover Label, US

Californian converter Cover Label installed the Domino N730i press at its Los Angeles facility to accelerate growth, upgrading from its existing Domino N610i. The N730i delivers a 1,200 DPI resolution, compared to 600 DPI on the previous model, while operating at 60-70 m/min, versus 25-30 m/min. This has doubled Cover Label's capacity, prompting the company to shift longer jobs to digital production and invest in additional finishing equipment. 'We have a health and beauty customer with fine 4-color process text that we struggled to run well on flexo,' said co-CEO Ryder Fyrwald, who leads the company with Pat Wafer. 'With the N730i, we delivered digitally printed samples that were spot on. That job is now fully digital.'





HP Indigo V12

Nordvalls Etikett, Sweden

Scandinavian converter Nordvalls Etikett added its second HP Indigo V12 press. The press forms part of its 'Nordvalls 2.0' strategy, a program focused on modernizing production. The second HP Indigo V12 is a cornerstone of Nordvalls' newly expanded production facility, which was purpose-built to house the two digital presses and designed to maximize operational workflow and digital output. For Nordvalls, the V12 has reduced setup times, minimized waste and improved responsiveness across the production floor. CEO Patrik Jenemark said: 'The press has given us the flexibility to scale smarter, with fewer machines and greater output. Its impact on our business is positive, and investing in a second HP Indigo V12 was a natural progression in our digital transformation journey.'

Installations



Mark Andy Pro Series

Barcom Industries, India

Mumbai-based Barcom Industries invested in two new Mark Andy Pro Series label presses, a deal confirmed at Labelexpo India 2024 and supplied and installed by Flexo Image Graphics (FIG), Mark Andy's distributor in India. The two new presses are set to enhance print quality and productivity. Barcom has invested in numerous Mark Andy presses over the years, including the Mark Andy 830, 2200 and Performance Series P5. 'We always endeavor to maintain quality printing and productivity for meeting our clients' ever-increasing demands for premium print outputs in quick turnaround times,' said Prasanna Sahu, managing director at Barcom. 'For this, we persistently upgrade our machine portfolio, which has now added the two new Mark Andy Pro Series label presses.'

Konica Minolta AccurioLabel 230

Quality Printing, US

Quality Printing, a Minnesota-based, family-owned full-service print shop, added a Konica Minolta press, expanding its capabilities to offer durable labels. A key driver behind Quality Printing's expansion into labels was an opportunity to better serve an existing client that the print shop already provided signage for. 'We explored several digital label press options, but Konica Minolta and their AccurioLabel 230 quickly stood out,' said Mark Opitz, who owns Quality Printing along with Annie Opitz. 'Its sales representative was highly responsive, visiting multiple times to address our questions thoroughly. The broader team also flew in to conduct on-site test runs, giving us full confidence in the press' capabilities and the quality of label production we could achieve.'





Focus Label Machinery Proflex 330

Advance Labels, UK

Leicestershire, UK-based label printer Advance Labels installed its second Proflex 330, manufactured and supplied by Focus Label Machinery. The new press will complement an existing Proflex 330, enabling the company to expand capacity and provide a broader range of medium and high-volume labels across specific market sectors. The Proflex 330 is modular for future growth. Advance Labels managing director David Gregory said: 'We find the Proflex very simple to operate, and the press was in full production within a few days after delivery. Over the years we have invested in Focus, the team has always been very helpful and professional, and throughout this procurement and installation process, it has been a pleasure to work with them.'

Fujifilm Jet Press FP790

Delo, Germany

Delo become the second site outside of Japan, after UK-based Eco Flexibles, to install Fujifilm's Jet Press FP790 digital inkjet press for flexible packaging. Delo sought digital technology, capable of handling both short-run and mainstream production volumes, to run alongside its flexo presses. The company decided to invest in the FP790 following discussions with Fujifilm's packaging team and a visit to Eco Flexibles. 'We're seeing a shift in job profiles,' Delo managing director Ralf Wilkens said. 'Very large runs will remain with flexo, but smaller and more customized runs are becoming increasingly important for digital. The FP790 allows us to handle those smaller sizes and tackle a share of the mainstream jobs in a way that makes sense commercially.'



Label & packaging showcase

01



03



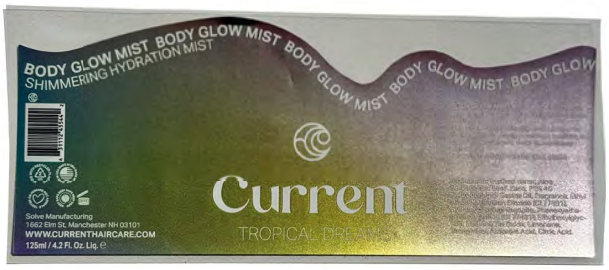
02



04



05



Winners of the TLMI Printing Excellence Awards 2025

01 Best in Show and Best in Class winner: Bù Pinot Noir

Category: Wine & Spirits - All, including neck label

Member company: ASL Print FX, an AWT Company

Press: Gallus

02 Best in Class: 360 Madagascar Vanilla

Category: Beverage - Alcoholic

Member Company: Phenix Label

Press: Omet

03 Best in Class: Benjamin Blue

Category: Beverage - Nonalcoholic

Member company: McDowell Label, a Resource Label Group Company

Press: Gallus

04 Best in Class: Bird-Friendly Mexico Coffee

Category: Food

Member company: Hub Labels, Inc.

Press: HP

05 Best in Class: Green Tribes - Current Body Glow Mist Tropical Dreams

Category: Personal Care & Cosmetics

Member company: Amherst Label, an Inovar Company

Press: MPS/Domino

06



07



09



08



10



06 Best in Class: RYSE - Godzilla

Category: Wellness, Pharmaceutical, & Nutraceutical

Member company: McDowell Label, a Resource Label Group Company

Press: MPS

07 Best in Class: Formula 1

Category: Industrial & Automotive

Member company: Flexo-Graphics, an Inovar Company

Press: Mark Andy

08 Best in Class: GLBC Peel N Play Contest – Distillery Focus

Category: Promotional & Extended Content

Member company: Great Little Box Company

Press: HP

09 Best in Class: Perdue Harvestland linerless label

Category: Innovation, Single Application, Linerless & Sustainability

Member company: Hub Labels, Inc

Press: MPS

10 First place winner: 7 oz Jergens Sandalwood Lotion

Category: 5000 Personal Care & Cosmetics

Member company: Amcor

Press: Gallus

SLITTER REWINDER SPOOLER RETROFIT

EG-8002 series

Streamline Workflow. Cut Downtime. Boost Production.

Engineered for consistent label converting performance.

With over 40 years of experience and more than 1700 machines installed globally, Nicely understands the need to keep machines aligned with market trends. In addition to tailored new machines, we offer slitter rewinder upgrades to help clients stay competitive and promote sustainability.



EG-8003 series



EG-9000 series

NICELY

www.nicely-slitter.com

video



Andy Thomas-Emans column
Labelexpo Europe trends

AI and cloud connectivity have emerged as the next wave of innovation as Labelexpo Europe 2025 exhibitors showcase how it is transforming label production, writes Andy Thomas-Emans

As the curtain came down on the first edition of Labelexpo Europe 2025 to be staged in Barcelona – and the last, as the show transitions to Loupe Europe – there was a real sense that something profound had changed in our industry; a tectonic shift.

The story was not so much about new machinery, though there was plenty of that on show, but what's happening 'under the hood'.

Let's start with AI. I have been extra wary of pumping up the AI balloon, as much of what passed for AI was simply highly sophisticated machine learning (if x then perform action y).

That has changed, I think, with the launch by Brotech of the FF-X530 flexo press in Barcelona. Brotech CEO Ramon Lee shared that the project has been underway for the last two years, utilizing the AI programming resources in Shenzhen, where the company manufactures its machines. Other key partners are AVT and X-Rite. The job performed by those companies' cameras and spectrophotometers is to feed the AI 'brain' with data on all aspects of registration and color during makeready and press run. Other sensors monitor different aspects of the press system: ink viscosity, temperature, substrate variation and so on. Based on all this information, the AI makes or prompts for adjustments to maintain register and color consistency, taking into account the full range of factors that a skilled operator would be looking at.

The first generation of flexo press automation was about sensors directly issuing control signals to servo motors to adjust, for example, print pressure. The new paradigm is about sensors feeding an AI model, which then intelligently decides – as a trained press operator would – what needs adjusting anywhere in the press system.

It was interesting too to watch demonstrations on the Nilpeter and Omet stands of 'digital twin' technology, where real-time production data from the press is sent to a cloud server for processing. After analysis, that data can be sent back to the press to set it up optimally when that job is run again.

"The cloud processing that takes place is increasingly AI-driven and uses a combination of real-time and historical data to work out the press settings that minimize downtime and waste during job change and makeready"

This is qualitatively different from simply storing press settings for repeat jobs. The cloud processing that takes place is increasingly AI-driven and uses a combination of real-time and historical data to work out the press settings that minimize downtime and waste during job change and makeready.

If there are multiple presses on the same cloud network, the AI could take the press settings from the most efficient crew and apply those to any other press on the network.

That AI could, in theory, be looking at top-performing crews anywhere in the world using those same Nilpeter or Omet presses where there is a matching substrate, color and converting combinations. This would be the equivalent of having the world's best press crew setting up your machines with total consistency and without operator intervention.

The future

Other indications of profound change were all over the show floor. I chanced upon the Lehner stand to discover an automation project that involved an AGV bringing a plate to a robotic plate mounter, followed by a second AGV inserting a plate cylinder or sleeve into the print unit. It's early days, but a fascinating vision, given that on today's highly automated flexo presses, sleeve mounting is often the only manual operation during makeready.

Other stands held clues to how future Loupe shows might unfold: single-pass folding carton production on the Canon-Edale stand and multiple press manufacturers talking about a booming interest in short-run, value-added flexible packaging.

These point the way to a future where narrow and mid-web technology will disrupt multiple package printing sectors, as well as delivering ever-increasing value for label production.

Coatings

What was also noticeable at Labelexpo Europe 2025 was the growing presence of coating manufacturers such as Actega, Sun Chemical, Tullis Russell and Archroma, along with all the key film and paper manufacturers.

The PPWR-fueled drive towards sustainability will be all about functional barrier coatings replacing non-recyclable laminations and the development of mono-material filmic constructions. This will have applications across the flexible packaging, folding carton and label industries, and Loupe will be the perfect place to look at these developments, perhaps in a forum running alongside the show.

This brief survey has not started to touch on the seismic developments taking place in the label-dedicated technology, which will always remain at the core of Loupe.

Some key trends include a new generation of water-based label presses; bringing flexo automation into hybrid press formats; more progress on linerless labels; digital embellishment; and a tidal wave of brand protection, RFID and other smart label technologies.

I greatly look forward to the first Loupe exhibition, Loupe Americas 2026, to see how these multiple threads start to weave together.

Turn to page 73 to read a full review from Labelexpo Europe 2025



UPM

High-performing pharmaceutical labeling solutions

ready to connect with your ambition

Pharmaceutical brands trust you to get it right – every time. Whether you're labeling small-diameter containers or managing cold chain packaging, the right material keeps products safe and compliance on track. And we're here to help you make every decision with confidence.

Download your essential pharmaceutical labeling checklist by scanning the QR code. Partner with us for a comprehensive label portfolio – backed by specialized technical support, reliable change management processes and credible sustainability options.

adhesivematerials.upm.com

UPM Adhesive Materials



Stand out or fade out: Five strategies for differentiation

In a competitive B2B sales landscape, differentiation isn't about price; it's about purpose, value and positioning, writes Lois Ritarossi

The most successful B2B sales teams follow a consistent process to qualify and develop prospects into profitable, growing customers. Metrics in the sales process drive better decisions in setting priorities and determining the likelihood of success in closing. As more print and label shops invest in newer technology, there are more companies with similar capabilities. How can your sales team stand out from the crowd to differentiate your services? Fine-tuning your sales process and sales messages is necessary in a competitive market of sameness.

"Sales teams must stop talking about 'quality and service' as differentiators. They are table stakes for print service providers in every category"

Sales process methodologies must evolve to meet the demands of more educated and time-stressed buyers. Getting and keeping buyers' attention requires concise and salient messages in meetings, calls and emails. Consider these five approaches to improve your sales process and sales results.

1. When everyone sells quality and service, then what?

Sales teams must stop talking about 'quality and service' as differentiators. They are table stakes for print service providers in every category. Salespeople must shift from pitching capabilities to uncovering customer business needs and project goals, and then mapping them to strategic outcomes. Research continues to validate that buyers typically have two or three buying criteria that are more important than price. Salespeople need to identify and articulate the specific benefits of working with your company that align with your customers' goals.

2. Creating value through insight-led selling

Sales reps must do the research and have the messages to speak to vertical market insights. Customers care about how your company can assist and respond to their rapidly changing business environments. In pharma, the conversations may include traceability, serialization and anti-counterfeit features. In the beauty and consumer good sectors, salespeople need to inquire and validate the impact of holographic or specialty finishes for brand impact. For food companies, representatives need to provide advice on aqueous ink compatibility and eco-friendly substrates. For e-commerce and retail, conversations about the impact of speed and supply-chain agility will demonstrate your sales representatives' comprehension of demanding market conditions.

Understanding new regulatory pressures or supply chain vulnerabilities can lead to consultative conversations. These conversations will position your company as a partner and resource, not just a supplier. The sales process must include research and AI-curated talking points as preparation for every major client call or meeting. In a previous article, I shared the importance of sales teams knowing your customer's 'why' and strategies for sales success.

3. Reframe your value

Rather than leading with price per label, salespeople should focus on how their solutions impact the business. Key topics for product and marketing teams are increasing market share, product launches, reducing waste, accelerating speed-to-market or simplifying SKU versioning. This requires a shift in the sales process and early sales conversations as projects evolve. Salespeople need to research and prepare to make valid points about the total cost of ownership, business impact and environmental impact. These are the types of business concerns and topics senior leaders spend their time and resources to address.

4. The role of sales enablement content

Sales teams need better tools to conduct strategic conversations. Relevant industry case studies, ROI calculators and AI-generated summaries enable salespeople to lead strategic discussions about solutions and impact, rather than unit costs and delivery dates. Having a few impactful success stories and ROI examples will empower your sales team. Empowered salespeople are able to reinforce differentiation across multiple conversations with buyers. Sales teams must feel confident about aligning solutions with customers' business goals. Factual success stories breed confidence.

5. Evaluate your pitch

Sales leaders should audit current sales decks, emails, and talking points for major customer projects to identify where the messaging is too product-focused and where content can be tweaked to align with customers' business goals. One best practice is reviewing key components of the sales process as a team. This creates collaboration and learning opportunities from colleagues. In my last article, I shared how AI tools can enhance prospecting and sales effectiveness.

Your sales team must not only sell labels, but also educate clients on regulatory compliance, digital options, sustainability benefits and supply-chain reliability. Fine-tuning your sales process and messaging will increase relevance to buyers and position your sales team to stay competitive as markets shift.



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

Advent calendars: Packaging an experience

Advent calendars have evolved from a holiday tradition into a powerful marketing tool, writes Vicki Strull

For as long as I can remember, the de facto date for putting up holiday decorations was the day after Thanksgiving. However, recently, some people apparently bumped that up to the day after Halloween, immediately swapping their orange-and-black for red-and-green. While I don't have a hard and fast rule (I celebrate Hanukkah, so our date changes every year), I do know that the anticipation of the holidays is at least half the fun.

Gerhard Lang, a German printer from the early 1900s, understood this better than anyone. Lang was the first to create a printed Advent calendar. He was inspired by the homemade one his mother made when he was a child, a rough-hewn piece of cardboard with 24 pieces of candy taped to it. Lang took his countdown calendar a step further, designing 24 little doors that opened to reveal hidden treats.

Benefits

Advent calendars have come a long way since then. Today they include a sleighful of creative and complex designs, and the hidden treats range from chocolates to candles to cosmetics and even beer and dozens of other items. Brands from nearly every product category are all-in on the advent action. And it's easy to see why; the calendars accomplish a multitude of brand goals:

- They build anticipation for the holidays (of course).
- They create a memorable, tactile experience through thoughtful packaging.
- It's a festive way to offer samples and trial sizes to customers, whether they are loyal fans or new customers who may fall in love with the products and start buying them.
- The logo'd calendar has a premium spot in the home for 25 days, and the user is thinking about your brand every single one of those days. It's hard to buy that kind of consistent visibility.
- The brand becomes part of a daily ritual leading up to Christmas. Whether you are 5 or 85, it's exciting to open something new every day.
- When done right, the design allows brands to tell their story, whether it's one of whimsy, luxury, quality, purpose or simply fun. Some brands even extend their content around their mission (as you'll see below with the first one I've highlighted).
- The products are bundled, so consumers feel they are getting a lot of value for the price.
- Many are pieces of art, with gorgeous structures and beautiful materials.
- They typically don't feel over-packaged, partly because they're gifts. Brands can use embellishments, foil stamping and the highest-quality paperboards, and it's all in keeping with the theme of the holidays.
- Many brands' advent calendars support the 'reuse' element of sustainability. With tiny drawers and compartments, people often save them to store small items or even jewelry, further extending brand visibility.
- They lend themselves to a fun unboxing experience. For social media influencers and enthusiasts, Advent calendars offer 25 days of content, with real-time reveals of what's behind the doors, drawers or flaps each day leading up to Christmas. Brands relish that kind of positive, unpaid promotion.

Real-world examples

While Advent calendars may have leaned initially toward the religious, today's Advent calendars have such broad and commercial appeal that I eagerly await the new releases from my favorite brands and look for unique, new entries into the category. With that in mind, I thought I'd share several of the Advent calendars I admire most and what makes them standouts in design, packaging, brand extensions, interactivity and more.

Tony's Chocolonely

Last year, I found the giant countdown calendar from Tony's Chocolonely in my local grocery store. The size alone makes it a standout; the price makes it easy to gift (about 20 USD); and the chocolate bar samples make it delicious. The calendar aligns perfectly with the brand's sustainability and quality reputation. It's a corrugated package with a litho-laminated coated sheet, allowing for 4-color process for the brand's recognizable bright colors. The daily doors are perforated, and the whole thing is super sturdy, so it doesn't get dinged up. You can put it in your grocery cart or even mail it without fear of it getting ruined. Sometimes miniature things are really cute, sometimes huge things are really cute, too. Either way, I love the uniqueness of this out-of-scale packaging.

Tea Forte

For a designer who loves tea, Tea Forte's Advent calendars are made for me. First of all, the packaging itself doesn't even look like a calendar. Instead, it emulates the unique shape the brand is known for, a three-dimensional pyramid. The Advent calendar is a simple, oversized version of that pyramid, where each numbered door flap — and the single-serving tea sachet



Tony Chocoloney



Tea Forte



Diptyque


Luxury chocolate


Benefit



City Brew

"Brands from nearly every product category are all-in on the advent action. And it's easy to see why; the calendars accomplish a multitude of brand goals"

hidden inside — also mimics the triangular shape. And the artistry! The calendar designs range from vivid watercolor florals (one of their long-time partnerships is with the New York Botanical Garden), to a white-and-gold winter wonderland, to a festive ruby-and-green, tree-shaped box.

Diptyque

If you're serious about Advent calendars, you're going to love this one from Diptyque. In fact, it's hard to call it a calendar, because its book-like structure, original holiday tale, luxury 'treats' and extraordinary media elements really put it in a class of its own. First, the design: It opens like a book with gilded-edged pages; inside is a beautifully illustrated setting of an imaginary Parisian bookshop. Behind the colorful images are working drawers, where a cat appears and disappears as it leads you through a magical story of wonder.

From a brand perspective, Diptyque makes the most of the daily interaction that countdown calendars are known for, creating a luxurious, memorable, multi-dimensional experience. From a sustainability perspective, the Diptyque Advent calendar is sourced from sustainably managed forests, and this is surely one of those packages that people will save, share online and reuse to store their own trinkets and treasures.

High-end chocolate packaging design

Is it obvious that I really love chocolate? When I was in New York last year, I popped into a high-end boutique chocolatier to see this Advent calendar up close. It features a rigid box wrapped in an uncoated stock. It's a 'jewelry box', but instead of earrings and necklaces, the drawers contain tiny, beautiful chocolates.

Benefit Cosmetics

If you step inside a cosmetics store or department during the holidays, you will likely see dozens of branded Advent calendars in all shapes and sizes, colors and materials, housing everything from lipsticks to nail polishes to perfumes. This one from the popular brand Benefit is called the 'Glam Cube' calendar. Like some of the others I've shared, Benefit's Advent calendar packaging dives deep into the user experience, with a Rubik's Cube-style puzzle that actually twists and turns. Each time you twist the cube, you reveal more cartons, each containing 24 beauty products. What I love about this calendar is that Benefit has created a seamless omni-channel experience by integrating the packaging with its website and social media platforms, with fun unboxing shorts that show how to 'win' the game or how fast people can 'solve' it.

City Brew Tours

I know it might be a stretch to call this an Advent calendar, but City Brew Tours has boxed up beer in a fun, interactive way, offering a craft beer for each of the 12 days of Christmas or the eight days of Hanukkah. Behind each numbered compartment is a surprise craft beer, with festive gifts sprinkled throughout. The packaging is what you would expect from a case of beer: corrugated with a litho-lam, with 4-color printing and perforated access, plus a bit of holiday humor. To complement the brew experience, City offers livestream virtual tasting parties for an immersive experience that clearly understands its fanbase and target audience. Whether this is a holiday calendar or a clever 12-pack, I applaud any brand that creates holiday bundles authentically connected to its community. Holiday exclusives like these are a proven way to cultivate loyalty, offer new tastes and fun experiences and create a higher ROI on products specifically packaged for the holidays.

Refashioning a Famous Industry Quote

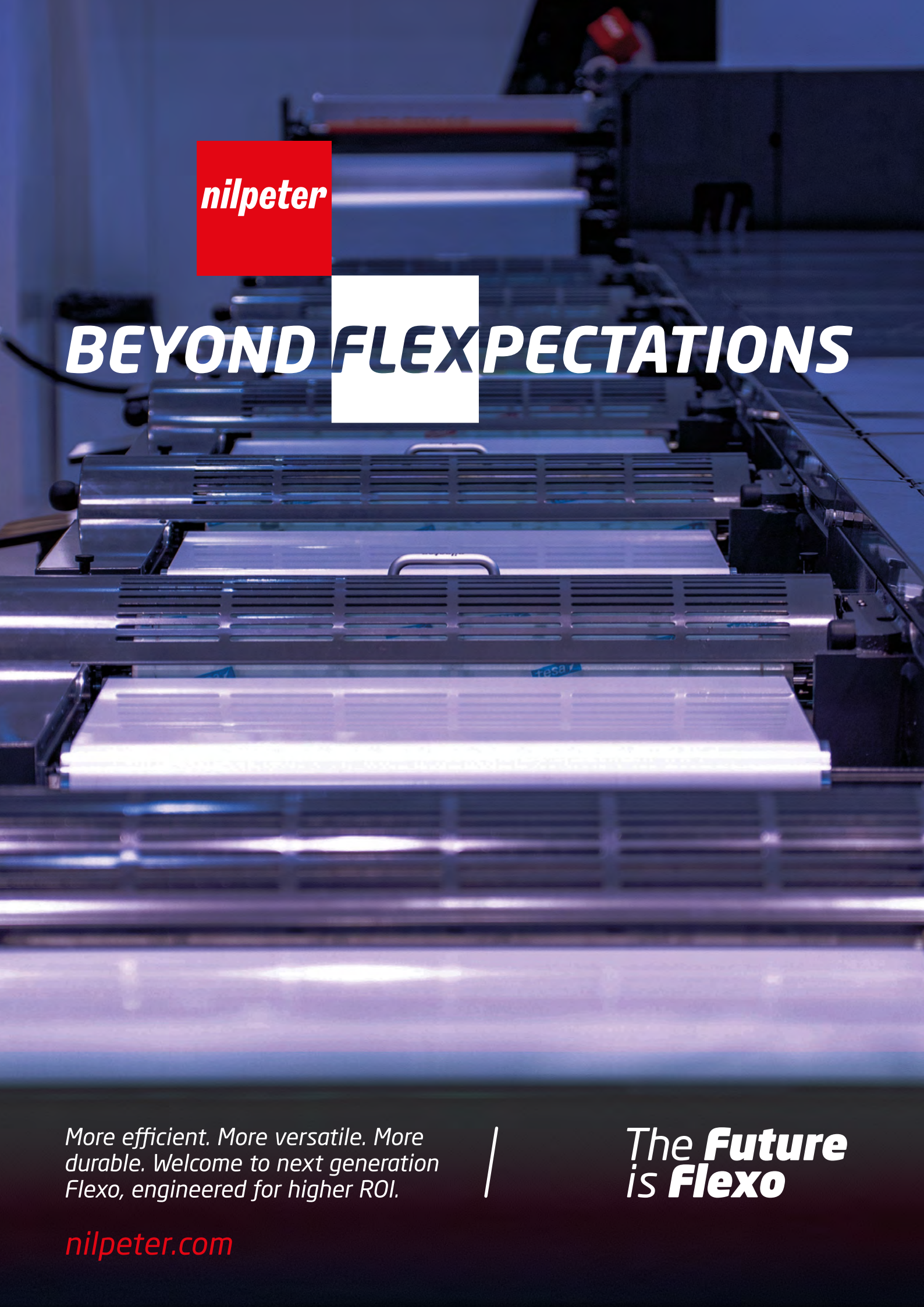
From a print packaging perspective, Advent calendars are enticing because of the tactile, interactive experience they offer. The physicality of opening a new compartment for 25 days or nights offers memorable sensory moments that not only build anticipation it encourages social sharing and builds relationships with the brand. While marketers focus on strategies each holiday season to attract new customers and entice loyal fans, designers develop concepts and structures that engage those customers. Converters then ensure the interactive packaging is of the highest quality, befitting the brand, from the sturdy substrates that support the construction to the printing and haptic finishes that dazzle. Our packaging creator ecosystem helps ensure these incredible holiday calendars are saved, shared and repurposed as keepsakes.

In our industry, we often quote graphic designer Saul Bass, who famously said in a March 1985 Los Angeles Times article, 'Packaging is the product.'

However, in the case of Advent calendars, I think packaging actually goes beyond the product. People aren't buying the package just to get to those surprises inside; they are just as interested in the experience of opening the flap, door or drawer; in the anticipation of the surprise, and in the fun, daily ritual. So, when it comes to countdown calendars, I'd say that packaging is the experience.



Vicki Strull has over 25 years of experience in the marketing and design industry as a brand strategist, creative director and packaging designer. She is recognized for her expertise in brand positioning, creative leadership and consulting with organizations on leveraging design to drive sales and build brand loyalty. In addition to her innovative approach to branding and packaging, she serves as an adjunct professor at Tulane University and frequently speaks at industry conferences in the US and internationally. Join fellow trendsetters at vickistrull.com or follow Vicki on LinkedIn @vickistrull


nilpeter
BEYOND FLEXPECTATIONS
More efficient. More versatile. More durable. Welcome to next generation Flexo, engineered for higher ROI.
The Future is Flexo
nilpeter.com

Guest column: A new chapter for narrow web innovation

By bridging technology and community, Loupe unlocks new opportunities for narrow web converters to advance their businesses amid an evolving landscape, writes Jan De Roeck, chief marketing officer at Esko.

When the label and packaging industry gathers, it does so with purpose. Few events embody that purpose more clearly than Labelexpo Europe, which this year took place for the first time in Barcelona. Having attended many editions of the show, I was struck not only by the change of scenery, but also by the deeper shifts it represents for our industry.

At its core, Labelexpo has always been unique. Unlike broader print or packaging exhibitions, it is laser-focused on a very specific form factor: narrow web production equipment. Every piece of machinery on display, from printing presses to finishing lines, from substrates to metal dies and embellishment technologies, operates within a normalized web width of roughly 20-25in. This singular focus is what sets Labelexpo apart.

It is not just a print show, nor a packaging or label show. It is, above all, a narrow-web production show bringing an entire ecosystem together.

The expanding role of narrow web

What makes this form factor so compelling is its versatility. While narrow web equipment is synonymous with labels, the truth is that converters have long been producing much more. Even in the early days, smaller folding cartons, particularly for pharmaceuticals, were efficiently manufactured on narrow web presses, thanks to their compact size and shorter run lengths.

Over time, converters recognized the opportunity to diversify further. Besides PS labels, flexible packaging applications such as wrappers and pouches began to appear on narrow web lines. Folding cartons, too, became a natural extension. This diversification nudged machine builders to gradually widen their equipment, but the underlying principle remained the same: a standardized form factor designed for efficient, cost-effective production.

It is only logical, then, that the organizers of Labelexpo have acknowledged this evolution. The rebranding of the event to Loupe underscores the widening application field of narrow web technology. Labels, by their very nature, will always require roll-to-roll production in narrow web. But if the same equipment can profitably produce other packaging formats, why wouldn't converters seize that opportunity?

"Labels, by their very nature, will always require roll-to-roll production in narrow web. But if the same equipment can profitably produce other packaging formats, why wouldn't converters seize that opportunity?"

More than a change of venue

The move from Brussels to Barcelona is far more than a logistical adjustment. It is a symbolic milestone that mirrors the changing dynamics of our industry. Barcelona is a city built for events: modern, spacious expo halls, more sqm of exhibition space and a vibrant setting that attracts a growing number of top decision-makers.

Walking the halls, it was clear that the new location elevated the show. The energy was palpable, and the conversations more strategic. The city itself amplifies the event's ambition, positioning Loupe as a global stage for the future of narrow web label and packaging production.

Innovation at the forefront

Of course, growth is not only about geography. What truly stood out in Barcelona was the wave of innovation brought forward by technology vendors. Across printing technologies and applications, the themes were consistent:

- Accelerated digital transformation through systems integration and automation
- Artificial intelligence applied to optimize workflows and reduce waste
- Sustainability as a driver of both product development and operational efficiency
- Cloud-based solutions enabling smarter collaboration and data-driven decision-making
- Machine interface innovation designed to improve operator experience and production accuracy

These advancements are not isolated. They reflect a broader industry commitment to improving efficiency, reducing environmental impact, and equipping converters with the tools to thrive in a competitive market.

Loupe: Craftsmanship and accuracy

As I reflect on this year's event, I am convinced that the rebranded Loupe will continue to build on Labelexpo's legacy while embracing the future. The name itself is well chosen: a loupe is a tool of precision, craftsmanship and accuracy; qualities that define today's print shops and drive tomorrow's innovation.

By staying true to its narrow web roots while expanding into adjacent packaging applications, Loupe embodies the duality of our industry: focus and flexibility. And by anchoring itself in Barcelona, it signals confidence, ambition and a readiness to grow alongside the evolving needs of converters worldwide.

Labelexpo Europe in Barcelona was more than a tradeshow; it was a statement. A statement that narrow web technology is not confined to labels but is a platform for broader packaging innovation. A statement that our industry is embracing digital transformation, AI, and sustainability with urgency and creativity. And a statement that the future of this event is as vibrant and dynamic as the city that now hosts it. For those of us in the label and packaging community, the message is clear: the form factor may be narrow, but the opportunities are anything but.



Jan De Roeck, a member of the Esko corporate marketing team, is highly respected and trusted for his insight in the graphic arts industry. He is a frequently asked speaker at industry events and represents Esko at different professional trade associations.


THE CRITICAL
ROLE OF
CRYOGENIC
LABELS IN
MODERN
SCIENCE

In an environment where temperatures drop as low as -196 deg C, cryogenic labels must maintain the integrity of precious preserved data where ordinary labels fail. Adyasha Sinha reports

In the quiet, climate-controlled heart of a modern laboratory, a small vial holds the potential for a cure, a new diagnostic tool or a lifeline for a patient. Within a biobank, millions of such vials are stored, each containing a unique and irreplaceable biological sample. These samples are preserved at the most extreme of temperatures, often in the vapor phase of liquid nitrogen at a chilling -196 deg C. At this frontier of scientific preservation, the integrity of a tiny, unassuming component is non-negotiable: the cryogenic label. Cryogenic labels are highly engineered products that must withstand conditions that would cause a standard sticker to crack, peel or fade into illegibility within minutes.

"THE PRIMARY CHALLENGE IS ACHIEVING SUFFICIENT ADHESION LEVEL AT SUCH A LOW TEMPERATURE. A CRUCIAL ASPECT OF THIS IS THE WIDE TEMPERATURE RANGE A LABEL MUST ENDURE"

The failure of a cryogenic label is not a mere inconvenience. It can lead to the misidentification or loss of a sample, compromising years of research, invalidating a clinical trial, or jeopardizing patient safety. As the fields of personalized medicine, cell and gene therapy and biobanking expand at an exponential rate, the cryogenic label has transformed from a simple accessory into a foundational component of the scientific and medical cold chain.

THE GROWTH OF THE CRYO MARKET

The demand for reliable cryogenic labels is a direct reflection of the surging industries they support. According to a market analysis by Grand View Research, the global cryogenic label market was valued at 1.12 billion USD in 2024 and is projected to reach 2.15 billion USD by 2034, exhibiting a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 6.64 percent. This growth is not uniform but driven by specific, high-stakes applications.

As Paavo Sillanpää, senior manager at UPM Adhesive Materials, notes: 'The cryogenic label market has enjoyed a healthy growth rate in recent years due to an increase in the number of biobanks, advances in research for biological drugs, cell therapies, genomics and regenerative medicine.'

This sentiment is echoed by other industry experts. Gabriela Gregor, senior marketing manager, pharma and specialty, Avery Dennison, shares: 'We have seen an increased number of requests for labels used for cryogenic applications over the past years. It started during Covid-19 as the delivery of vaccines required low temperatures. Since then, the ultra-low temperature products have been steadily rising due to the advancement in biologic and genetic therapeutics.'

THE SCIENCE BEHIND CRYOGENIC LABELS

When selecting a cryogenic label, several key features are paramount to ensuring long-term success.

It goes without saying that labels must be certified to perform reliably at the full range of cryogenic temperatures, from -20 deg C (standard freezer), to -80 deg C (ultra-low temperature freezer), to the ultimate challenge of -196 deg C (liquid nitrogen).

The labels must also be able to withstand exposure to common laboratory solvents without smudging or peeling. What makes a label capable of surviving a liquid nitrogen bath? It is a complex, engineered system where every component is chosen for its ability to function under extreme duress. This is often achieved through a combination of the right facestock, a robust thermal transfer ribbon, cryogenic adhesives and a protective topcoat.

ADHESION AT SUB-ZERO TEMPERATURES

The adhesive is arguably the most critical component. A standard adhesive loses its tackiness and becomes rigid below its glass transition temperature. In this temperature range, a polymer-based adhesive undergoes a transition from a hard, brittle, glassy state to a soft, flexible, rubbery state or vice versa. It can't conform to the shrinking surface of a vial, causing it to peel or delaminate. Cryogenic adhesives are formulated to remain flexible and functional at extremely low temperatures. Most cryogenic adhesives are specialized acrylics formulated for this purpose.

A key challenge is the difference in thermal contraction between the label material and the surface to which it's applied, such as a polypropylene vial. The label and the vial will shrink at different rates, creating immense stress on the adhesive bond. A properly engineered cryogenic adhesive possesses a specific degree of flexibility that allows it to accommodate this movement without peeling or losing its grip.

As Gregor of Avery Dennison points out: 'The primary challenge is achieving sufficient adhesion level at such a low temperature. A crucial aspect of this is the wide temperature range a label must endure, from application at room temperature to storage at -196 deg C, and in some cases, cryogenic cycles and thawing in a water bath at body temperature.'

For Soichiro (Sushi) Fujinaga, technical manager at Lintec, the chemistry behind these adhesives is proprietary information and a closely guarded secret. However, he states: 'The performance hinges on a specialized formulation that allows the adhesive to accommodate the thermal expansion and contraction differences between the label and the container.'

THE UNBREAKABLE FACESTOCK

In cryogenic applications, the facestock is far from a simple piece of paper. The material must be able to endure extreme cold without becoming brittle, cracking or losing its ability to hold ink. It must also resist chemical solvents, abrasion and moisture, all of which are common in a laboratory setting.

Standard paper and vinyl face stocks are generally not recommended for use in cryogenic applications. Paper, being porous, absorbs moisture, which then freezes and can cause the label to delaminate. Vinyl becomes brittle and loses its flexibility in low temperatures. This has led label manufacturers to adopt a



Cryogenic label sample from Avery Dennison

range of specialized synthetic films that offer superior performance.

Polyester is the most common material for cryogenic label face stocks due to its exceptional dimensional stability, thermal resistance and durability. It is a strong, rigid film that resists temperature-induced shrinkage and maintains its mechanical strength even at -196 deg C. Polyester's chemical resistance makes it ideal for environments where labels may be exposed to harsh solvents like ethanol, isopropanol or xylene. It is also highly compatible with thermal transfer printing, which is standard for creating durable, smudge-proof labels. Gregor indicates that polyester films are 'rigid and less conformable than polyethylene, making it ideal for flat and semi-rigid surfaces where labels must remain secure for years.'

Polyolefin films, such as polypropylene (PP) and polyethylene (PE), are primarily chosen for their conformability and flexibility. This is particularly important for small-diameter vials and tubes, as a flexible face stock can more easily wrap around a curved surface without flagging or peeling at the edges. Gregor further notes that 'although PP and PE have better resistance to freezing and thawing, they may not be as reliable as polyester for long-term storage or the most extreme cryogenic conditions.'

While less discussed, the liner is essential for protecting the adhesive before application. A good liner ensures the adhesive remains pristine and ready to form a secure bond with the substrate.

PRINTING BEST PRACTICES

The most advanced label is useless if the information printed on it is unreadable. This has made thermal transfer printing among the most suitable techniques for cryogenic labels.

This method uses a heated printhead to melt a solid resin-based ribbon onto the face stock. 'At UPM, we always recommend using a resin ribbon with our cryogenic label materials. Resin ribbons are designed to withstand extreme cold and chemical exposure,' shares Sillanpää. 'The resulting print is exceptionally durable and resistant to common lab solvents and abrasion.'

While TTR is dominant, other technologies are also used. Fujinaga mentions: 'We also sell desktop laser printable and water-based inkjet versions for cryogenic labels.'

Gregor from Avery Dennison notes that 'each technology has trade-offs; for instance, direct thermal printers do not use a ribbon, which can be an advantage if you want to ensure no personal information is left on a ribbon that needs to be securely disposed of.'

Even with the best materials, an improperly applied label will fail. Material manufacturers emphasize that a label requires 'a clean surface with sufficient pressure and dwell time to adhere properly.'



FreezerBondz ultra-thin cryogenic polyester labels from Brady Corporation



Paavo Sillanpää, senior manager, ecosystem pharma and healthcare, EMEIA, UPM Adhesive Materials

"EACH TECHNOLOGY HAS TRADE-OFFS"

Sillanpää notes that they 'always recommend attaching labels in room temperature, if possible.'

Gregor echoes the same sentiment, stating: 'We primarily print at room temperature and ensure long enough dwell time in order to let the adhesive bond with the substrate before cryogenic storage.'

The consensus among experts is that applying a label to a frozen, frosted, or wet vial is a major risk factor for failure. Brien Christopherson, vice president, research and development at Brady Corporation, a Milwaukee, US-based manufacturer of labels, signs, safety devices, printing systems and software, notes: 'The biggest mistake we see is when customers try to apply our labels to vials that have already been frozen. It's a natural instinct, but it's crucial that the adhesive has a chance to form a strong initial bond before the temperature plummets.'

Trying to apply a standard label to a frosted vial will result in immediate and catastrophic failure, as moisture and temperature differences prevent any bond from forming. However, some specialized adhesives do exist. As Sillanpää notes: 'Specialized cryo adhesives also allow labeling in sub-zero temperatures.' For containers with small diameters, Gregor recommends an 'overlap for test tubes in order to prevent label lifting.'

THE CRUCIAL APPLICATIONS

The demand for high-performance cryogenic labels is inextricably linked to the rapid advancements in the medical and scientific fields. In these environments, every sample is a potential source of a cure, a vital piece of evidence or a key to understanding a disease.

In the medical field, cryogenic labels are widely used in biobanking. The global biobanking market is projected to reach over 182 billion USD by 2034, growing at a CAGR of 8.16 percent. Biobanks are vast repositories that store millions of biological samples such as blood, plasma, tissue and DNA for future research. The National Institute of Health in the US notes that in a large-scale biobank with millions of samples, one cannot afford a single mix-up. The entire value of a biobank is in its ability to retrieve and identify a sample decades later. The label is the most important part of that chain of custody. The integrity of these labels is fundamental to the long-term viability of personalized medicine, which relies on accessing patient-specific biological data. Cryogenic labels are also used in clinical diagnostics, where patient samples need to be labeled with absolute precision to ensure accurate test results. The need for a label that can withstand rapid freezing and thawing cycles and resist common lab chemicals is non-negotiable for patient safety and diagnostic reliability.

Another area of application is in cell and gene therapy. The global cell and gene therapy market is projected to reach 117.46 billion USD by 2034, and each of these treatments requires meticulous labeling to ensure the right patient receives the right therapy.

Corinna Endres, product manager, drug protection at Schreiner MediPharm, states: 'Due to the rise in novel therapies such as cell and gene, mRNA, etc, there has been a growing demand regarding cryogenic labels.' These therapies, such as CAR-T cell therapy, use a patient's own living cells. These precious, one-of-a-kind samples are frozen and stored in liquid nitrogen during transport and processing. A labeling error could have devastating consequences, rendering the therapy unusable or, in a worst-case scenario, leading to a patient receiving the wrong treatment. The label here is not just an identifier; it is a direct safeguard of the patient's life.

Other than the medical arena, cryogenic labels play a major role in genomics and proteomics. Research labs that perform high-throughput screening may process thousands of samples a day. Automation and robotics are critical, and they depend on scannable barcodes on labels that are reliable and will not fail. The failure of a single label can disrupt an entire research workflow, leading to costly delays and the potential loss of irreproducible data.

Drug discovery is also an area where cryo labels are gaining popularity. Pharmaceutical companies rely on cryogenic storage to preserve vast libraries of chemical compounds and reagents. The ability to accurately track and retrieve specific compounds is essential to the lengthy and expensive process of discovering new drugs.

NO ROOM FOR ERROR

The critical nature of cryogenic labels becomes painfully clear when they fail. A patient sample mix-up or loss can have catastrophic consequences, as documented by organizations like the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) and the Center for Phlebotomy Education. These agencies conclude that mislabeled specimens are a frequent problem, resulting in serious consequences, including the need for additional treatment or temporary or permanent harm to the patient.

The cost of these errors is staggering. The College of American Pathologists (CAP) estimates that a single mislabeled specimen costs an institution about 712 USD. For a large hospital, the cost of mislabeling can exceed one million USD per year.

The challenges of the cold chain are not static, and neither are the solutions. The market is constantly evolving to meet new demands.

Gregor highlights the growing need for tamper-evident labels for secondary packaging, such as cardboard boxes and plastic storage boxes. This adds another layer of security to the cold chain, ensuring samples have not been compromised during transport or storage. Fujinaga, too, notes: 'There's the constant need to develop new products to match our customers' requirements as clinical technologies like syringes and test tubes evolve.'

The ultimate goal for many in the industry is automated tracking. The integration of RFID or NFC chips into cryogenic labels would allow for the simultaneous scanning of entire racks of samples without ever needing to open a freezer.

'RFID/NFC have already been integrated into cryogenic labels for tracking, but there are significant challenges with extremely low temperature ranges and reliable functionality of the integrated chip,' comments Endres. 'The thermal shock can cause stress on the chip and wire bonds, leading to failure. However, many companies are actively working to overcome these hurdles. We, at Schreiner MediPharm, have advanced test capabilities to verify that RFID readability is possible even at minus 80 deg C.'

RFID cryogenic labels are engineered to withstand extreme conditions, remaining scannable even when submerged in liquid nitrogen at -196 deg C. These labels, provided by manufacturers such as US-based AssetPulse, feature a flexible UHF inlay and permanent adhesive securely identifying vials and tubes in long-term cryogenic storage. Unlike traditional barcodes, passive RFID labels can be read without direct line-of-sight, reducing the need for freeze–thaw cycles that risk sample integrity. This consistent and reliable tracking minimizes errors, while also supporting strict regulatory compliance in sensitive environments such as hospitals, where RFID is used to access the right sample for life-saving procedures.

Similarly, Identiv and InPlay are co-developing a portfolio of BLE-enabled smart labels for high-value logistics, including cold-chain, pharmaceuticals and food. Powered by InPlay's ultra-low-power IN100 NanoBeacon SoC, the labels provide real-time tracking, visibility, and condition monitoring (temperature, humidity, motion). With extended read ranges, smartphone compatibility, and built-in AES-EAX encryption, the labels are designed for secure, scalable use in specialized environments such as cryogenic logistics. Commercial launch for these labels is planned for late 2025.

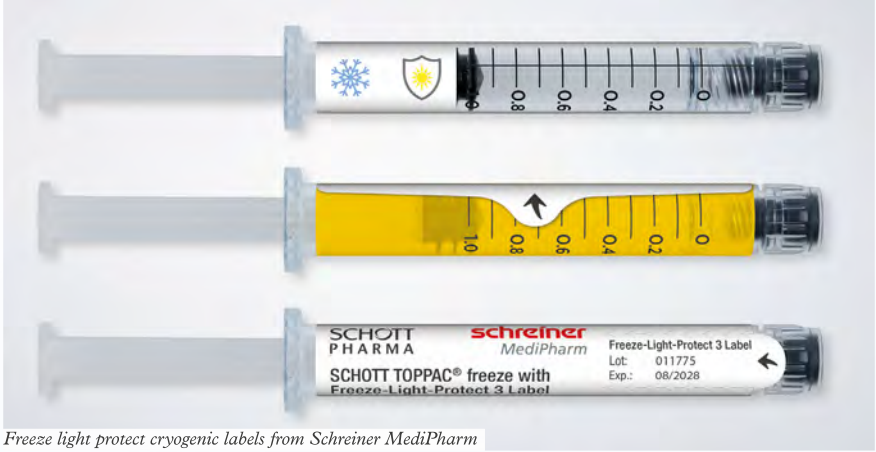
Cryogenic labels are no longer just for vials. Schreiner MediPharm has developed a Freeze-Light-Protect label to address the challenge of light-sensitive drugs. This innovative solution combines cryogenic durability with multi-level UV and light protection. This is critical for biologics and other sensitive substances stored in transparent containers, where maintaining drug efficacy is just as important as maintaining sample identification.

SMALL LABEL WITH A MONUMENTAL IMPACT

Cryogenic labels are a hidden but indispensable part of modern science and medicine. They are not mass-produced commodity items but highly specialized, engineered solutions designed to function under the most punishing conditions imaginable. From the microscopic scale of a single cryovial to the massive scale of a national biobank, these labels are the silent guardians of integrity, ensuring that a sample collected today can be reliably identified and used a decade from now.

The market for these labels is thriving, fueled by unprecedented growth in fields that rely on the preservation of biological materials. As cell therapies become more patient-centric and personalized medicine moves into the mainstream, the need for reliable, secure, and smart labeling will only increase.

"THE BIGGEST MISTAKE WE SEE IS WHEN CUSTOMERS TRY TO APPLY OUR LABELS TO VIALS THAT HAVE ALREADY BEEN FROZEN. IT'S A NATURAL INSTINCT"



Freeze light protect cryogenic labels from Schreiner MediPharm

Scan the QR code to read more end-use features in Labels & Labeling

Software suppliers tackle industry's perfect storm

Workflow integration separates market leaders from struggling converters, with automation shifting from optional to essential. Piotr Wnuk reports

One of the Hybrid Software's customers has recently increased output by 3,000 SKUs per month without hiring a single additional employee. The secret was not a faster press or more floor space, but an integrated workflow system that eliminated manual touchpoints across the entire production process. This productivity gain exemplifies a shift happening across the label and packaging industry, where software automation has become the difference between thriving and merely surviving.

The response from the supply chain has been unmistakable: workflow automation is no longer optional; it is the foundation of competitive operations.

The perfect storm is hitting converters

Printers are navigating what Craig Tait, chief product officer at ePS, calls 'a perfect storm' of market pressures. 'An unprecedented shift toward shorter runs and increased SKU proliferation is putting new strain on already thin margins,' he explains. 'The most critical pain point is the reliance on fragmented, disconnected systems that create silos and block a real-time view of the business.'

The shift from analog to digital print technology has changed the type of orders converters handle. 'The volume of orders is higher, but with shorter run lengths and tighter lead times,' notes Peter Dhondt, director of global and strategic accounts at Cerm. 'If the workflow within the organization is not optimized to manage this effectively, then pressure builds in the CSR and production teams, and this is when costly mistakes can happen.'

Mike Agness, Hybrid Software executive vice president for the Americas, points to persistent fundamental issues that plague even sophisticated operations. 'Files received are still not print-ready, which means a pre-press technician needs to do work on them to print properly. This goes for both flexo and digital print production.'

For many converters, manual processes create a cascade of problems. 'Too many converters still run complex workflows on spreadsheets and manually enter data, creating errors and costly surprises that are often discovered too late on press,' observes Tait. His company's data shows that 'by replacing these manual touchpoints with a connected workflow, process complexity can drop by 30 to 50 percent. The result: fewer mistakes, faster turnaround and complete visibility from quote to production.'

Sistrade identifies additional operational pressures, including 'escalating energy and material costs, excessive waste from idle machines and the demand for shorter print runs with tighter delivery windows.' These challenges are 'compounded by rising compliance needs for variable data and personalization, leading to inefficiencies in production planning and inventory management,' notes Isabel Ferreira, head of marketing and communication at Portugal-based Sistrade.

The convergence of these pressures is forcing converters to rethink their operational models, with workflow integration emerging as the primary lever for maintaining competitiveness.

Labor crisis

The workforce shortage has emerged as perhaps the most urgent challenge facing the industry, with demographic data painting a stark picture. 'If you look at the age pyramid across Europe, there is a peak in the 50-60 year-old group, falling significantly through 40 to 50 and 30 to 40 and beyond,' reports Cerm's Dhondt. 'The people are just not there, so technology must bridge this gap.'



With the newly developed connector between Durst Analytics and Cerm MIS, production data from Durst Tau label presses can now be transferred directly into the Cerm MIS Software

"The labor shortage has exposed a critical vulnerability in the industry: an overreliance on tribal knowledge that walks out the door when an experienced employee leaves"

The impact extends beyond simple headcount. 'The labor shortage has exposed a critical vulnerability in the industry: an overreliance on tribal knowledge that walks out the door when an experienced employee leaves,' explains Tait. 'The impact of this is realized daily in slower estimating, brittle production schedules and a general lack of operational resilience.'

For pre-press departments, the shortage creates particularly acute problems. 'The labor shortage and finding qualified pre-press technicians impacts our clients considerably,' notes Agness. 'Many times, converters have a single pre-press person on staff. If that person moves on or is on vacation, our clients need some backup to keep their files moving.'

Sistrade quantifies the impact: 'Labor shortages have led to revenue loss, increased error rates in picking and handling and prolonged lead times, exacerbating supply chain disruptions.'

'Our philosophy is to build expertise directly into the system, so every job moves faster with fewer manual steps,' states Tait. 'By automating RFQs, estimating, job creation and production planning, teams spend less time on admin and more time producing.'

This approach fundamentally changes the skill requirements for new employees. 'Complex, accurate quotes can be created without years of experience, because built-in logic guides the process,' Tait adds. 'The goal isn't to replace people, it's to make them more effective, free their time for strategic work and amplify decision-making across the plant.'

Cerm's MIS takes a comprehensive approach to automation. 'Online web to print, pre-press software and production machines can be seamlessly connected with two-way communication,'

Dhondt explains. 'This massively increases productivity driven by technology, enabling label and packaging converters to do the same level of business with fewer people or similarly support growth without the need to increase headcount.'

Maximum impact

Workflow providers identify several key areas where automation delivers immediate return on investment. Tait of ePS outlines five critical automation zones: 'The front-end intake process is the largest win: RFQs flow directly into estimating without manual intervention, cutting delays, errors and hidden costs.'

The benefits extend through the entire workflow. 'Automating pre-press handoff through structured specs, automated die and cylinder lookup and digital approvals, removes long-standing bottlenecks,' continues Tait. 'Planning becomes faster and smarter, with constraint-aware batching, ganging and automatic sequencing by ink and substrate. The result: production plans created up to 20 times faster, maximizing efficiency and reducing costly delays.'

Cerm emphasizes the power of product-based workflows as the foundation for automation. 'Cerm is a product-based workflow, unique SKUs containing technical specifications and production routes to go either digital or analog depending on quantity,' Dhondt explains. 'This data drives an automated workflow from sales order, ganged production run opportunities, communication with pre-press software for step and repeat file prep, pushing data out to machines for automated set up and receiving real-time production data back for tracking and performance analysis.'

The company reports measurable results across its customer base: 'We see this achieved throughout our customer base, reporting KPIs of reduced lead times, improved OTIF, increased revenue per employee and ultimately profitability increases.'

For pre-press specifically, Agness identifies two critical opportunities for automation. 'Online proof approvals and step and repeat layouts should be integrated and automated,' he states. 'Online approvals offer, through status updates, visibility throughout the organization about in-process or completed pre-press tasks, immediately when a client approves the proof.'

Sistrade's Ferreira points to 'estimates automation, pre-press automation, dynamic job batching and integrated scheduling with presses, allowing for seamless handling of short runs and variable data. Robotic systems for finishing and packaging also offer quick wins by minimizing downtime.'

Ultimate Tech sees particular opportunity in SMB market segments. 'The biggest opportunity is in small to medium companies, because today there are no pre-press tools available for them in a reasonable quality/price ratio that enables them to have a high level of automation,' notes Watson. This represents a significant untapped market where workflow automation could deliver transformative results for operations that have been priced out of enterprise-level systems.

Theurer.com identifies product configuration as the foundation for automation success. 'We see the greatest potential for automation at the very beginning of the workflow, during product configuration,' Tobias Theurer, managing director of the company, explains. 'With our flexible calculation and configuration module, articles are created as the foundation for both sales and production processes. Through simple customization, we can map any customer-specific requirements, from special quality standards to unique logistics labels or complex production steps.'

The system enables end-to-end automation. 'Once configured, jobs can automatically move through the entire workflow, from estimating with standardized Business Templates, through automated job creation and scheduling, to production feedback via Direct Machine Interface and performance analysis in Actual Costing and Business Intelligence dashboards,' Theurer adds.

Manual processes on the chopping block

When asked which manual processes converters most want to eliminate, workflow providers point to repetitive, error-prone tasks that consume time without adding value. 'Customers are focused on eliminating non-value-added work,' states Tait. 'Every minute spent re-entering specs from an email, chasing artwork approvals or hand-building a job bag is a minute lost from producing sellable product. The absolute priority is to eliminate low-value, high-risk tasks that consume time and introduce errors.'

The hit list is extensive and consistent across suppliers. 'Top of the list: manual re-entry of specifications into estimating and ERP, wiped out through automated intake,' continues Tait. 'Other top pain points include the constant chase for artwork approvals, the manual creation of job bags and spreadsheet-based scheduling.'

'We see bottlenecks in order intake where orders are coming in from multiple sources, email, online portals, the printer's customers' ERP systems, Excel spreadsheets,' Dhondt reports. 'At Cerm, we have tools, including AI, to automate this process and remove manual and repetitive tasks.'

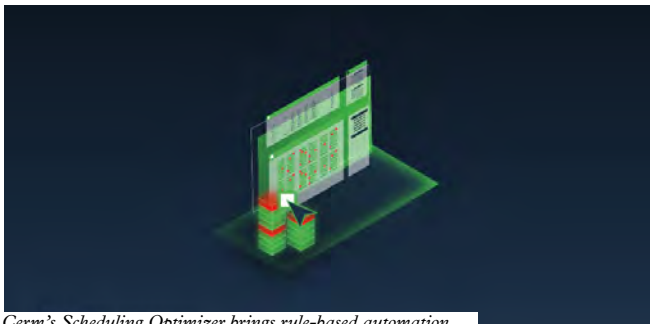
Continues Dhondt: 'We see bottlenecks in pre-press from receiving customer artwork, one-up proof approval and prepping the file ready for production. Manual processes can be significantly removed here through integration, replaced by automated workflows that communicate and synchronize status changes, preflight reports, proof approvals and step and repeat.'

Hybrid Software's Agness highlights specific automation wins that demonstrate the value proposition. 'Generating a proof file and sending it automatically to the customer is very helpful and eliminates repetitive work,' he states. 'Letting the system prepare optimum step and repeat layouts for output saves a lot of operator time and also assures that the print provider is printing labels as efficiently as possible.'

Sistrade's clients consistently target 'manual proofing, imposition planning and barcode labeling, which introduce errors and slow approvals.' The company reports quantifiable improvements: 'Through our workflow automation consulting, we've helped clients automate these steps, cutting turnaround times by 30 to 40 percent and eliminating error-prone data entry.'

Ultimate Tech emphasizes the importance of human capital. 'Tasks that are repetitive, tasks with little value for human interaction. This is specifically the case for imposition, ganging and nesting,' Watson explains. 'As we help more and more customers automate, they quickly realize that the software can handle all their work with no human intervention for them to focus on high-value tasks like creativity, customer care and designing new offerings.'

"Up to 55 percent of the lead time of a sales order or job can be taken up by admin and preparation, leaving less than half for production"



Cerm's Scheduling Optimizer brings rule-based automation to scheduling, helping printers save time and reduce complexity

AI transformation

Artificial intelligence is reshaping how converters approach production scheduling, though perspectives vary significantly on the current state and future potential. The divergence of opinion among workflow providers reveals both the promise and the challenges of AI implementation in specialized manufacturing environments.

'AI is transforming production scheduling, moving from reactive, rules-based systems to predictive, intelligence-driven decision-making,' reports Tait. 'AI models now suggest optimal batching strategies to reduce makeready times, flag potential delays before they occur and run multiple what-if scenarios to identify the best production outcomes.'

Cerm sees AI as essential for managing the complexity that overwhelms human planners. 'In dynamic production environments, it is unrealistic to expect planners alone to effectively deal with changes to delivery dates, new priority orders coming in, which jobs should be run together, impacts of machine breakdowns, changes in staff availability,' Dhondt notes. 'It is the new technologies, including AI, that will help to solve the challenges and support better decision-making.'

However, Agness offers a more cautious perspective that highlights the challenges of applying general AI to specialized industries. 'While AI will have a future, it needs to learn our industry and particulars about our industry,' he states. 'AI won't have a considerable impact on our business immediately because our industry is too specialized to collect accurate information for business or process decisions. Chances are the advances in AI will be what converters teach it about their particular workflows on a micro level and not a global, macro level open-to-public AI engine.'



Hybrid Software's SmartDFE enhances connectivity with MIS and ERP platforms, streamlining operations for faster turnaround and increased automation

This view suggests that the most effective AI implementations will be those customized to individual operations rather than off-the-shelf applications.

Ultimate Tech acknowledges both the opportunities and the learning curve ahead. 'Artificial intelligence is not new to automation, but it has certainly taken a new leap with generative AI and agentic AI,' Watson observes. 'AI is great at assessing quickly a vast amount of data and can help production professionals make decisions more quickly. But like any tool, there is always a better way to use it, and it is important for customers to learn about the limitations and opportunities of AI before scaling it to the entire organization.'

Theurer.com describes a shift from reactive to proactive scheduling. 'Artificial intelligence is transforming production planning from manual rescheduling to continuous optimization,' states Theurer. 'In C3 AI, the system continuously calculates the optimal production plan based on the current production situation and automatically adapts it when conditions change, for example,

Paper Converting Machine Company
BALDWIN
HUDSON-SHARP
BW Converting
Change for the better
Treat
Surface cleaning and corona treatment systems
Inspect
Web viewing & inspection and security technology
Print
Flexographic and digital hybrid presses
Cure
UV/IR curing and drying systems
Clean
Anilox and gravure roll laser cleaners
Bag
Bag and pouch-making machines, and bag closure solutions
bwconverting.com

> **"AI won't have a considerable impact on our business immediately because our industry is too specialized to collect accurate information for business or process decisions"**

due to rush jobs, machine downtimes or delayed materials.'

The company emphasizes multi-objective optimization. 'The C3 AI engine determines a global optimum across multiple weighted objectives, such as the minimization of missed delivery dates, the minimization of set-up times, the maximization of overall equipment effectiveness and the reduction of lead times,' Theurer explains. 'Planners define the strategic weighting of these objectives, while the AI continuously balances them and proposes the optimal schedule.'

The consensus appears to be that AI will play an increasingly important role, but implementation requires careful consideration of industry-specific requirements and realistic expectations about current capabilities.

Sustainability reporting

Regulatory requirements are transforming sustainability from a marketing initiative into a core business function with significant implications for data management. 'Sustainability is no longer a marketing initiative, it's a core business requirement with significant data demands,' states Tait. 'Brand owners expect auditable, part-level traceability, requiring converters to capture a complete raw-to-finished genealogy for every job, including supplier certifications, energy use and waste attribution.'

Sistrade points to specific regulatory drivers with challenging deadlines. 'Sustainability mandates are demanding granular data on material traceability, recyclability and carbon footprints, with stricter EU and global regulations requiring verifiable reporting by 2025,' Ferreira reports. 'This shifts focus to eco-friendly inks and substrates, increasing the need for integrated tracking systems.'

Cerm observes increasing pressure from multiple regulatory sources. 'As more and more legislation is introduced, PPT, EPR, EUDR, and responsibilities on the converter increase, we are seeing the need for more data and reporting for sure,' Dhondt notes. 'With scrutiny via audits and specific reporting, then the flexibility of the MIS to support and extract data is key.'

The message is clear: sustainability data management is becoming a table-stakes requirement for converters working with major brands, and workflow systems must be equipped to capture, track and report this information seamlessly.

Untapped opportunities

Looking beyond current automation efforts, workflow providers see significant potential in areas that remain largely unexploited. Tait envisions self-improving systems that learn from every job. 'The most significant opportunity is building a self-correcting business ecosystem,' he states. 'Too often, valuable production data is locked in reports instead of being used to shape future performance. Real-time feedback, like actual run speeds and waste,



should flow back into core systems to refine estimating standards automatically. If a job consistently runs faster than planned, the following quote becomes more competitive and more accurate.'

This creates a virtuous cycle of continuous improvement. He also sees opportunity in transparency that strengthens customer relationships. 'The broader vision is complete operational transparency through live job status portals for brand owners. Converters maintain control while delivering the visibility customers demand, strengthening relationships and unlocking deeper operational insights.'

Cerm emphasizes end-to-end integration as the critical missing piece for many converters. 'Many converters have invested in automation in specific parts, studio/pre-press, digital and flexo presses and finishing lines, but often the full integration between them is missing,' Dhondt states. 'These gaps between, or in other words, where the process flow breaks down, can cause jobs to stall, errors to creep in and margins to erode.'

Material waste represents another significant opportunity with direct bottom-line impact. 'Waste reduction, improvements in processes can be achieved by using tools to optimize ganging/nesting and to minimize set up waste,' Dhondt notes. 'Given that substrate material cost can represent around 40 to 60 percent of total costs, then just a one to two percent reduction can have a significant financial impact.'

Agness identifies data silos as a key target for improvement. 'The biggest untapped opportunity for many is when they have silos of data, but the current method for data input is done manually,' he observes. 'If we can look to eliminate touches and interruptions during production, efficiency will be gained and fewer errors will occur.'

Ultimate Tech zeroes in on pre-press as the area with the most unrealized potential. 'In labels and packaging, definitely in pre-press. Many label printers tell us they prepare jobs manually,' Watson states. 'Labor costs are some of the highest costs a company can have, thus automation is key to enhanced productivity, quality and viability.'

Digital integration with brand owners

The relationship between converters and brand owners is evolving toward deeper digital integration, fundamentally changing the nature of these partnerships. 'Digital integration is reshaping the way converters and brand owners collaborate,' states Tait. 'With open APIs and secure portals, RFQs, specs, artwork, live job status and compliance documents can be exchanged seamlessly. The payoff is clear: brand owners gain the transparency they demand, while converters maintain a single, auditable source of truth.'



Ultimate Tech's Impostrip can manage dynamic label runs, including the generation of print PDFs and cut and embellishment files for finishing, to automate setup time throughout production

> "Sustainability is no longer a marketing initiative; it's a core business requirement with significant data demands"

The strategic advantage extends beyond operational efficiency. 'By offering transparency and protecting sensitive data, converters can differentiate themselves in a crowded market and position themselves as strategic partners rather than just vendors,' Tait adds.

Cerm emphasizes close collaboration with integration partners to create robust ecosystems.

'We work very closely with our partners to ensure integration between our systems is effective and robust,' Dhondt explains. 'This could mean a web-to-print storefront that has been customized for the brand-owner and is fully integrated with the Cerm MIS, enabling real-time pricing and online ordering from product catalogs to be synchronized.'

Agness emphasizes the practical realities of integration. 'Brand owners don't want to change their systems generally speaking, so adapting what their systems can output and what the converters can accept and explaining how efficiencies can be gained can accelerate the entire production process,' he states.

Theurer.com emphasizes standards-based integration for seamless collaboration. 'C3 enables converters and brand owners to collaborate digitally on every level, from product data to delivery,' Theurer notes. 'With C3 Web-Portal 2.0, brand owners can log in to view and manage their own products, create new variants or SKUs and directly release or reorder items online. They can also track order progress in real time, view production or delivery status and access quality and sustainability information.'

Looking ahead

The consensus among workflow providers is clear: the industry stands at a transformative moment where integrated, intelligent systems separate market leaders from those struggling to survive. 'The future of labels and packaging will be defined by agility and intelligence,' concludes Tait. 'Market leaders won't be those with the newest presses, but rather those with the most innovative and connected workflows. Sustainability demands, labor pressures and rising customer expectations aren't threats; they're opportunities for companies that embrace integrated, intelligent systems.'

Ultimate Tech sees market disruption ahead that will reshape the competitive landscape. 'As digital label presses become better and faster, they will create a new market opportunity for companies that are not already in labels,' Watson predicts. 'This enhanced competitiveness in the market will push label printers to innovate, to become more flexible and automated.'

Agness emphasizes the ongoing nature of workflow development. 'We continue to listen to the needs of the marketplace and adapt our technology to those needs and new tools that become available,' he states. 'We welcome challenges from our customers and prospects, to understand their issues and put a development effort from a software manufacturer to adapt technology to resolve the difficulties they have.'

The path forward requires converters to fundamentally rethink their workflow systems, not as back-office utilities, but as strategic competitive weapons. The evidence from workflow providers suggests that the winners over the next five years will be those who invest now in integrated, intelligent systems that connect every touchpoint from initial quote to final delivery. Those who delay risk finding themselves unable to meet the speed, transparency and sustainability demands that are rapidly becoming table stakes in the label and packaging market.

The question for converters is no longer whether to automate their workflows, but how quickly they can implement the integrated systems that will define competitive advantage in an industry being reshaped by technology.

Scan the QR code below to learn more about workflow and software from the 'Management Information Systems and Workflow Automation' Label Academy book



GLOBAL LEADER IN FLEXO & COMBINATION PRINTING PRESSES
FOR LABELS, FLEXIBLE PACKAGING & SPECIAL APPLICATIONS

60 YEARS OF PASSION FOR INNOVATION

PRINTING.OMET.COM

OMET

DOMINO

The **ALL NEW** **N410** LED digital label press

Unlock your digital future with LED

by a brand you can trust



Domino. Do more.

OPM Group honored as Converter of the Year

Independent and family-owned, OPM Group is recognized for label leadership and packaging innovation at the Global Label Awards. Chelsea McDougall reports

For decades, OPM Group has been synonymous with innovation, quality and growth.

Now, OPM Group can add a new title to its list of accolades: Converter of the Year.

The Leeds, UK-based company received recognition at the Labels & Labeling Global Awards, held on the first night of Labelexpo Europe 2025.

Accepting the Converter of the Year award on behalf of OPM were joint owners and managing directors Chris and Susan Ellison. The husband-and-wife duo are well-known figures in European label circles. Chris Ellison is a past chairman of Finat and was named a Labelexpo Ambassador for his experience in the flexible packaging space.

'This award means a great deal to us,' Chris Ellison says shortly after winning the award. 'It's been a long journey, there was a lot of learning along the way, and it's nice to be recognized by the industry for our service and commitment. This [award] is for all of our people, both our present people and the people who helped us along the way.'

In an industry largely represented by private equity and large multinational businesses, the Ellisons are holding strong as an independent and family-run label and flexible packaging manufacturer. Their children, Arnie and Charlotte Ellison, are actively engaged in the business, carrying forward the company on the strong foundation laid by their parents.

'We've enjoyed bringing our family into the industry; it's been an amazing journey, but it's never felt like a chore because we've done it together, and so it's been easy in some ways,' Susan Ellison says.

But it wasn't just OPM's independence and industry involvement that earned them the Converter of the Year Award. The judges were impressed by OPM's leadership in flexible packaging and the company's work driving technical progress and positive change not only in the industry, but in the wider community (see boxout).

'I've had the privilege of watching OPM Group grow and evolve over many years, and this award is a testament to its commitment to excellence,' says Andy Thomas-Emans, chair of the judging panel. 'Chris and Sue have never been afraid to innovate, invest and diversify, while always maintaining the highest standards of quality and integrity. This award was rightly deserved.'

History

OPM was established in 1985 as a traditional label printer with a small converting line and a desktop printing machine. Slowly, the company grew to add more flexo equipment, more employees and a larger footprint. Today, OPM Group has 100 employees, an annual turnover of 38M USD, and a 62,000 sqft facility.

By the late 1990s, the UK label market was starting to feel a little crowded. OPM, led by Chris and Susan, began looking at ways to innovate. Flexible packaging was a natural extension of the production processes already in place at OPM.

'Modern narrow-web UV flexo presses, especially those equipped with servo drives and modular configurations, are already capable of handling a wide range of substrates beyond pressure-sensitive labelstock,' Chris Ellison says. 'Films, foils, laminates and paper-based materials can be printed, laminated and converted in-line, enabling converters to produce flexible packaging formats such as stand-up pouches, sachets, shrink sleeves, flow wraps and lidding films without major capital reinvestment.'



Chris and Susan Ellison accepting the award

"We've enjoyed bringing our family into the industry; it's been an amazing journey, but it's never felt like a chore because we've done it together"

Chris Ellison co-authored the Label Academy book on flexible packaging production as the company developed deep expertise in coatings and materials, and encouraged suppliers to change their supply chain models to better serve the burgeoning narrow and mid-web market.

Ellison says it's even easier for a label converter to diversify today than it was when he got started. Today's flexible packaging sector is reshaped by sustainability, consumer demand for convenience, and the rise of e-commerce, making it the perfect moment to enter the market.

Strengths

Chris Ellison says part of the strength of OPM Group is knowing where it can succeed. For OPM, its success is in being a fast and agile converter, as well as a short-run specialist that focuses on quality and innovation. This often means OPM takes on challenging applications and spreads its portfolio across end uses and a diverse customer base.

'We produce products that either have very high barriers to entry for our competitors in terms of investment or are in a very niche market,' Chris Ellison says.

Perhaps the most significant factor in the company's success has been its ability to listen to its customers. The Ellisons were not afraid to change the course of the business when the customers dictated it.

'I have a saying: God blessed us with two ears and one mouth, we should use them in that ratio,' Chris Ellison says.

OPM was quick to recognize the potential of flexible packaging, with an entrepreneurial foresight in place long before others in the industry. By 1999, OPM Group had added short-run flexible packaging to its label portfolio.

The Ellisons found that customers wanted flexible packaging in the same way that label converters were accustomed to delivering it.

They could produce high-quality flexible packaging in smaller minimum order quantities than a traditional flex pack converter could offer, and in a matter of days, not weeks. Speed to market really gave OPM its competitive edge.

'Label converters are the ultimate short-run specialists,' Chris Ellison says. 'We all know how to deal with SKU proliferation and short-run work.'

The move proved successful. Today, flexible packaging makes up half of OPM's annual turnover.

OPM Group didn't just keep the recipe for success to itself. Rather, the Ellisons blazed the trail for other converters and led them down the path, speaking openly and candidly about their early stumbles in flexible packaging production.

'It's a steep learning curve, but a worthwhile one,' Chris Ellison says.

Challenges

The path to success wasn't always paved with roses. The Ellisons and the OPM team certainly stumbled along the way.

'We didn't need to reinvent the wheel,' Chris Ellison says. 'We just needed to reconfigure what we already did. Yes, we needed to change some equipment on our platform. We needed to change some mindsets on our team, but it didn't involve huge shifts in our thinking.'

Learning about new materials was a significant challenge. The team quickly realized that in flexible packaging, what's inside the packaging matters just as much as what's on the outside. The team also faced early hurdles in sourcing enough material and understanding how they would behave on the press.

'Get used to bigger inventory,' Chris Ellison says. 'You've got to carry stock and lots of it. And it all has sell-by dates. You have to move that material, keep it fresh, keep it rotating through the business. And it behaves very differently on press.'

'There's more science behind it,' he continues. 'It's new technology that you must pay very careful attention to. It can make or break your packaging journey.'

Perhaps it's because of that challenge that the Ellisons became instrumental in encouraging suppliers to change their supply chain models to meet the burgeoning needs of narrow and mid-web flexible packaging marketing. The results of which were evident at Labelexpo's most recent edition.

'You have more suppliers here than ever,' Chris Ellison said during the event in Barcelona. 'Most of the machine manufacturers are running packaging on their presses. There's a lot of material packaging suppliers here which weren't here 26 years ago when we started on this journey.'



Chris Ellison at the Global Label Awards

"Most of the machine manufacturers are running packaging on their presses. There's a lot of material packaging suppliers here which weren't here 20 years ago when we started on this journey"

Inclusive environment

OPM Group is an inclusive employer that actively welcomes employees from any gender, race, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, religion and educational background. The company offers a comprehensive range of training and development programs, including apprenticeships and supplier training sessions, to enhance its employees' skills and motivation for staying with the company.

OPM actively supports its local area through a variety of initiatives. The company proudly sponsors sports teams and players that include its own employees or their children, fostering a strong sense of camaraderie and community spirit. It also runs an annual work experience program, welcoming students from nearby schools to its Leeds-based facility. During their week-long placement, students gain hands-on insight into the world of print, an eye-opening experience that has inspired many.

In addition, OPM offers apprenticeships in partnership with the BPIF, helping to nurture the next generation of print professionals. OPM also supports several charities through year-round fundraising and awareness campaigns, reflecting its deep-rooted values of responsibility and care.

Innovations

OPM has been at the forefront of developing mono-material structures to replace laminated barrier structures, working closely with its longtime partner and supplier, Synthogra. OPM has devoted considerable research and development resources to meet this goal.

The company has also developed technology that advance its sustainability goals, such as mono-material products as an alternative to laminated barrier structures and a thicker label closure (TLC), a patented re-seal technology to replace rigid plastic molded lids in the wet wipe market.

OPM has pioneered the use of AI and automation at its facility, constantly driving toward efficiency and reducing the need for manual operations in production.

Future

At Labelexpo Europe, part of Ellison's ambassadorship involved sharing his journey into flexible packaging production with others who may be interested in pursuing the same path. It was a role he easily and eagerly stepped into.

'I think now is probably the sweetest time in the market for a narrow web converter to move into short to medium run, high-quality flexible packaging,' Ellison said during his keynote speech at Labelexpo.

Ellison says today's heightened focus on sustainability has become a major driver for the flexible packaging market. Consumers are looking for packaging that reduces waste, while supporting convenience and portability are qualities that flexible formats naturally deliver. At the same time, the rapid growth of e-commerce has further accelerated demand for lightweight, durable packaging.

'These are the trends that give us the opportunities to conduct business in this market,' Chris Ellison says. 'You're already doing it. You're able to pivot that skillset from labels and apply it to flexible packaging.'

Turn to page 83 to read more about the winners of the Global Label Awards

ENSURE HIGHEST QUALITY IN YOUR PRINT PRODUCTS

Erhardt+Leimer

SMARTSCAN | 200% Print image inspection

NEW FEATURES

- Camera system with unique 200% inspection function
- Fast and simple „one-click“ setup process
- For printing and finishing machines in label and narrow-web applications



SMARTSCAN
MIS2

More info about SMARTSCAN

ELSCAN | Web monitoring system

NEW PRODUCT

- Technology with 2 x 18 megapixels for magnificent image quality
- Motorized crossbeam with precise, high-speed control
- Unique LED-based flash concept for all types of printing in the printing industry



ELSCAN
OMS5

More info about ELSCAN

WE KNOW THE GRAPHICS INDUSTRY

Livasta

Mono-materialized labelstock



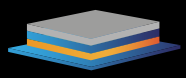
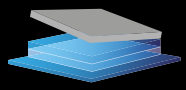
=



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	Mono-material labelstock
	
Ink layer is difficult to remove, and different materials are present so recycling efficiency decreases.	Ink layer can be removed during recycling washing phase and all materials originate from the same chemical components so recycling efficiency increases.

WINNER "Kinath" series MMP50CA BP401 8SK

11 September 2023 • Brussels
LABEL INDUSTRY GLOBAL AWARDS
www.labelawards.com

Award for Innovation
2023 Label Industry Global Awards held by Tarsus Group.

LINTEC

LINTEC Corporation JPN +81-3-3868-7730 www.livasta-labels.com/en/
LINTEC EUROPE B.V. NLD +31-20-673-3566 www.lintec-europe.com
LINTEC EUROPE (UK) LIMITED UK +44-1628-777766 www.lintec-europe.com

Reynders pioneers recyclable metallic labels

Family-owned Reynders adopts Actega technology to meet sustainability demands. Piotr Wnuk reports

Label converters face an increasingly complex challenge: delivering the premium aesthetics brands demand while meeting environmental requirements. Belgian family business Reynders has addressed this through its partnership with Actega, adopting EcoLeaf on-demand metallization to create S-Sential, a new approach to metallic label decoration that eliminates traditional foil waste.

Three generations of growth

Founded in 1956 in Mortsel, Belgium, Reynders operates eight production facilities across Europe and Asia. The company employs 650 people and generates an annual turnover of 173M EUR, serving the cosmetics, food and beverage, automotive and pharmaceuticals markets.

The converter produces self-adhesive labels, booklets, shrink sleeves, flexible packaging and in-mold labels. Third-generation family leadership now runs the business, with CCO Marco Van Hooff describing it as focused on agility and technical expertise.

'We believe in being small enough to move with speed, yet large enough to operate in the Champions League of label printing,' Van Hooff explains. 'Our strength lies in how we unite technical know-how with a tailored touch.'

The company identified on-demand metallization as key for meeting both environmental requirements and customer expectations for premium finishes.

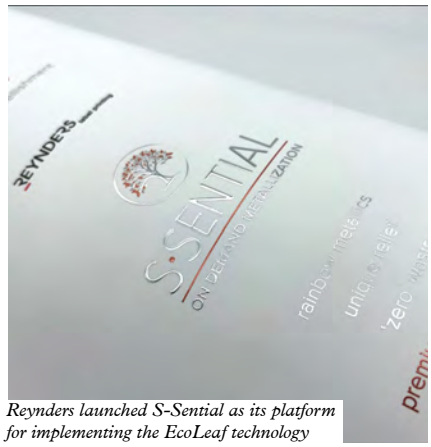
Technology

Reynders discovered EcoLeaf at Labelexpo Europe 2023. The technology applies metallic effects directly onto labels without PET carrier film or traditional foil backing. According to Actega, 1kg of EcoLeaf flakes replaces 3,000kg of conventional foil, resulting in a reduction of carbon emissions by more than 80 percent.

The process allows converters to apply metallic decoration precisely where needed, offering design flexibility and late-stage product differentiation.

'Sustainability and on-demand metallization go hand in hand with EcoLeaf,' Van Hooff notes. 'It allows us to deliver shiny, standout labels while cutting waste and carbon impact.'

Reynders launched S-Sential as its platform for implementing the technology. The system targets premium sectors where visual appeal drives purchasing decisions, particularly cosmetics, body care and specialty food and beverage products.



Reynders launched S-Sential as its platform for implementing the EcoLeaf technology

> **"Sustainability and on-demand metallization go hand in hand with EcoLeaf. It allows us to deliver shiny, standout labels while significantly cutting waste and carbon impact"**

Haptic and visual appeal

Beyond environmental benefits, S-Sential delivers tactile qualities that enhance shelf presence. The metallic finish creates a haptic effect designed to encourage consumer interaction, while the reflective properties provide visual differentiation on crowded shelves.

Reynders has conducted lifecycle analysis in accordance with ISO standards, providing data that brand owners can use to measure and communicate their environmental impact.

'It's also the quick turnarounds and the creative possibilities to use shiny on-demand metallization to differentiate the products,' Van Hooff adds.

Strategic partnership

Van Hooff describes the relationship with Actega as a long-term strategic partnership. 'Actega has consistently proven to be a dependable partner, offering cutting-edge approaches in coatings, inks, adhesives, compounds and sealants,' he remarks. 'Together, we are perfectly aligned in our shared vision to stay ahead of the market, driving innovation and setting new standards for sustainable, impactful outcomes.'

Harald Jasper, managing director of Actega Metal Print, views the collaboration as demonstrating that environmental responsibility and premium aesthetics need not conflict.

'Reynders' unwavering commitment to innovation and environmental responsibility is redefining what's possible in label embellishment,' Jasper states. 'With S-Sential and EcoLeaf's on-demand metallization, we're pioneering a new era, demonstrating that sustainable practices can seamlessly deliver a luxury, premium look.'

The partnership addresses multiple pressures converters face: regulatory compliance, brand owner sustainability targets, consumer preferences for premium packaging and production efficiency.

Van Hooff frames the adoption of new technology as essential for converters seeking a competitive advantage.

'The future of packaging demands action, not hesitation,' he argues. 'True leadership isn't about waiting for the perfect moment but embracing innovation and driving transformation.'

As regulatory timelines approach and sustainability criteria become standard in brand specifications, Reynders positions S-Sential as proof that label converters can deliver both environmental performance and premium aesthetics.

The company's investment in on-demand metallization represents a bet that the technology will become standard in premium label segments where traditional foil is currently the dominant format.

Scan the QR code to learn more about EcoLeaf technology

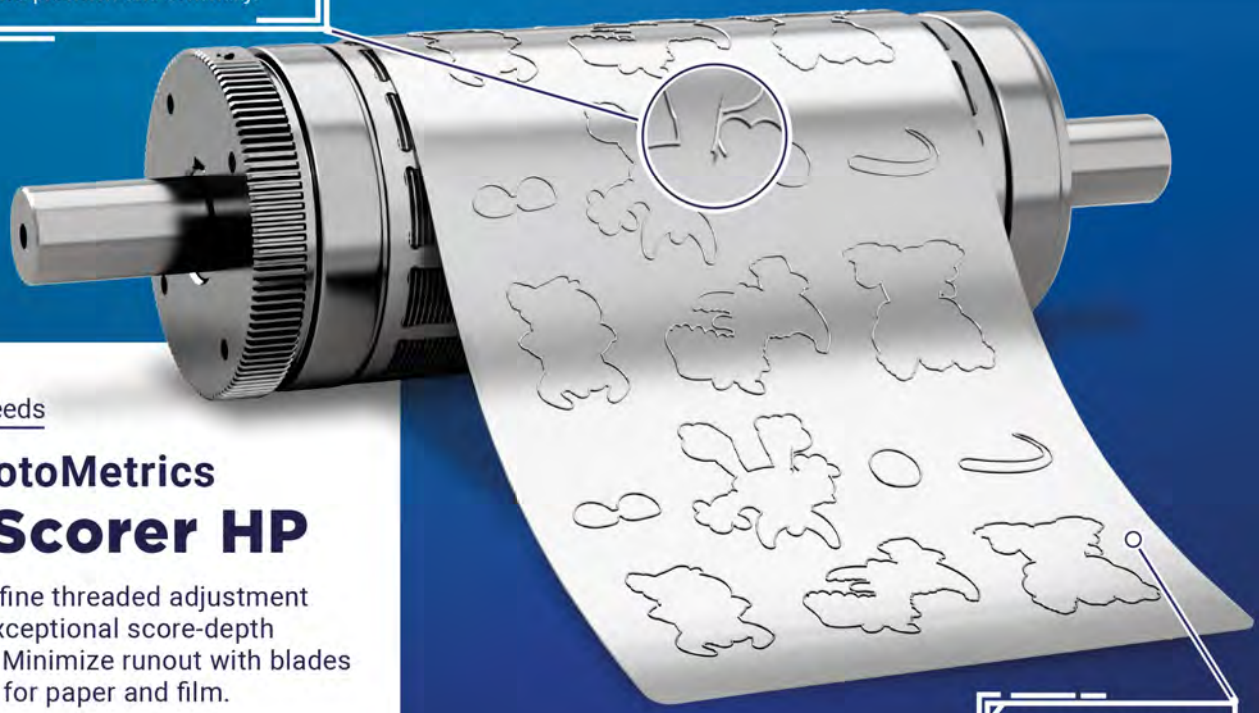
ROTOMETRICS
A MAXCESS BRAND

MAXCESS
BETTER, FASTER, SMARTER

RotoMetrics Flexible Die Portfolio

Enhanced Flexible Die Portfolio with 2X Durability

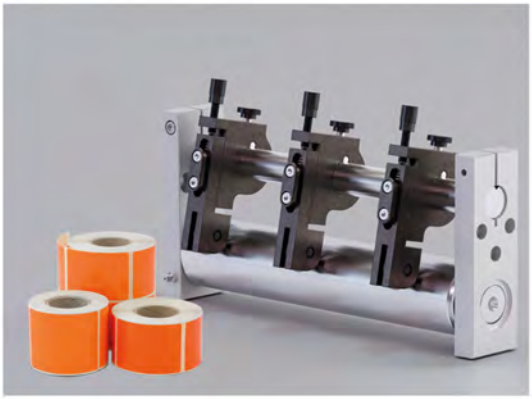
Versatile Die Solutions
From standard shapes to complex patterns and tight blade spacing, our dies cut thin liners, tough materials, and abrasive inks and papers with unmatched precision and continuity.



Scoring Needs

The RotoMetrics RD Scorer HP

New ultra-fine threaded adjustment delivers exceptional score-depth precision. Minimize runout with blades optimized for paper and film.



2X Durability
Superior durability lasting up to 2X longer than the competition.

Scan to Learn More

Choose the right flexible die for your application and enhance its performance with RotoRepel, a nonstick coating that reduces adhesive and ink buildup.

maxcess.com

Digital watermarks prove their worth in real-world trials

HolyGrail 2.0's latest industrial trials demonstrate the technology's readiness for commercial deployment across European recycling facilities. Piotr Wnuk reports

The quest for accurate plastic sorting has reached a pivotal moment. After years of development and testing, digital watermark technology has finally proven it can deliver the precision needed to transform how Europe handles post-consumer packaging waste. The HolyGrail 2.0 initiative's latest industrial trials, conducted at Germany's Hündgen Entsorgung facility, have demonstrated detection rates consistently exceeding 90 percent, a significant leap forward in sorting technology.

Over 100 days of rigorous testing from August to December 2024, the facility processed real household waste from Germany and Denmark, clocking an average of nearly 56,000 detections per day. The numbers are impressive: 5.66 million detections across 5,949 unique SKUs, with detection efficiency ranging from 87.9 to 93.8 percent. This represents the largest-scale testing of digital watermark technology to date, proving its potential for widespread commercial adoption.

Beyond traditional sorting limitations

Current near-infrared and visible light spectroscopy (NIR/VIS) systems, while effective at separating basic materials like PET, polypropylene and polyethylene, face inherent limitations that digital watermarks can overcome.

'NIR/VIS spectroscopy separates materials and colors; however, certain packaging features limit its detection capabilities. For instance, the presence of sleeves does not allow you to see the color underneath, multilayer packaging hinders the detection below the top layer, and additives and polymer physical properties are not visible by NIR/VIS,' explains Margherita Trombetti, project manager and sustainability policy officer at AIM, the European Brands Association.

Traditional sorting technologies also cannot identify crucial information, such as product application, whether for food, cosmetic or detergent use; recycled content levels; or whether materials are bio-based or fossil-based.

'There are certain types of information that it is impossible to obtain via the technology alone. This is why new technologies are needed,' adds Trombetti.



Martyn Tickner, technical advisor at the Alliance to End Plastic Waste



Margherita Trombetti, project manager and sustainability policy officer at AIM – the European Brands Association

"Digital watermarking is a proven method at commercial scale, and the early-adopter markets will benefit from this"

Digital watermarks address these gaps by encoding detailed information directly into packaging during the printing process.

'Digital watermarks' ability to identify packaging features at the SKU level unlocks a new set of data about the packaging, granting access to any packaging attributes such as additives, viscosity and hidden layers,' notes Trombetti.

These granular sorting capabilities extend far beyond current systems. 'When packaging is marked with digital watermarks, it can be sorted based on usage such as food, cosmetics, detergents and others, as well as traced for brand owners' collection statistics by product and for EPR purposes,' she explains.

Complementary technologies

Rather than replacing existing infrastructure entirely, the most effective approach combines digital watermarks with established NIR technology. This hybrid approach maximizes sorting efficiency while accommodating both marked and unmarked packaging, a practical necessity.

'Digital watermarking allows for the splitting of any fraction to a higher level of granularity than is currently possible with near infrared technology,' states Trombetti.

Integration proves essential for practical implementation. 'Not all objects will be digitally watermarked, and so a combination of DW and NIR/VIS provides the best of both worlds, enabling mixed sorting of both marked and unmarked SKUs, including responding to dirty, partially marked or damaged packaging,' explains Trombetti.

The Hündgen facility trials exemplified this integrated approach through sophisticated equipment configuration. 'On Hündgen's main line, a new 2.8m-wide Pellenc ST module enabled with Digimarc watermark detection was installed to process an input stream consisting of post-consumer plastic from the German and Danish collection systems,' details Trombetti.

'The detection efficiency ranged from 87.9 percent to 93.8 percent, with strong evidence of consistent detection over 90 percent over long durations,' Trombetti notes. These results proved particularly impressive given the complexity involved: 'Nearly 6,000 SKUs from collection in two countries, challenging post-consumer waste, including the presence of films and flexibles in the rigids stream, and the uneven distribution and crumpling of material.'

Implementation challenges

Integrating new technology into existing facilities requires careful consideration of both technical and economic factors. Martyn Tickner, technical advisor at the Alliance to End Plastic Waste, emphasizes

KOCHER + BECK

QUALITY BUILT + SERVICE DRIVEN

Driving you forwards

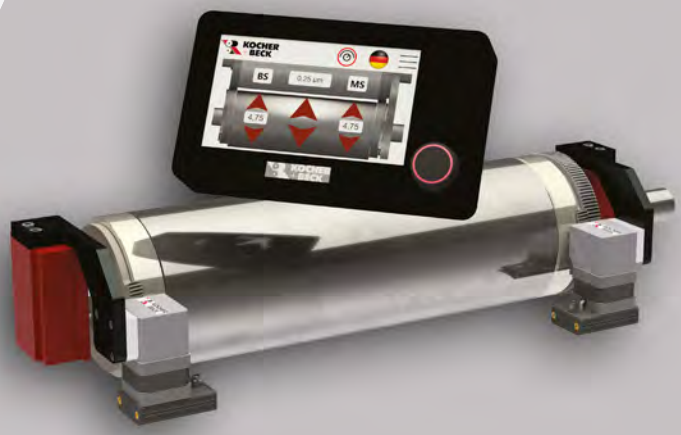


Kocher+Beck's precision-engineered cylinders, rotary cutting and stamping tools are manufactured to the highest industry standards and can take your products to the next level.



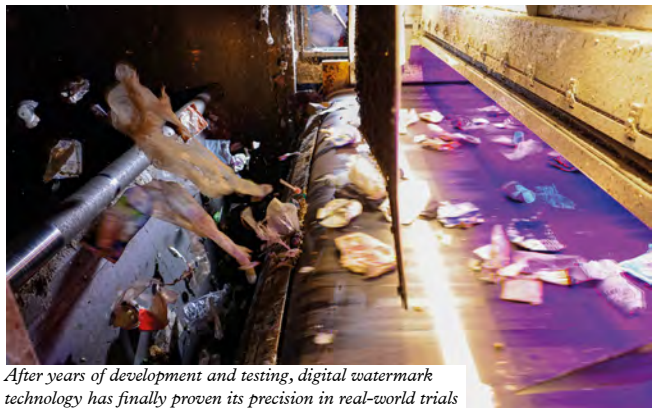
+ Consistent results
+ Streamline workflow
+ Increase productivity
+ Long-term use
+ Minimize downtime

Tooling that is built to last and delivered to the market with the highest customer service levels and technical assistance.



Contact one of our friendly expert team today at:
sales@kocher-beck.co.uk

kocher-beck.com



After years of development and testing, digital watermark technology has finally proven its precision in real-world trials

"Meeting the 2030 EU-wide PPWR targets requires investment not only in sorting, but in recycling capabilities"

the distinction between detection and sorting components. 'It is important firstly to recognize that the transition to circular systems requires major investments into sorting capability, the key enabler to high-quality recycling,' he explains.

Investment strategy becomes crucial for successful implementation. 'We should differentiate between the detection/decision making and the sorting step itself, most typically by air-jet separation of a stream, with the most significant part of the capital cost being the latter,' he notes.

The detection systems themselves increasingly utilize multiple sensor inputs, combining NIR, visible light, digital watermarks and object recognition technologies.

'Detection/decision making increasingly utilizes multi-sensory input, with the choice determined by the cost and value that each technology brings to the problem being addressed,' notes Tickner.

Real-world sorting presents challenges beyond technology implementation. Contamination remains a persistent headache, with waste conditions presenting multiple obstacles.

'In general, sorting is made more difficult by elements that consumers put in the garbage bag despite not being plastic, metal, or paper, hence contaminating the input. It is estimated that around 40 to 50 percent of such elements can be found in the yellow bag,' explains Trombetti.

The trials also encountered operational challenges that provided valuable learning opportunities. 'Waste conditions also presented some challenges: harsh soiling, crumpling, crushing and aging. During the trials, there were some hardware and cooling challenges associated with the detection, but these did not negatively affect the detection and ejection results,' she adds. Such real-world hiccups are exactly what the industry needs to understand before widespread rollout.

Economic viability

The transition from research trials to commercial deployment hinges on demonstrating clear economic value for all stakeholders. The newly formed Circular Packaging 2030 consortium, emerging from HolyGrail 2.0, focuses specifically on proving the business case for intelligent sorting across European markets.

'Circular Packaging 2030 is a collaborative consortium of companies and organizations representing the entire packaging value chain. Its mission is to prove the economic viability of a circular economy for selected plastics packaging use cases,' explains Trombetti.

The consortium's comprehensive approach addresses multiple stakeholders' needs simultaneously.

'The primary aim is to demonstrate end-to-end business value creation by implementing intelligent sorting for all PP plastic materials, and identification of the right recycling path to create food-grade [recycled polypropylene] material. This may later extend to other material types,' she continues.

The consortium's methodology encompasses rigorous evaluation criteria, including sorting performance metrics, business case evaluation and return on investment assessment.

This comprehensive evaluation approach recognizes that advanced sorting represents just one component of the circular economy equation.

'Meeting the 2030 EU-wide PPWR targets requires investment not only in sorting, but in recycling capabilities. However, advanced sorting is a key enabler for recycling and hence PPWR compliance,' emphasizes Trombetti.

The infrastructure investment strategy focuses on scalable approaches rather than retrofitting facilities individually. 'The industry should focus on implementing advanced sorting, including managing this on a large scale as a second sorting step rather than retrofitting capabilities into each individual municipal sorting facility,' she advises.

Strategic market demonstrations

The transition to commercial deployment begins with carefully selected market demonstrations in Belgium and Germany. These locations offer distinct advantages for validating the technology's commercial viability under different conditions.

'Both markets were selected for strategic reasons. Belgium offers environment to demonstrate the business case for a circular economy in flexible polypropylene packaging,' states Trombetti.

The country's institutional advantages make it particularly suitable for testing. 'This is largely due to Fost Plus, a well-positioned and highly proactive Producer Responsibility Organization, whose ambition makes them a key partner,' she notes. 'Leading brand owners who were instrumental in previous semi-industrial and industrial trials are also actively involved in this market demonstration, driven by their commitment to meeting the EU-wide 2030 targets for recyclability and recycled content.'

Belgium's existing infrastructure provides an excellent foundation for advanced sorting implementation. 'Belgium sees high annual volumes of flexible packaging and its advanced sorting centers already deliver very pure flows. By introducing watermark recognition technology, we are completing the final step toward achieving truly circular flexible packaging,' Trombetti explains. Its positioning as a perfect testing ground makes sense.

Germany offers complementary advantages for rigid packaging applications. Germany is also being explored, given high amounts of rigid PP in their market. Moreover, this market demonstration can benefit from the sorting equipment that is already installed in the partner MRF Hündgen Entsorgung,' she adds. Leveraging existing infrastructure makes economic sense.

The demonstrations will follow a structured two-year timeline focusing on specific outcomes. 'This will be a two-year market demonstration, focused on sorting post-consumer, digitally watermarked PP packaging from selected markets. The resulting fractions will be recycled using various technologies to assess performance and output quality,' details Trombetti.

Regulatory compliance

The European Union's Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation creates urgent timelines for industry transformation, requiring sophisticated tracking and reporting capabilities.

'Digital watermarks embody the perfect example of how the EU-wide goal of the green and digital transitions can happen together: DW carry a wide range of attributes such as

manufacturer, SKU, type of plastics used, composition for multi-layer objects, food vs non-food application,' notes Trombetti.

The technology's data collection capabilities support comprehensive regulatory reporting requirements. 'Digital watermarks have the potential to meet other PPWR requirements. Notably, to enable the creation of a Digital Packaging Passport that can help companies meet EU reporting requirements, such as communicating about the material composition of the packaging to facilitate sorting, or about the presence of substances of concern, or even to get highly reliable and accurate data for EPR reporting obligations,' she explains.

Timing becomes critical for meeting regulatory deadlines.

'Given the urgency for improvement, it is important to move forward with technologies that are already in place today that will support the viability of downstream investments, rather than waiting for maturation of even newer technologies,' explains Trombetti. This approach provides 'the most assured route towards PPWR compliance.'

The regulatory framework also requires significant infrastructure development beyond sorting capabilities.

'Next to progress on sorting infrastructure, an upgrade in recycling capabilities is needed. It will take many years to install adequate infrastructure for chemical recycling. However, we already have significant mechanical recycling infrastructure in place, which can be more rapidly developed to provide the quality required to meet the PPWR targets as long as feedstocks are accurately and efficiently sorted,' she notes.

Global adoption

While European markets drive current development, the technology's global potential depends on varying regional conditions and requirements. Tickner outlines how adoption patterns will differ based on local waste management maturity and economic conditions.

'Plastic recycling rates will increase progressively and differently region by region, driven by waste management policies, targets, brand-owner ambitions and financing mechanisms, which in turn create end-markets that support the investment in collection, sorting and recycling,' he explains.

Regional infrastructure variations create different opportunities for implementation. 'In OECD countries with more mature waste management systems, sorting will largely be fully automated and capable of advanced detection such as NIR, DW, object recognition [OR]. In lower-cost countries and those with less mature waste management systems, manual sorting will dominate,' notes Tickner.



Digital watermarks encode detailed information directly into packaging during the printing process

"Plastic recycling rates will increase progressively and differently region by region"

However, advanced detection technology can provide value across diverse operational contexts. 'Even here, advanced detection can be deployed, using laser lights to guide manual sorters. And in all cases, quality control of incoming materials will be relevant,' explains Tickner.

The strategic decision for brand owners involves weighing implementation approaches and timing considerations. 'Perhaps the trade-off for brand owners between taking the initiative and costs for digital watermarking versus relying on others to implement object recognition may favor a strategic decision to adopt digital watermarks,' suggests Tickner.

Competitive landscape

The sorting technology landscape continues evolving rapidly, with artificial intelligence-enabled object recognition advancing alongside digital watermarks. However, a pragmatic perspective on technology selection and implementation timing should be maintained.

'For sorting and data collection, the capabilities of AI-enabled object recognition (OR) are advancing fast, and while the limits of performance and operational cost in highly complex systems are not yet determined. OR represents an approach with a lower entry barrier for brands, at least for today's needs in rigid packaging,' explains Tickner.

Tickner highlights the importance of action over prolonged evaluation. 'We believe that the actual choice of detection approach is of secondary importance and is consuming too much energy. Digital watermarking is a proven method at commercial scale, and the early-adopter markets will benefit from this,' he states.

Risk management considerations favor implementation over waiting. 'The regret cost of inaction is far higher than the regret of implementing a detection technology and then finding in five to 10 years that performance boundaries and market requirements have evolved in favor of a different approach, and some retrofit costs are required,' observes Tickner.

The competitive landscape will likely support multiple detection technologies, each optimized for specific applications.

Next steps

The Circular Packaging 2030 consortium has established comprehensive milestones for commercial deployment over the next two years, encompassing technical performance, economic viability and regulatory approval processes.

Key objectives include achieving 'sorting performance metrics comparable to those in HolyGrail 2.0 Phase 3 and aligned with regulatory standards', along with demonstrating 'added value for both feedstock and recyclates, focusing on the production of high-quality materials suitable for target packaging applications,' explains Trombetti.

Economic validation remains central to the consortium's mission. The program will 'assess the ROI for all stakeholders to validate the commercial viability of a circular economy model' while working to 'produce high-value recyclates that justify investment in intelligent sorting technology,' she details.

The demonstration's expected outcomes extend beyond immediate commercial deployment. 'By the end of the market demonstration, the Consortium expects to achieve a pathway for food-grade PP recyclates initially for non-food contact applications and outline a clear roadmap toward EFSA approval,' she explains.

Success in these demonstrations will provide the foundation for broader rollout across European markets. The readiness for widespread implementation represents the culmination of years of hard work and testing. With high detection efficiency and the ability to sort at unprecedented granularity, digital watermarks offer a proven path toward the accurate sorting essential for circular packaging systems. The transition from HolyGrail 2.0 research to HolyGrail 2030 marks a pivotal moment in the evolution of packaging recycling, one that the industry has been waiting for.

Scan the QR code to learn more about HolyGrail project



TAU G3

Empower your business.

The next generation in UV inkjet label printing — effortless engineering, unwavering reliability, and exceptional performance.

For more information,
please visit

durst-group.com/g3

durst

HERMA

Coating your success

The whole world of films.
In a single plant.
With cutting edge technology.



For you, this means:

Top expertise in film self-adhesive materials.

The best selection for every application.

Maximum delivery capability.

herma.com/material

Lauterbach Group undergoes digital transformation

The Wisconsin-based company is expanding into digital flex pack, enhancing its software ecosystem and adding automation, all while embracing continuous improvement. Selah Zighelboim reports

In 2022, CEO Shane Lauterbach returned from Labelexpo Americas and informed the Lauterbach Group team that the company was purchasing an HP Indigo 25K.

While the converter's senior leadership team is engaged in the day-to-day operations driving the business, Shane Lauterbach's role is to look ahead and anticipate future opportunities and challenges, helping to define the direction that the leadership team will execute next. The rapid change of the industry required the Lauterbach Group to enter the packaging market quickly.

They were determined to succeed. They developed a plan for the new press, evaluating which clients to target and material suppliers to use; they scaled up the press and got it to full production in about six months.

Over the past several years, the Lauterbach Group, a family-owned company, has been on a digital journey as it invests in digital flexible packaging technology, develops a more robust software platform and brings in automation and manufacturing consultants.

Based in Sussex, Wisconsin, the Lauterbach Group is an employee-focused business led by Shane Lauterbach and his two brothers, Heath Lauterbach, chief operating officer, and Brent Lauterbach, chief development officer. The company has about 60 employees, called group members, and the company makes use of consultants for IT, marketing and more.

The Lauterbach Group manufactures pressure-sensitive labels, blank stock labels, shrink sleeves and flexible packaging. Its biggest end markets are food, nutraceuticals, health care, cannabis and pet food. Lauterbach Group specializes in middle-market brands.

As it undergoes its digital transformation, the Lauterbach Group is working to greatly expand the percentage of its business focused on flexible packaging. For 2025, the company expects its revenue to come from 10 percent flex pack, 60 percent PS labels, 5 percent shrink sleeve and 25 percent stock products, such as blank labels, thermal labels, wafer seals and now stock flexible pouches. By 2028, the company wants to see those numbers evolve to 30 percent flex pack, 30 percent PS label, 10 percent shrink sleeve and 30 percent stock product sales.

The Lauterbach Group's transformation has been so significant that the company is even reconsidering its identity as a label converter, as the most challenging components of its technical work are now pouching, rather than printing or converting.

'We manufacture,' says Shane Lauterbach. 'We're not printers. I'm not even sure we're converters anymore.'

From labels to flex pack

Lauterbach Group was purchased by the Lauterbach brothers' father, Bill Lauterbach, in 1985. At the time, it was a reseller of stock labels and tags. After a few years, Bill Lauterbach asked Shane Lauterbach, his eldest son, to step in and run the company. The Lauterbach Group eventually expanded into producing its own labels, rather than just reselling them. Much of its label business was producing direct mail promotional labels on flexo presses.

Lauterbach Group's investment in an HP Indigo 8K in 2017 marked the beginning of its digital transformation. The company went on to purchase from HP an 6K in 2022 and a 25K in 2023.



L-R: Heath, Shane and Brent Lauterbach

"We believe flexible pouches and packaging represent a dynamic and rapidly growing segment of the packaging industry, especially when powered by a digital ecosystem and production environment"

The company did not have any clients asking for digital flex pack when it began developing that side of the business. Up until that point, Lauterbach Group's client base had been primarily direct mail labels and food segments, which weren't interested in flexible packaging. The company had primarily grown through referrals.

Despite that, the Lauterbach Group wanted to expand into flex pack because of the segment's strong growth potential.

'We believe flexible pouches and packaging represent a dynamic and rapidly growing segment of the packaging industry, especially when powered by a digital ecosystem and production environment,' Shane Lauterbach says. 'This approach enables the creation of high-quality, sustainably produced and brilliantly decorated packaging with unmatched speed.'

This meant that the team needed to grow its client base more aggressively than it had in the past. Lauterbach Group expanded its sales team to meet the challenge.

Lauterbach Group sees several benefits in focusing on its digital print technology.

The integration of digital printing technology with the Lauterbach Group's proprietary software system enables the Lauterbach Group to deliver products to clients quickly with a high level of consistency in quality. This allows clients to hold smaller inventories of packaging.

Digital printing has also opened up new product lines, bringing more cross-selling opportunities. For example, the company now also manufactures shrink sleeves with its digital printing technology.

Technology

Alongside these benefits, digital presses also have their own challenges. Unlike flexo, which can be maintained and used for decades, digital presses become obsolete rapidly, requiring more frequent reinvestment.

'It's an exciting time because you have to grow quickly,' Brent Lauterbach says. 'You must put a bunch of capital into the equipment. You didn't have to do that 15, 20 years ago. Now it's every two, three years.'

In addition to its digital presses, Lauterbach Group has a number of 10- to 20-year-old Mark Andy flexo presses. The company anticipates replacing them with machines that offer more automation.

Along with the digital presses for flexible packaging, Lauterbach Group has added a Karlville pouching machine to its production fleet. Not having to outsource pouching is one of the Lauterbach Group's greatest assets, Brent Lauterbach says.

Lauterbach also has finishing and laminating equipment from Delta ModTech, laminating machinery from Gonderflex and rewinders from Grafotronic.

Digital ecosystem

A crucial component of Lauterbach Group's digital transformation has been its integrated software system, which the company calls its 'digital ecosystem', or its OmniMark platform. Lauterbach Group hired consultants to build this technology.

This ecosystem, built on Label Traxx and Hybrid Software as well as proprietary client-facing and middleware software, allows clients to submit orders, approve proofs and monitor progress. It also handles production workflow and job management.

'This system brings together all components of sales, service, production and client interaction,' Shane Lauterbach says. 'We want to eliminate redundant activities and transactions, make it easier for clients and our group members to do their jobs and deliver greater value to both, in addition to a high-quality product.'

The digital ecosystem provides clients with more flexibility, allowing them to place orders and upload artwork 24/7 at their convenience. Meanwhile, Lauterbach Group employees no longer need to interact with the order, giving its group members more time to focus on helping clients.

'It's opened up some opportunities, because there are certain companies that wouldn't work with you unless you had something like this,' Brent Lauterbach says.

Lauterbach Group does not see its systems as complete and continues to develop and improve its technology and processes. It is a living and continually improving environment.

"It's an exciting time because you have to grow quickly. You must put a bunch of capital into the equipment. You didn't have to do that 15, 20 years ago"

'In the digital pouching world, there are so many opportunities,' Brent Lauterbach says. 'We're focused on speed to market and total quality. If we can turn pouches in a week on average, we're ahead of most. That's where we're at because of the whole OmniMark ecosystem. The more people use it, the more it goes straight to the press. It saves days in production.'

Automation

Lauterbach Group uses a significant amount of automation, particularly through its OmniMark system for receiving orders, handling pre-press work and managing workflow.

The company has seen automation increase revenue and productivity significantly, which in turn has meant that the company has needed to hire more employees, particularly in sales, client services and process flow.

Lauterbach Group is also able to pay employees more as a result of the automation tools in place.

Instead of performing routine tasks, which automation and AI can handle, employees' time is spent on more complex or human-oriented work, like building relationships with clients.

'It's growing more work, but it's a different type of work,' reflects Kaia Peterson, director of core business development and client services. 'I oversee our inside sales and our core development sales, as well as our client services. Where it has helped is that it's taken away tasks. We're no longer paying people just to do a task, to enter orders.'

Time is a valuable asset to the Lauterbach Group and its clients. Automation allows the company to service clients at a higher, more direct level.

People-centric

Lauterbach Group embraces constant learning.

To successfully expand into flex pack, Lauterbach Group has trained sales staff on how to answer questions from new flexible packaging customers and has educated technical staff on new technology, such as the pouching machinery.



Lauterbach Group's HP Indigo 8K press

'Our job is to help our group members create value for themselves, so they can create value for our clients,' Shane Lauterbach says. 'Then, they make great products. They service clients at a high level.'

Lauterbach Group often brings in outside consultants and organizations to provide education. For example, the company has brought in consultants from WMEP, a nonprofit firm that helps develop Wisconsin manufacturers. This year-long project is focused on creating 'transformational change' within the organization.

The Lauterbach Group also brought in a Nobelus staff person to educate employees on flexible packaging materials.

Outside perspectives help drive grassroots change at the company, Heath Lauterbach notes. It helps develop the entire thought process within the company to become more open to change and handle operations in new ways, especially when the industry and the company are evolving rapidly.

'The beauty of it is it's not coming from me,' Heath Lauterbach says. 'I'm helping direct it, but it's an outside view, and they're just being very upfront, and they can give you a perspective that somebody here has never seen before.'

Shane Lauterbach himself has learned from outside sources.

For example, he has absorbed lessons about automation from the commercial print world, which he describes as about a decade ahead of labels and packaging in automation.

According to Shane Lauterbach, continuous education and development are essential to keeping up with the industry's rate of change.

'The world is fundamentally transforming in our industry,' Shane Lauterbach says. 'You don't have to be the leader, but you've got to be involved in the game.'

Scan the QR code to learn more about the Lauterbach Group

Process more orders faster and better with **CERM MIS Software**



Stay ahead of the herd with CERM MIS

Process more orders faster and better with **CERM MIS Software for Labels, Packaging and Folding Carton.** Improve your productivity with our complete end-to-end MIS software solutions for your entire value chain. CERM connects all elements of your business through key standard integrations with industry leaders.

CERM

Amtech and Label Traxx grow with PE investment

Amtech acquired Label Traxx last year. Now, with new private equity backing, the company plans to expand its team and increase its global presence. Selah Zighelboim reports

Amtech Software is acting on its vision to become the leader in technology and software for the packaging industry.

Founded 44 years ago, Amtech historically provided software for corrugated and folding carton companies. The business expanded into the labels and flexible packaging space last year by acquiring Label Traxx. Amtech now offers ERP, MES and CRM products for corrugated packaging, folding carton, label and flexible packaging companies.

Vista Equity Partners, a private equity firm, acquired Amtech earlier this year, further advancing the software company's growth. With this new backing, Amtech plans to increase its staff by 40 percent and expand globally over the next year, including with a new center in India.

Label Traxx position

Label Traxx was founded in 1993 as a business management system for label converters. The company has since grown, expanding into flexible packaging and offering a wider breadth of software capabilities.

Label Traxx has more than 500 clients in North America, Europe, Latin America, Africa and Australia. Its offerings now include Siteline, a customer portal and light CRM; Batched, an automated planning and scheduling application; and Cloud API, which allows customers to interact with Label Traxx data and integrate with external tools.

'It's really an ERP that has grown and modernized over the years with the advent of digital printing, pre-press automation and industry consolidation,' says Rob Mayerson, Amtech vice president and former Label Traxx president.

As the original founder approached retirement, he and the other investors in the company sought to find a buyer for Label Traxx that would allow the company's products to continue and grow and would provide a secure future for both employees and customers.

Amtech seemed like a good fit as the company was remarkably similar to Label Traxx. 'Amtech Software was, in a lot of ways, like a bigger brother, a more mature version of Label Traxx,' Mayerson says. 'It's very similar in that they're serving in a niche manufacturing industry.'

> **"Amtech Software was, in a lot of ways, like a bigger brother, a more mature version of Label Traxx. It's very similar in that they're serving in a niche manufacturing industry"**

Mayerson continues: 'It just felt right. It was a pretty easy choice.'

Amtech enters labels and flex pack

While Amtech provided Label Traxx with a buyer that would support its mission, Label Traxx offered Amtech a chance to broaden its offerings.

'We saw a lot of opportunity in labels,' Amtech CEO Chuck Schneider says. 'There are a lot of label manufacturers in the world. Also, labels in general are ahead of the corrugated market in their adoption of digital printing. We're starting to see more and more digital print in our corrugated customers, so we felt there were some things we could learn from Label Traxx.

'Flexible packaging is also growing,' he adds. 'If you looked in your pantry five years ago, your protein powder came in a big, plastic tub. Everything was that way. Now you look, and you see pouches of all kinds. You see the packet of protein powder, nuts, everything. So flexible packaging is another specific but growing market that we want to be able to support.'

For Amtech, Label Traxx stood out for several reasons. Schneider says: 'Label Traxx had a dominant position in North America. It had a great product that was easy to use. It did an excellent job supporting smaller customers. One of the philosophies around Label Traxx is to make it easy to use and easy to train people. But Label Traxx also made a conscious strategic effort to expand upmarket. It added enterprise capabilities so it could pursue the largest label manufacturers on the planet. We want to be the global leader in technology and software for the packaging industry; therefore, it is a great fit for our mission. And also, as we examined Label Traxx further, we found that the culture of the people there aligned closely with Amtech.'

Label Traxx was about a quarter of the size of Amtech, which greatly expanded the company. Label Traxx also brought a more robust global client base, including around 80 clients across Europe, Latin America, Africa and the Asia Pacific.

Label Traxx developments

Many of the significant changes that Label Traxx has experienced since the Amtech acquisition have been behind the scenes, including adopting Amtech's best practices, such as in software development, product management and customer service.

Label Traxx is currently developing new capabilities, including enhanced track and trace features, as well as expanded enterprise technology to better manage multi-plant organizations. This capability has become especially important with the label industry's significant M&A activity. This enterprise technology simplifies workflow software for multi-plant converters, offers an opportunity to centralize key functions and allows organizations to share resources and better manage capacity, in addition to achieving associated IT savings.

One of Label Traxx's new functionalities is a data visualization tool called Visual Analytics, launched at Labelexpo Europe 2025, which allows customers to create interactive dashboards and reports using Label Traxx data. Label Traxx has also recently improved its shop floor data collection system.

Looking toward the future, Amtech's top priority with Label Traxx is to develop cloud-native technology. This will decrease cybersecurity costs for clients, increase software accessibility and ensure that clients maintain the current version.

Being on the cloud will also simplify the integration of AI functions into Label Traxx. For instance, a client with its ERP on the cloud could integrate its own version of ChatGPT and ask it questions.

Vista Equity acquisition

For the past four years before the Vista Equity acquisition, Amtech had been owned by Peak Rock Capital, an Austin, Texas-based PE firm.

Schneider joined Amtech in 2022, intending to grow and then sell the company. He wanted Amtech's next owner to support the company's mission, have experience with software companies and help Amtech expand globally.

'When I looked at those three priorities and started lining them up, Vista was perfect,' Schneider says. 'Vista only works with software companies. They've done, I think, over 100 software investments. They're really good at it. They have best practices for everything you'd want to do, so in terms of us scaling and avoiding mistakes, they'll help us there. They believed in our vision. They looked at it, and they said: "There's a great market for packaging out there. We want you to be the best at packaging, and so we're going to invest in that". They're great at going into new markets. They're great at M&A.'

With Vista's backing, Amtech has already been able to hire new staff, with plans to grow the team by 40 percent in the future. In addition, Vista's portfolio of software companies has experience moving technology to the cloud and working with AI — experience that Amtech can leverage.

Mayerson says of Vista: 'They've made it clear, and they're already showing with actions, the investments being made in the product and how we go to market. The strategy that they've put forth is to invest in our products, which will fuel growth, and hold the investment for a significant period.'

Global expansion

Amtech plans to use its Vista Equity support to grow globally. Having a greater presence in time zones outside of the US will allow Amtech to support customers around the world more easily.

For example, the company's plans for its expanded team will include a larger global sales staff, particularly in geographic areas where Amtech plans to grow, such as Europe and Latin America.

Additionally, Amtech is opening a new Center of Excellence in Bengaluru, India, and hiring new staff there. This new center will initially serve as an R&D facility and eventually expand into other functions. Amtech is opening this facility in 2025.

'This is another thing that's part of the Vista best practices,' Schneider says. 'They look at your global expansion and how you support customers and where you can have access to really good talent. They've got a person on staff that just helps figure out, "Hey, what technologies do you use?



Chuck Schneider, CEO, Amtech Software



Rob Mayerson, vice president, Amtech Software

"We saw a lot of opportunity in labels. There are a lot of label manufacturers in the world"

What customers do you serve? What industries are you in?" And they'll look across the globe and say, "Here's where you should be."'

Vista identified Bengaluru as the location for this facility for several reasons. The city has a significant number of software and ERP companies, providing a source of skilled professionals with ERP experience. As a major city, Bengaluru is also accessible for travel. Amtech has also already hired someone based in the city to serve as the site leader and chief human resources officer.

Amtech had been growing globally before the Vista acquisition, but with Vista's support, the company can expand much more rapidly. Vista is also looking for companies that would be a good fit for Amtech to acquire, such as companies that bring new product capabilities or help Amtech enter a new market.

Growing leadership team

In October, Amtech announced several new appointments to its leadership team as the company works to grow.

This includes Vinod Kumar, who joins as chief people and culture officer, a position in which he will lead global talent strategy. He will also oversee Amtech's operations in India.

Kostas Vassilakis is Amtech's new senior vice president of technology. His work will focus on advancing technological innovation, cloud migration, security and AI capabilities.

Amtech appointed Cory King as senior vice president of customer operations. King will oversee Amtech's customer operations framework and grow a dedicated customer success group.

The company also welcomed Joe Buckley as director of strategic programs. He will lead strategic initiatives to help Amtech scale effectively and deliver outcomes.

Implementing AI

Vista Equity Partners owns a significant number of software companies, giving Amtech and Label Traxx a deep well of knowledge to draw from when it comes to technological advancements, such as AI.

Schneider notes several ways that AI could benefit Amtech and Label Traxx. One is by making documentation more accessible, so that clients can more easily find answers to questions about how to use the technology.

Another is in data analysis: collecting the data that's available in the workflow technology and having AI glean information and patterns from it. AI could also help with schedule optimization.

Amtech is also using AI in its own operations to increase efficiency within the company. It has already begun piloting AI capabilities to assist in code writing, with the goal of increasing software developer productivity. For its sales team, Amtech is using AI to help identify potential customers.

Overall, Schneider is looking forward to the developments that will take place at Amtech under Vista.

'I couldn't be more excited about Amtech's future right now with Vista,' Schneider says. 'Part of it is, when I look across a lot of our competitors and suppliers in the industry, I don't see anybody stepping up to make the level of investment Vista is making, and us bringing new and better products to market. I'd say the world's our oyster. There's so much opportunity out there. We are well-positioned.'

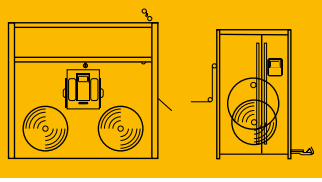
Scan the QR code to learn more about Amtech Software

NO STOP EVOLUTION

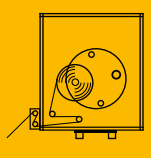
VBS-530 System



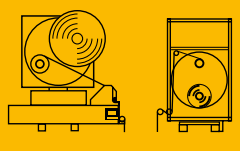
VBS-530
No-Stop Complete System
Unwinder + Rewinder
For Printing and Converting Lines



VBM-R530
Matrix No-Stop Unit
Rewinder
For Collecting Matrix Waste



VBF-530
Foil No-Stop
Complete System
Unwinder + Rewinder
For Hot-Cold foil and
Laminating Embellisment



VBR-530
No-Stop Turret
Rewinder
For Finishing Product Slited in Line



VEBEX
PERFORMANCE IN EVOLUTION

Labels as a strategic tool

No longer just a medium for providing basic product information, labels have become a powerful tool to deliver storytelling, compliance and functionality and they continue to transform, Akanksha Meena reports

Labels have long been one of the most powerful brand assets in consumer packaged goods, but the pace of change in recent years has been extraordinary, says Jennifer Dochstader, co-founder of LPC.

LPC, an agency for the print and packaging industries, aims to help companies across the supply chain grow through marketing, communications and industry-specific research. The company has over 25 years of experience conducting printed packaging-focused studies and surveys to help its customers, including technology suppliers, converters and associations with a competitive edge and market insights.

Dochstader observes that from sustainability requirements to digital innovation, labels have become a strategic tool that carries the weight of branding, storytelling, compliance and performance for brands.

'Shorter, more targeted runs have become the norm as brands respond to niche segmentation, seasonal campaigns and the need to stand out in crowded e-commerce listings. At the same time, premium cues like tactile varnishes and textured papers, once reserved for luxury categories, are increasingly visible in everyday products like condiments, personal care and coffee,' she says.

Sustainability in labels has moved far beyond a marketing tool to become a procurement priority for brands.

'Sustainability influences everything from substrates and adhesives to graphic design choices. And on the production side, digital and hybrid printing are no longer viewed as short-run solutions, but as essential platforms for agility, enabling rapid design changes and cost-effective versioning that help brands keep pace with the market,' Dochstader adds.

The trend is expected to gain further momentum as new sustainability regulations are introduced worldwide, with increasingly strict timelines approaching. Global regulatory changes are pushing brands to design with compliance in mind from the outset, particularly when it comes to recyclability and sustainability claims.

'And then there's the economic layer in the current geopolitical landscape. Tariffs, raw material volatility and transportation costs are forcing brands and converters to become more resourceful, finding ways to produce high-impact labels while



Labels showcased at Beontag stand during Labelexpo Europe 2025

"Sustainability influences everything from substrates and adhesives to graphic design choices"

optimizing material use and workflows,' Dochstader explains.

At the same time, several different forces are converging to reshape the label market. One of the drivers is consumer behavior. Shoppers expect freshness, variety and transparency, which means more frequent label updates and bolder, clearer communication. Retail and e-commerce dynamics are also at play; a label now has to work just as hard in a thumbnail image as it does on a physical shelf.

Brand priorities

When it comes to decision-making, brand owners are focused on three primary factors.

'The first is differentiation. In a saturated market, labels function as the silent sales pitch, telling the brand's story before the product is even picked up,' says Dochstader.

The second priority is functional performance. If the product is being moved from a freezer to a microwave or is likely to be exposed to condensation, heat or chemicals, the label must maintain its integrity under all these conditions.

The third is sustainability, which remains a central concern. It is now embedded in decision-making around substrates, adhesives, ink and drying/curing methodologies. And hovering over all of these factors is speed-to-market, particularly for seasonal SKUs or trend-driven launches, across end-use segments, where agility often matters more than unit price.

Finishing and embellishment

Breakthroughs in both materials and finishing technologies are fueling new opportunities for brands. As an industry observer, Dochstader highlights some of the most exciting innovations in finishing and embellishment technologies.

'There's so much happening in materials science and finishing right now that it's hard to pick favorites,' she notes. 'Mono-material construction development is exciting because these substrates simplify recycling without sacrificing design freedom. We're also constantly seeing innovation in adhesives, like clean wash-off options for PET recycling and compostable choices for food labels. These constructions are meeting both sustainability and performance demands.'

In finishing, digital embellishment has achieved new levels of sophistication.

'Digital embellishment has reached a point where metallic and tactile effects can be produced without the environmental or cost impact of foil or additional tooling,' she highlights.

Lastly, connected packaging has developed into a meaningful and essential tool for brands to connect beyond the product with customers and share information that cannot fit on the packaging or label.

'Whether through QR codes or NFC, which has evolved beyond marketing gimmicks into tools for traceability, authentication and richer consumer engagement. All these forces work together in making a product's label an increasingly valuable and essential tool to label and printed packaging buyers.'

As the label industry continues to evolve, its role will only deepen. Emerging technologies, new material innovations, and heightened sustainability expectations will redefine what a label can achieve. The next phase is creating connected, sustainable and compliant products to help brands build trust and relevance in a fast-changing world.

LABELS & LABELING

Scan the QR code to learn more about LPC

Valley bridges US, Mexico manufacturing boom

With production sites on either side of the US-Mexico border and strong expertise in durable labeling, Valley has been well-placed to take advantage of the nearshoring trend. James Quirk reports

US/Mexican label converter Valley has built strong production and distribution capabilities on either side of the countries' borders. Leveraging its expertise in high-quality, durable label applications, it is taking advantage of the nearshoring trend of manufacturers setting up plants in northern Mexico and selling their products into the US market.

The company, known in Mexico as Valley Latinoamérica, specializes in UL-certified custom labels for demanding industrial applications such as automotive, aviation and household appliances, frequently creating unique constructions that can withstand the harshest of environments. Among its clients are Ford, General Electric, General Motors, Tesla and Whirlpool.

With a Durst Tau RSC inkjet press freshly installed, among other new investments this year, and a reorganization of its printing capabilities underway across its plants in both the US and Mexico, Valley is preparing for its next stage of growth.

Opportunity

Valley Commercial, as it was then known, was founded by Mexican couple Oscar Serrato and María de los Ángeles Serrato more than 35 years ago in Brownsville, Texas, as a distributor of labels produced by trade printers. Their three US-born children now run the operation. Its focus from the beginning was on durable label applications and high-quality materials, which stood it in good stead for its move around 10 years later into printing its own labels.

The founders' middle son, Joel, now the company's general director, was sent across the border in 1998 to set up a label printing facility in Ramos Arizpe in Coahuila, northern Mexico. 'The family believed there was more opportunity for opening the plant in Mexico rather than the US,' he recalls. 'The Mexican government gave support to new businesses.'

Equipped with a second-hand Mark Andy 820 flexo press and a single operator, who taught himself to use the machine from scratch, there were 'initial teething problems', admits Joel Serrato. But soon the fledgling operation was growing and buying surrounding land to expand the business.

In 2002, the company opened a second production site in northern Mexico, this time in Monterrey.

Again, it started with a small facility and began buying neighboring sites to reach its current footprint of four warehouses.

A distribution center has since been opened in Matamoros, Tamaulipas, streamlining logistics for both northbound and southbound shipments.

Valley also moved its US site from Brownsville to the nearby Texan town of McAllen, a hub for 'maquiladoras': parts manufacturers and assembly plants for companies selling into both the US and Mexico, and began printing labels there five years ago, no longer distributing them from other converters. 'Production in the US is only five years old, but it is expanding,' says Serrato. 'Many of our clients have been with us since the beginning.'

The company now employs around 20 staff in the US and more than 80 in Mexico.

Joel Serrato is joined in running Valley by his elder brother, Oscar, who leads the US operation, and his younger sister, Nancy, in charge of logistics.

Nearshoring

With one production facility in the US and two in Mexico, plus its Mexican distribution site, the setup allows Valley to manufacture and distribute its labels on both sides of the border. The Mexican plants represent 75 percent of the company's overall production, with 25 percent produced in the US. Sixty percent of Mexican production is exported to the US market.

'We are taking advantage of the nearshoring trend,' says Joel Serrato. 'There have been many foreign companies setting up manufacturing facilities in northern Mexico to serve the US market.'

Additionally, the bi-national set-up provides insurance. 'We were unaffected by the uncertainty surrounding tariffs earlier in the year, because we can manufacture in Mexico for the Mexican market, and in the US for the US market,' he says.

Durable labels, particularly for the automotive sector, represent around 60 percent of production. Food, cosmetics and pharma account for 10-15 percent. The rest includes shipping and variable-use labels tied to cross-border logistics. 'Our production is less segment-specific and more about the flow of goods across the border,' says Serrato.

The consistent factor is quality, he continues. 'Our focus is on high quality, not price. We are not interested in competing at the lowest cost. Our contracts with

"There have been many foreign companies setting up manufacturing facilities in northern Mexico to serve the US market"



Joel Serrato of Valley and his wife Dalia Treviño, with the Durst Tau press, bought at Labelexpo Mexico 2025

clients are often long-term. Strong relationships are important to us.'

Valley's reputation rests on its ability to deliver labels that can survive the harshest conditions. Its products are designed to endure both extreme heat and cold, from 50 deg C warehouse trucks to sub-zero aircraft fuselages.

'We've produced labels that must last five years in marine environments or withstand aviation-level temperature swings,' Serrato says. 'Some of our most demanding jobs use specialty materials where wasting even a meter can be very expensive.'

All materials and consumables that Valley uses in its production are UL-certified. Materials come from Avery Dennison, Fedrigoni, Flexcon and UPM Adhesive Materials. 'We have to be very precise in our production,' says Serrato. 'Our processes are regularly audited. Sometimes our client will specify which suppliers we must use for materials and adhesives. On other occasions, we will create the construction ourselves and then send it off to be UL-certified.'

Harsh environments will sometimes be simulated, so a label that is required to withstand five years in the ocean, for example, can be tested in just a few weeks.

Labels for distribution within Mexico also meet NOM (Norma Oficial Mexicana) standards, which ensure that products sold in the country meet specific safety, quality and performance standards.

A recent new area of production is graphic overlays, a type of printed decal that can be applied to the exterior layer of products such as washing machines.

'We started this about a year ago,' Serrato says. 'We see lots of potential with this application.'

Serrato cites folding carton production for small pharmaceutical boxes as a potential area for future expansion.

Reorganization

To support its next stage of growth, Valley has embarked on a major reorganization of its production facilities and a new wave of technology investment. The site in Monterrey will be dedicated to digital printing, housing a new 330mm (13in) Durst Tau 340 RCS E inkjet press bought during Labelexpo Mexico 2025 in Guadalajara in April. Alongside it is a Mark Andy Digital One, installed in 2017 after the deal was confirmed at Labelexpo Europe; it was the first such machine sold in Mexico, and a 2m (79in) web width Agfa flatbed inkjet press. A 2m web width Mimaki cutter will arrive soon, while finishing for the Durst press is handled by a Rotocon converting line, another first in the Mexican market.



Valley runs two manufacturing plants in Mexico and one in the US

"We were unaffected by the uncertainty surrounding tariffs earlier in the year, because we can manufacture in Mexico for the Mexican market, and in the US for the US market"

'The print quality of the Durst machine is exceptional,' he continues. 'We can print on many different types of material, which is important for us, and its UL-certified inks are a huge advantage. The press is quick to set up and prints very fast for a digital machine, at 80m/min. We've heard that even Apple specifies Durst machines for some label suppliers; that's the level of quality we want to reach.'

The Monterrey site will soon feature a dust-free clean room for specialized applications. All labels produced in the digital-only facility are for durable applications and are UL certified. Once the reorganization is complete, the site will be officially reinaugurated.

Valley's flexo output is being concentrated in Ramos Arizpe, Coahuila. It houses 22 presses in total, from Mark Andy, Allied Gear and Etirama, in a variety of web widths. Production is dedicated to prime labels.

Finishing of the company's flexo output takes place on machines from the Chinese manufacturer Henyue.

Serrato says they are evaluating the RFP 340 flexo press jointly developed by Chinese manufacturer HS Machinery and Rotocon, which was exhibited at Labelexpo Mexico 2025, describing it as 'very interesting'.

'I've been traveling to and buying equipment from China for more than 10 years,' he says. 'I was a pioneer in bringing Chinese machines to Mexico. People often have out-of-date ideas about the quality of Chinese technology. But in recent years, the quality has risen dramatically, and this is shown by how many Chinese manufacturers have been exporting huge quantities of machines.'

In McAllen, Texas, Valley's production is all currently flexo, but as part of its reorganization, the company plans to add digital capabilities.

'We want to have dual capabilities in both countries. This will give us the agility to meet any client's needs,' Serrato says.

One of Valley's defining principles is financial prudence. 'We don't much like credit,' he says. 'We've always bought our equipment outright.'

This conservative approach has allowed the company to invest in both machinery and facilities without exposure to debt, a rarity among converters of its size.

As the North American supply chain reconfigures under the nearshoring trend, Valley's cross-border manufacturing model serves as a template for other companies. By maintaining dual production bases, investing in certification and the latest digital technology, and preserving its culture of quality and family values, the Serrato family has turned a small Brownsville distributor into a binational, multi-facility manufacturer ready for its next stage of growth.

'Our focus will always be on high-quality, durable products and strong relationships,' concludes Serrato. 'That's how we began, and that's how we plan to continue – on both sides of the border.'

Scan the QR code for more information about Valley

Schober technologies

ROTARY CONVERTING TECHNOLOGY FOR
INMOLD LABELS



- Schobertechnologies combines continuous and intermittent processes for **cutting** and **creasing** due to the newly developed Varicut drive technology
- Processing of web widths up to 1,000 mm and print format lengths up to 1,220 mm possible
- Antistatic equipment and vacuum system for stacking and counting the cut products at speeds up to 50 m/min

schobertechnologies.com

IT'S SHOWTIME!

Experience online our high performance finishing technology

rotationsschneiden.de/en

P2B

Ready to work with the market leader? Join our team!

theurer.com
C3 | ERP / MIS-Software

ERP/MIS software for print and packaging

Label Printing

Flexible Packaging & Converting

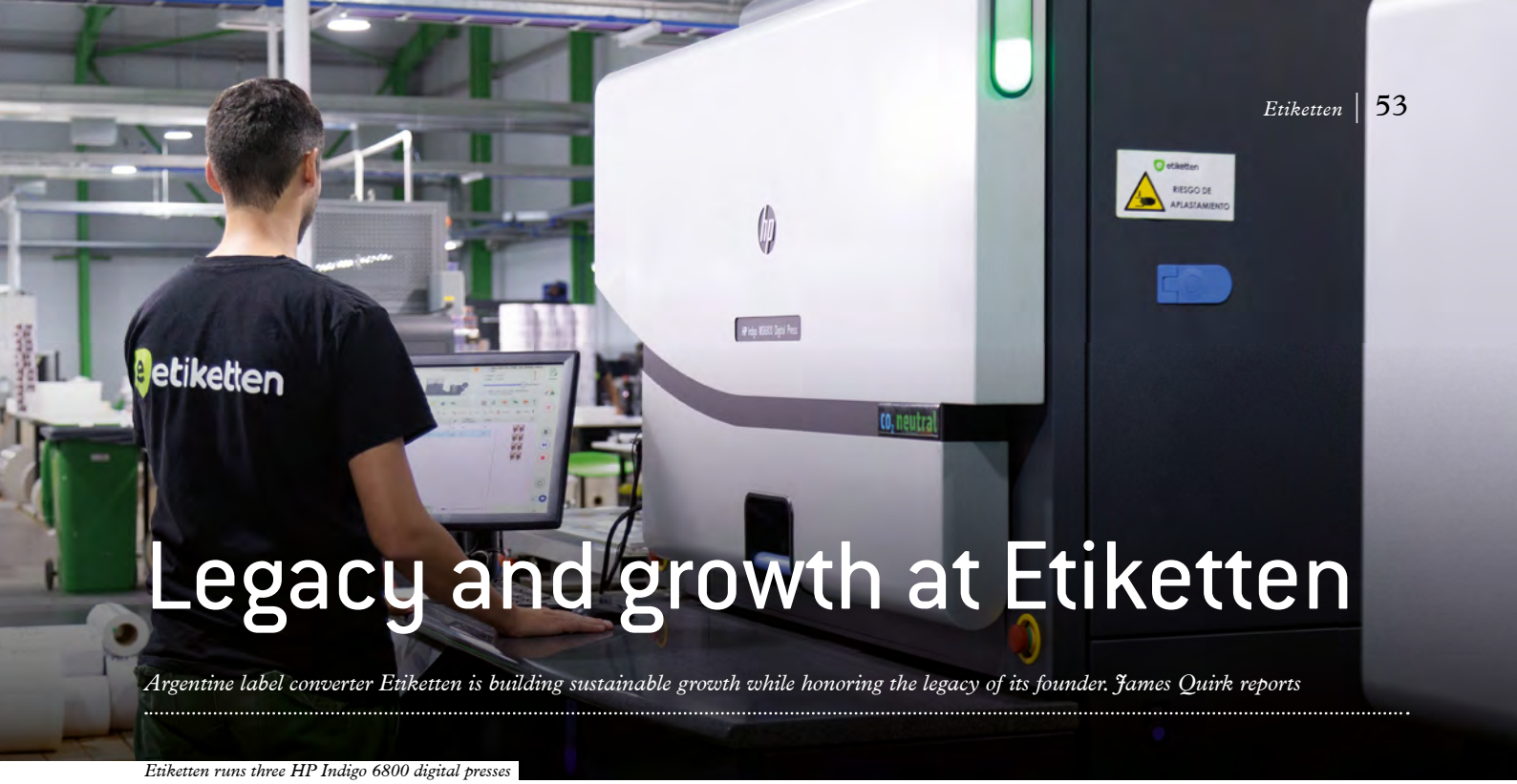
Folding Carton & Corrugated

theurer.com C3 – the leading ERP/MIS business management software for print and packaging.

We are here for you, covering every process of your business:
CRM – product configuration – estimating – purchasing – quality management – order processing – logistics – AI-driven production planning – dashboard-supported controlling – actual costing.

With over 60 employees, we develop solutions for all of our customers' needs. More than 200 enterprises with over 16,000 users in 30 countries trust theurer.com and automate their processes with C3 every day.

www.theurer.com



Legacy and growth at Etiketten

Argentine label converter Etiketten is building sustainable growth while honoring the legacy of its founder. James Quirk reports

Etiketten runs three HP Indigo 6800 digital presses

It has been a busy 12 months for Argentina-based label converter Etiketten, with the arrival of new flexo and digital presses – from Hontec and HP Indigo, respectively – as well as a move to a new, larger facility in its hometown of Galvéz in Santa Fe province.

The family-run company has maintained an impressive growth trajectory under CEO Constanza Calvi, who stepped into the leadership position from her role as head of administration and HR following the sudden death of her father, Germán, in December 2023 at the age of 59.

As well as its investments in new presses and a bigger plant, Etiketten's headcount has risen by 30 percent to 52 staff. New finishing equipment will be added soon.

Constanza Calvi has built a youthful leadership team and is preparing the company for its next stage of growth. 'My challenge is to honor my father's legacy and lead Etiketten into a new stage of development,' she says.

Foundations

Germán Calvi, the fourth generation of graphics industry professionals in his family, founded Etiketten – the German word for label – in Galvéz in Argentina's Santa Fe province in 2004. The fledgling company began production in a 50sqm space with a single 4-color flexo press.

'My father combined technical expertise with a strong focus on service and developing long-term relationships with his clients based on trust, rapid response, and sustained quality,' says Constanza Calvi.

It was a strategy that proved effective. The company experienced consistent growth, and in 2011, it installed an 8-color Mark Andy flexo press, significantly improving its productivity and the quality of its output. In 2017, Etiketten added



Constanza Calvi has been CEO of Etiketten for just under two years

"My challenge is to honor my father's legacy and lead Etiketten into a new stage of development"

digital capabilities with the installation of its first HP Indigo 6800. 'Demand for shorter runs was increasing as supermarkets were increasingly offering multiple SKUs,' says Constanza Calvi. 'There used to be only one or two choices of marmalade; now there are five or more. The move into digital printing was key. From that point onwards, the expansion strategy combined technology, operational efficiency and customer proximity.'

Today, Etiketten's new industrial plant has more than 1,600sqm of covered space, a warehouse with stock for three months of production and modern 350sqm offices. The 7,200sqm facility is located in an industrial zone with space for expansion.

It now runs two Mark Andy flexo presses – a 2200 and a Scout – both with eight printing units, in-line die-cutting, inspection camera and reverse printbar. Both have a web width of up to 250mm.

The company has three 7-color HP Indigo 6K presses with a capacity of up to 330mm wide, providing versatility and customized production of high quality and complexity. Finishing and die-cutting are handled by A B Graphic DigiLite and Brotech SDF 330 machines, supported by A B Graphic Omega SRI3 rewinders with an integrated inspection system and automated control.

Late last year, Etiketten installed a new Hontec FlexiCon 460-8C press, an 8-color machine that allows printing on a wide range of substrates. With a maximum web width of 450mm, it includes a water-cooling system, UV LED curing, reverse printbar and pre-registration.

Germán Calvi had seen the Hontec press at Labelexpo Europe in Brussels in 2023 and had 'fallen in love with it because of its production quality and its flexibility', according to Constanza Calvi. The company already had a relationship with Hontec's local distributor in Argentina, which facilitated communication with the Chinese manufacturer. 'We've had good communication with Hontec,' reports Constanza Calvi. 'It takes time to switch between machines and to get used to a new one, but the installation has been a success and we are very happy with the press.'

Further installations are in the pipeline. Constanza Calvi and some of her team traveled to Barcelona in September to attend Labelexpo Europe 2025, with the aim of choosing a finishing system to help handle the additional output brought by Etiketten's recent press installations.

Color quality control is performed using high-precision spectrophotometers, and the entire production process is integrated



Management team, from left: Antonela Gario, administration manager; Sebastián Ferrero, head of systems and IT; Daniela Morales, quality and purchasing manager; Lucas Oviedo, operations manager; Constanza Calvi, owner and CEO; Manuel Hormaiztegui, sales manager



Etiketten installed a Hontec FlexiCon 460-8C press late last year

"We have a triple impact approach: economic, social and environmental. It's not just an idea, but a daily practice"

under a custom-developed management system.

The company currently processes approximately 500,000 sqm per month. From its sales office in Vicente López, Buenos Aires, a group of technical and commercial advisors serves clients throughout the country.

Room for growth

Etiketten is 100 percent dedicated to label production, but Constanza Calvi says that the machinery at the company's disposal would facilitate a move into different types of production, such as flexible packaging, in the future. 'For the time being, we still have room to grow in the label sector,' she says.

Etiketten supplies to a various industrial sectors, from local start-ups to large multinational companies. It serves renowned brands in the food, beverage, cosmetics, laboratory, dietary supplement, cleaning, paint and other premium product sectors. Its clients include Minerva Foods, Arcor, Saputo, Marfrig, Alfa Parf Milano, Schoott and Abbott Laboratories, among others.

Another important sector for Etiketten is labels for refrigerated food: dairy products such as milk and cheeses, as well as meat products. The company's local province of Santa Fe has a strong farming industry.

Etiketten also serves the automotive sector, with labels for products such as oils and lubricants. Constanza Calvi cites air fresheners as a growing market, with one of the converter's clients in this segment seeing particularly strong growth.

Etiketten's production is all currently for the domestic market, though some multinational clients export their products. 'We don't have any clients outside Argentina, but that could change in the future,' says Constanza Calvi.

Argentine president Javier Milei has lifted the myriad currency controls and import and export restrictions put in place by the previous government, which had hampered local converters' ability not only to import materials and export finished labels, but even to pay foreign suppliers.

'It has become easier to import materials since the restrictions have eased,' says Constanza Calvi. 'Things don't get held up in customs like they used to. It's easier to pay suppliers abroad. Opening up the export market is also a positive development. However, it also brings great challenges for businesses.'

Leadership

When Germán Calvi was in charge, Constanza Calvi, as head of administration and HR, and two production shift leaders reported to him. After his passing, staff and clients alike advocated for her to take over as the face of the family. Constanza Calvi united the heads of different departments to be company's leadership group. 'I wanted to have a wide range of skills leading the company,' she says. The leadership group comprises Antonela Gario, administration manager; Sebastián Ferrero, head of systems and IT; Daniela Morales, quality and purchasing manager; Lucas Oviedo, operations manager; and Manuel Hormaiztegui, sales manager.

Etiketten's leadership team has sought external advice to help it continue its growth trajectory. Industry expert Luis María García, who co-founded and ran Argentine converter Multilabel for 22 years, overseeing expansion into Brazil and Mexico, is providing support and advice as an independent consultant.

'Luis María has been a great support to us and has offered a lot of help,' says Constanza Calvi. 'We are very grateful for his advice and input.'

Etiketten is certified under ISO 9001:2015 and is in the process of becoming a B Corporation, a company that has voluntarily met the highest standards for social and environmental performance. 'We are aware of the importance of companies having a positive social and environmental impact,' says Constanza Calvi.

Sustainability policies include energy efficiency, responsible waste management, carbon footprint measurement and continuous improvement in production processes. 'The new plant was designed with these criteria in mind from its inception,' she notes.

'We have a triple impact approach: economic, social and environmental,' she says. 'It's not just an idea, but a daily practice. The company actively promotes a healthy work environment, implementing internal surveys to measure the work environment, conducting performance evaluations and encouraging the active participation of our employees, prioritizing equal opportunities, ongoing training and teamwork.'

Germán Calvi's entrepreneurial spirit remains alive in Etiketten's culture.

'My father's legacy transcends the technical and is reflected in every decision, process and relationship,' says Constanza Calvi. 'We combine that legacy with a modern, professional vision oriented toward sustainable growth. We believe that supporting our clients in their development also means growing with them.'

Scan the QR code for more information about Etiketten

take your
embellishment
to the top.

re:think what's possible



Experience our impressive finishing products

SILVER LINE®
Cool. Clear.
Achromatic.



LUMAFIN®
Deeper. Clearer. More
Fascinating.

© KURZ 2025

Find out more

LEONHARD KURZ Stiftung & Co. KG
Schwabacher Str. 482
90763 Fuerth/Germany
E-Mail: sales@kurz.de

www.kurz-world.de

KURZ

DRIVEN BY **INNOVATION.**
POWERED BY **PRINT.**



2 – 5 DECEMBER 2025 | SNIEC, SHANGHAI, CHINA

The road to the future of labels and packaging begins here. Returning to Shanghai, Labelexpo Asia 2025 is your ultimate journey, bringing together industry leaders, innovators, and professionals for four days of cutting-edge technology, industry connections, and business growth.

Navigate the latest advancements in smart labels, intelligent packaging, digital printing, and automation solutions, which are driving the future of the industry forward.

Fuel your success by connecting with key industry leaders, discovering game-changing insights, and taking the fast lane to innovation.

Explore every turn with **450+ exhibitors** across **four halls**, featuring **product showcases**, **Label Academy master classes**, and the **Label Industry China Awards**.

SHIFT INTO HIGH GEAR AND ACCELERATE YOUR BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES AT LABELEXPO ASIA 2025!

WWW.LABELEXPO-ASIA.COM

LABELEXPO
ASIA 2025

DE Converter chooses Gallus

Installing a Gallus Labelmaster 440 establishes a new operational benchmark for the Kolkata-based converter and signals intent to dominate the growing flex pack segment in Eastern India. Adyasha Sinha reports

Kolkata-based DE Converter has taken a step toward the future of high-performance label and packaging production with the installation of a Gallus Labelmaster 440. This strategic capital investment, an 8-color press featuring dual die-cutting stations and cold-foiling capability, reinforces the company's commitment to innovation while ensuring long-term profitability. The move establishes a new operational benchmark for the company and signals a clear intent to dominate the growing mid-web segment in Eastern India.

The acquisition of the Gallus Labelmaster 440 strengthens DE Converter's flexo printing infrastructure. The press is designed to handle the company's versatile product portfolio, ranging from high-volume FMCG labels and tea tags to premium short-run flexible packaging that requires complex decorative finishes.

Strategic growth

DE Converter's investment is rooted in a history of evolution and expansion. Established in 1950, the company has a 75-year history, transforming from a small family enterprise into a diversified group with a reported turnover exceeding 22.5 M USD. Today, the company operates across several key segments, including laminates, machinery manufacturing and confectionery packaging, solidifying its position as a respected flex pack provider in India.

This deep experience in converting dictates a need for equipment that can marry flexibility with high-efficiency output. The market, defined by shifting consumer behavior and rapid e-commerce expansion, demands immediate responsiveness. Director of DE Converter, Sandip Kundu, emphasizes the need to upgrade to a highly automated system to manage these pressures.

'Today's packaging market demands speed, agility and efficiency,' Kundu says. 'We needed a super-efficient press that could give us faster changeovers, reduced waste and offer greater substrate flexibility. The Gallus Labelmaster enables us to run more efficiently with fewer operators and confidently handle urgent requirements. It's an investment in resilience as much as in growth.'

Achieving efficiency through precision

The Gallus Labelmaster 440 was selected for its engineering philosophy, which prioritizes waste reduction and setup speed; critical elements for ensuring profitable operations in a high-mix, high-demand environment.

The Labelmaster 440 supports a maximum web width of 445mm and a maximum printing width of 440mm. The press also features a maximum mechanical speed of up to 200m/min. However, the real commercial advantage lies in its design. The machine has a short web path of only 1.4m between printing units, which significantly reduces material consumption during makeready and setup. Furthermore, the system includes servo drives for the printing cylinders and anilox rollers, guaranteeing precise and stable register accuracy across all operating speeds.

A crucial factor in DE Converter's decision was the machine's substrate flexibility. The team conducted extensive trials at the Gallus demo center in Pune, specifically testing its most challenging materials. The converter was impressed by the Labelmaster's handling of diverse paper grades and ultra-thin 12-micron polyester. The ability to successfully run thin films, validated the press's capacity to handle the complex requirements of high-end flexible packaging, a key growth area for DE Converter.



Team DE Converter with Thomas Frank (third from right), managing director, Heidelberg Asia Pacific

"Today's packaging market demands speed, agility and efficiency. The Gallus Labelmaster 440 is an investment in resilience as much as in growth"

Quantifying the ROI

The decision to invest in the Labelmaster aligns with India's rapidly accelerating position as a global packaging hub. The Indian packaging market is exhibiting significant growth, with overall market CAGR forecasts reaching 26.1 percent through 2030, according to Maximize Market Research. This expansion is overwhelmingly driven by the flexible packaging sector.

The press is expected to generate immediate and quantifiable operational improvements for DE Converter. The installation is forecast to increase the production capacity from 70–80 to 100 tons per month. Measuring capacity in tons reflects the company's focus on maximizing throughput for laminates and bulk converting materials used in its confectionery and flexible packaging operations. This efficiency gain, combined with faster changeovers and reduced substrate waste, is projected to boost the company's overall profitability by up to 25 percent.

The investment also resonates with the broader macroeconomic trends identified by the machine manufacturer. Thomas Frank, managing director of Heidelberg Asia Pacific, says: 'India is at the forefront of global growth in labels and packaging. With the Gallus Labelmaster, converters like DE are not only scaling up their capacity but also ensuring they remain cost-competitive, efficient, and future-ready in an increasingly demanding market.'

The installation serves as a technological precursor to DE Converter's ambitious future plans. The company is currently preparing for a major greenfield expansion project on a 14-acre site in West Bengal. This facility will house new extrusion lines, roll-trim facilities, and other state-of-the-art technology. By mastering the high-efficiency, automated platform of Labelmaster, DE Converter establishes a template for standardized production that will define the operations of its massive new manufacturing site.

LABELS & LABELING

Scan the QR code to read about the new launches from Gallus at Labelexpo Europe 2025

rosas
MASCHINENBAU GMBH

Your partner for label and booklet Inspection,
digital printing and custom made machines.
Made in Germany.



Cheetah 500

We build:

- Table-Top-Rewinder Systems up to **1000 m/min**
- Pharma validated
- fully customizable inspection systems, like:
  - optical inspection
  - RFID/NFC
  - many more options

rosas Maschinenbau GmbH
www.rosas-maschinenbau.de
info@rosas-maschinenbau.com
Tel.: +49 821 2489383

Keimstraße 2a
86420 Diedorf
Bavaria
Germany

Prateek Graphics secures Epson SurePress

With the new digital label press, the India-based converter plans to meet the growing demand for short-run jobs and variable data printing. Adyasha Sinha reports

Amid the booming Indian label market, driven by e-commerce, FMCG and electronics sectors, Prateek Graphics has propelled its growth trajectory with the installation of an Epson SurePress L-6534VW UV digital label press. Prateek Graphics, a subsidiary of Prateek Metal Industries, is the first company in India to install this press.

With a legacy spanning over 30 years, Prateek Graphics is one of the leading manufacturers catering to highly specific needs across automotive, home appliances and pharmaceutical industries; sectors where label integrity, durability and precise color matching are paramount. The SurePress L-6534VW installation represents a critical investment in next-generation UV inkjet technology, designed to complement the company's existing mix of digital and traditional printing capabilities.

Located in Sonipat, Haryana, the installation marks a significant step forward for one of the region's long-standing label converters, positioning it to capitalize on the rapidly growing demand for short-run, high-mix and durable labels.

Speed meets durability

The decision to invest in the Epson L-6534VW was driven by the market's increasing intolerance for long lead times and the need to achieve premium quality on challenging, non-paper substrates. The Epson press, with its high-speed productivity mode of up to 50m/min and a print resolution of 600×1,200 DPI, delivers the throughput required to bridge the gap between digital flexibility and traditional flexo production volumes.

A key factor in the selection was the press's advanced ink and substrate handling technology. The SurePress uses proprietary UV-curable inks and features a high-opacity white ink, essential for printing vivid colors on clear films and metallic substrates, which is a staple requirement for the electronics and large household appliance brands served by Prateek Graphics.

'We have a fleet of machines comprising label presses of different models and configurations, as well as a line of post-press finishing equipment. But we totally redefine labels using the new Epson UV label press,' says Manoj Arora, director of Prateek Graphics.

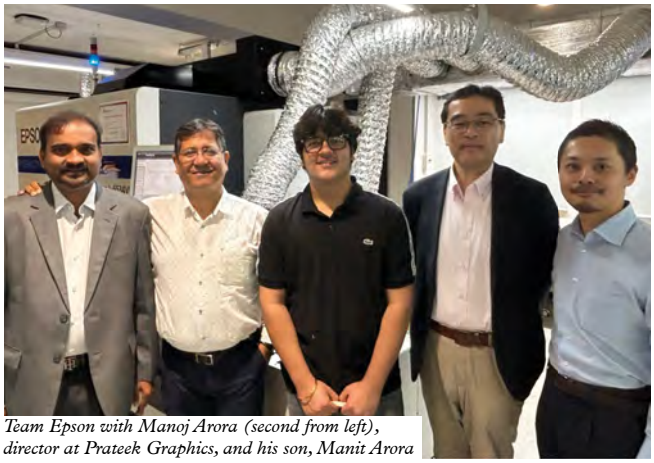
He further notes that the company was impressed by the machine's high-quality output, multiple speed modes and stable operations. 'The ability of the press to manage complex jobs quickly, leveraging features like single-pass high-opacity white ink for metallic films, was key to the investment decision,' adds Arora.

With a robust setup that includes 11 screen printing machines from Grafica (both sheet and roll format), digital presses from Konica Minolta and now the Epson SurePress, Prateek Graphics is geared to meet high-volume, high-quality label production demands.

'We started exploring digital printing five years ago with Konica Minolta and added Epson last year to boost quality, reduce turnaround time and minimize waste,' comments Arora.

PrecisionCore technology

The SurePress L-6534VW credits its quality to Epson's PrecisionCore printhead technology, which uses variable-sized droplet technology (VSDT) to jet ink droplets as small as 3.2 pl. Ashish Joshi, sales and marketing at Epson, India, says this precision enables smooth gradations and fine text, essential for fine-print applications common in the pharmaceutical and medical equipment sectors that Prateek serves.



Team Epson with Manoj Arora (second from left), director at Prateek Graphics, and his son, Manit Arora

"We see a 20 percent annual growth in the Indian label market, and we're positioning ourselves to capture that momentum with the right technology and infrastructure"

'Furthermore, the machine's web handling system, which includes a Drum Platen to hold the substrate taut, ensures flawless color-to-color registration,' remarks Joshi. Added to this is an integrated LED UV pinning system, which instantly cures each ink color, preventing dot gain and spread.

At Prateek Graphics, its new press now plays a critical role in producing a wide range of labels, including dome labels, polycarbonate labels, vinyl labels and specialty products for home appliances, health, wellness and automotive sectors. The company produces up to 50,000 dome labels per day and handles 50,000 meters of media per day.

Looking ahead, Prateek Graphics plans to diversify into shrink sleeves and pouches as part of its continued growth strategy.

'We see a 20 percent annual growth in the Indian label market, and we're positioning ourselves to capture that momentum with the right technology and infrastructure,' concludes Arora.

Scan the QR code to read about Epson's circular leasing program in Labels & Labeling

polilux



Inspirational
PACKAGING



Youngest
BOPP CO.



Leading
PRODUCT

Polilux is the youngest player of BOPP production industry. The company was established in 2018 and its main purpose has been to focus special products such as IML, PSL so far. Polilux has been performing production with specially designed Brückner Technology in order to produce the highest quality of label materials.

Polilux today exports material to 26 countries and this number reached in only 3 years after establishment. The company has only one purpose as to be a leading producer of special products. As a consequence Polilux launched its first BML (Blow-Moulding Label) product in 2022 and the company is producing high quality of PSL Facestock material which can serve high end market since January 2023. Polilux invested the first of its kind investment which will be the only one in the World. The main purpose of this investment is to match with company's objectives as to be leading special product supplier.

polilux

+90 282 686 70 00 info@polilux.com www.polilux.com

Pravesha Industries chooses inspection from Lucid Imaging

With a zero-error production mandate, Pravesha Industries relies on Lucid Imaging's OptiCheck Label inspection system. Adyasha Sinha reports

For packaging converters operating in regulated sectors like pharmaceuticals, FMCG and personal care, inspection is not merely a quality checkpoint; it is a compliance mandate. Hyderabad-based Pravesha Industries, a fast-growing packaging converter with a strong portfolio of advanced packaging, operates in this high-stakes environment, where zero-error production is non-negotiable. That's why the company chose Lucid Imaging's flagship OptiCheck Label inspection system, extending its successful and established partnership.

The stability challenge

The imperative for a new, robust label inspection system arose from significant operational friction experienced with previous technology.

'We had endured an underwhelming experience with the existing inspection system, which presented critical limitations in defect detection and restricted substrate adaptability,' shares VC Prasad, plant head-operations, Pravesha Industries. 'In a modern converting environment handling diverse materials — including paper, polymer, metallic foil and clear-on-clear substrates — limited adaptability directly translates into reduced operational flexibility and increased costs.'

This situation prompted Pravesha to seek a more stable system capable of meeting stringent client expectations. Its search focused on systems that could guarantee compliance with stringent international quality standards demanded by pharma clients, higher stability and detection accuracy and dependable local support.

Lucid Imaging was chosen as the preferred partner not just for proven past performance with the carton inspection system, but also because of strong word-of-mouth recommendations received from other converters in the Hyderabad printing hub.

Importantly, Lucid assured minimizing service level agreement time and maximizing uptime through fast response time and local availability of spare parts.

'This local availability effectively offsets potential long-term costs associated with offshore support and delayed spare parts, positioning the domestic solution as the financially superior choice for long-term total cost of ownership,' notes Prasad.



Lucid Imaging's OptiCheck Label inspection system installed at Pravesha Industries

"In a modern converting environment handling diverse materials, limited adaptability directly translates into reduced operational flexibility and increased costs"

Technical deep dive

Headquartered in Bengaluru, Lucid Imaging stands out through its deep expertise and advanced technology in high-precision print inspection.

Founded by Anand Chinnaswamy, the company designs and delivers a comprehensive range of inspection systems tailored for the printing industry. Its product portfolio includes high-speed in-line sheet inspection systems for intaglio and offset presses, label inspection systems, web inspection systems, carton inspection systems, VDP (variable data printing) inspection, hologram inspection and PDF proofing technology.

The company holds over 80 percent share in India's currency note inspection systems, serving as an OEM supplier to India's security printing presses. This background in security printing, a discipline requiring the detection of microscopic defects and anti-counterfeiting features at extreme speeds, enables Lucid Imaging to equip the OptiCheck Label system with algorithms developed for the most demanding visual tasks.

Sharing the specifications of the inspection system installed at Pravesha, Dheeraj Kumar, product manager at Lucid Imaging, says: 'The system at Pravesha is equipped with high-end capabilities to meet the demanding requirements of pharmaceutical clients. The core hardware features a 4K trilinear color line-scan camera and a 330mm field of view. This configuration provides impressive inspection resolution, capable of identifying defects as small as 0.01sqmm. The system can operate up to a maximum web speed of 150m/min.'

The robustness and precision of the system address all Pravesha's core challenges, ensuring accurate verification of character precision, color deviation, die-cut registration and matrix removal across various substrates using optimized multiple high-bright LED light sources. Kumar continues: 'Furthermore, the system is upgrade-ready, offering optional modules for variable data verification, PDF matching, varnish and hologram inspection and re-inspection, ensuring the converter's investment remains relevant as its end-client requirements evolve.'

Strategic partnership

Reinforcing its trust, Pravesha has since placed additional orders with Lucid Imaging. These orders include OptiCheck PDF Proofing for pre-press, new carton inspection units and additional label inspection systems.

'The reliability instilled by our system and support structure has guaranteed minimal downtime and consistent productivity.

This tangible performance has led Pravesha to elevate its partnership with us from vendor-client to a strategic quality collaborator,' concludes Kumar.

Scan the QR code to read more news from India in Labels & Labeling

ZELLER+GMELIN

UVAFLEX FCM LED Y581

Low-migration LED Flexo ink for food labels and packaging applications



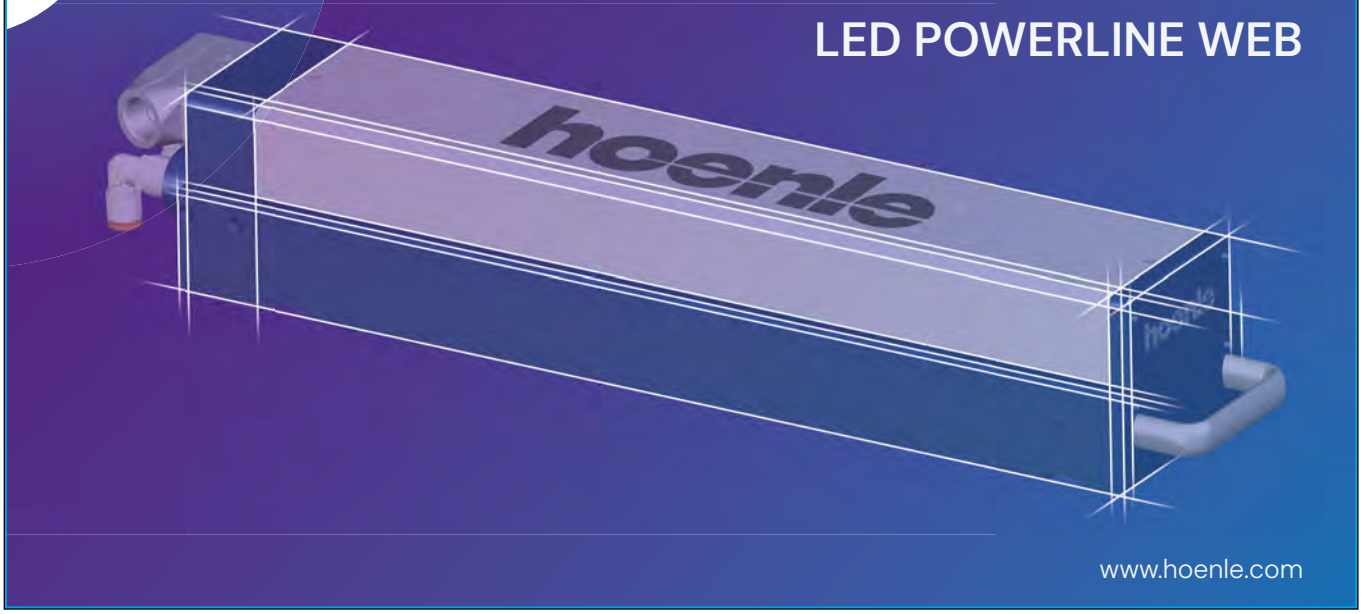
EXPERTLY DONE.

Zeller+Gmelin UK Ltd. · 795 London Road · Essex RM 20 3LH · United Kingdom
n.smart@zeller-gmelin.co.uk · www.zeller-gmelin.co.uk

hoenle

DISCOVER OUR LATEST INNOVATION IN LED HYBRID CURING

LED POWERLINE WEB



www.hoenle.com

S Kumar eyes East Africa expansion with Zonten

Chinese press manufacturer Zonten is targeting East Africa through its distributor network. The manufacturer sees opportunities for affordable, quality machinery. Akanksha Meena reports

S Kumar, an India-based distributor of Zonten presses and converting machines, is eyeing the East African market with plans to establish a local presence in Kenya to service the region, including Tanzania and Uganda, in 2026.

The move aims to tap into what Manish Hansoti, managing director of the company, describes as a market that's ripe for opportunity, and one with demand for affordable label and packaging equipment.

'We are planning to start operations for Zonten in East Africa, mainly in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda,' Hansoti says. 'We have had a few installations recently, and most printers in the region are Indian-owned. They rely on support from India because they are connected to the Indian market.'

He sees geographical proximity, that's well-connected by air, as a strategic advantage. 'There are several flights from Ahmedabad and Mumbai to the Middle East and Africa within a span of eight to 10 hours, which allows us to provide timely service and support,' Hansoti adds.

S Kumar, which has already installed presses in Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, believes East Africa represents one of the few remaining untapped regions. 'This is a virgin market, there's not much presence of machine suppliers yet,' Hansoti says. 'The neighboring countries are getting saturated, so we're looking to set up something new in this region.'

Affordable technology

Zonten's product range includes a mix of small slitting and converting equipment as well as high-end flexo to semi-rotary and full-rotary offset presses. The company showcased an economical flexo model with two servo drives and flower type mode at Labelexpo Europe 2025, designed specifically for price-sensitive markets, such as Africa and other countries. This machine can print all types of substrates like paper, film, shrink sleeve, IML and 300gsm board and runs at 160m/min. The ZTR-FL series 370/430/560 size modular flexographic press showcases its versatility with features such as UV/LED curing, die-cutting, slitting, cold foil capabilities and online inspecting facility as an optional feature.

The company's highlights at the show included the ZTJ Series intermittent offset press, which delivers high-resolution output, precise color control and minimal waste, making it suitable for short to mid-run label production.

Zonten has already installed several units of ZTJ series in India and is now promoting it across Africa . S Kumar has recently installed second intermittent offset press at Ramdoot Packaging.

Zonten also debuted the ZTD-350 hybrid digital-flexo press with Epson printheads which combines W + CMYKW digital printing with flexo enhancements for variable data and fast job changeovers. Additionally, the ZMQ Series Multi Converting System demonstrates a compact, all-in-one approach that integrates flexo, flatbed hot foil, screen printing, cold foil, intermittent die-cutting, IML cutting and sheeting.

The ZMQ press is designed for embellishment on digital printed or offset/flexo printed labels. Recently, a customer from Nairobi has installed the embellishment unit to support its digital press.



Zonten stand at Labelexpo Europe 2025

"We have had a few installations recently, and most printers in the region are Indian-owned. They rely on support from India"

Supporting local converters

Initial installations have included stack-type flexo presses, embellishment machines, die-cutters and hot foil converting equipment in East Africa.

These machines complement existing digital printing setups such as HP Indigo presses in the region.

S Kumar plans to appoint a local marketing and engineering representative to ensure timely service and customer support. 'You cannot provide the required support without a local presence. Initially, we'll have a resident engineer who can handle both technical and marketing functions, and we'll see how it develops,' Hansoti explains.

The company is particularly interested in the food, healthcare, beverage, lubricant oil and pharmaceutical markets, which are experiencing strong growth in East Africa. These segments are expanding rapidly and the company aims to support converters who cater to these markets.

S Kumar is focusing on providing scalable technology that grows with the region's printing capabilities. Initially, customers may not invest in high-end models, but Hansoti believes that as the market grows, the company will grow with it.

As S Kumar prepares to enter the East African market, the company sees the move not only as a business opportunity but also as a step toward building a long-term partnership with regional converters.

'We see strong potential in this region,' Hansoti concluded. 'Our goal is to grow together with our customers and support the development of a more self-sufficient printing ecosystem in East Africa.'

Scan the QR code to learn more about S Kumar



Right Label for the Right Product

Operating in this industry for over 30 years, we continue producing visually impressive and more sustainable pressure-sensitive self-adhesive labelstocks for you.

frimpeks.com

Frimpeks

Indonesian converter's bold flexo investment pays off

Five Omet iFlex presses position Indolabel as one of the leading manufacturers in Southeast Asia. Piotr Wnuk reports

PT Indolabel Surya Pratama has completed a remarkable transformation from traditional letterpress to advanced flexographic printing with the acquisition of five Omet iFlex presses, positioning itself as one of Indonesia's leading label converters and a driving force in the Southeast Asian label market.

The Jakarta-based company's journey began with a strategic decision to modernize its production capabilities to meet growing demand for high-quality, short-run and sustainable label production across diverse industries, including pharmaceuticals, food and beverage, cosmetics, electronics and logistics.

Over the past several years, Indolabel has systematically invested in flexographic technology, with each press installation building upon the successes of its predecessors. The latest acquisition, a fifth Omet iFlex press that was recently showcased at Labelexpo Southeast Asia, demonstrates the company's unwavering confidence in both the technology platform and its strategic partnership approach.

This progressive investment strategy reflects broader market dynamics across Southeast Asia, where converters are responding to evolving customer demands for more sophisticated label applications, shorter run lengths and faster turnaround times. Indolabel's approach has positioned it at the forefront of this transformation, creating a competitive advantage that extends well beyond its domestic market.



Indolabel positioned itself as one of Indonesia's leading label converters and a driving force in the Southeast Asian market

"What Indolabel has built here is nothing short of outstanding. The facility is one of the most impressive in Southeast Asia"

Partnership drives technology adoption

The transformation has been supported by a strong partnership with Jet Technologies Indonesia, the exclusive dealer and service partner for Omet across Indonesia, Vietnam, Singapore and Malaysia. This relationship has extended beyond equipment supply to encompass comprehensive training, optimization and production planning support that has been crucial to Indolabel's success.

'The simplicity and efficiency of the Omet iFlex made it the right machine for our team and our production needs,' says Benny Kartaraharja, managing director at Indolabel. 'But just as important has been the strong, ongoing support from Jet Technologies. The service didn't stop at installation. They've been a true partner throughout our transition from letterpress to flexo.'

The partnership model exemplifies how successful technology adoption requires more than equipment procurement. Jet Technologies has worked closely with Indolabel throughout every stage of its transformation, providing expertise that has enabled the company to maximize the potential of each press installation.

Jack Malki, director at Jet Technologies, emphasizes the consultative approach that has characterized the partnership. 'We take a consultative approach with all our clients, and in the case of Indolabel, we've partnered with the company every step of the way, from planning and investment to training and optimization,' he explains. 'The result is a production setup that's both scalable, efficient and well positioned to support Indolabel's continued growth.'

This comprehensive support model has enabled the Indonesian converter to avoid many of the common pitfalls associated with major technology transitions. Rather than simply installing equipment and hoping for the best, the partnership has ensured that each press installation has delivered immediate productivity gains while building capabilities for future growth.

The relationship has also facilitated knowledge transfer that has elevated Indolabel's internal capabilities. Through structured training programs and ongoing consultation, Jet Technologies has helped develop Indolabel's technical expertise, creating a more self-sufficient operation that can adapt quickly to changing market requirements.

Indolabel's investment extends beyond equipment to encompass a state-of-the-art facility located near Jakarta, which has impressed industry leaders and set new standards for label production in the region. The facility represents a comprehensive approach to modernization that addresses every aspect of the production process.

Marco Calcagni, sales and marketing director at Omet, recently visited the site and praised its scale and sophistication. 'What Indolabel has built here is nothing short of outstanding,' says Calcagni. 'The facility is one of the most impressive in Southeast Asia. It's a world-class production hub, and we are incredibly proud that Omet plays a central role in Indolabel's journey.'

The facility design reflects Indolabel's understanding that successful flexographic printing requires more than advanced

equipment. Environmental controls, workflow optimization, quality control systems and material handling capabilities have all been carefully planned to support high-performance production across multiple product categories.

The investment in infrastructure demonstrates the company's long-term commitment to the Indonesian market and its confidence in continued growth. By creating a facility that can accommodate future expansion and technology upgrades, the company has positioned itself to respond quickly to evolving market opportunities.

The facility also serves as a showcase for Indonesian manufacturing capabilities, demonstrating that domestic converters can compete effectively with international competitors through strategic investment and operational excellence. This has important implications for the broader development of Indonesia's packaging industry.

Strategic growth

The successive investments in Omet iFlex technology reflect Indolabel's confidence in flexographic printing as the optimal approach for meeting evolving market demands. Each press acquisition has added capacity and flexibility to handle the growing requirements for short-run, high-quality production while maintaining efficiency and quality standards.

'The iFlex has consistently delivered on performance, ease of use and quality,' notes Malki. 'We're thrilled to see Indolabel's trust in the technology reaffirmed with each investment.'

The company's evolution from traditional letterpress to advanced flexographic printing mirrors broader industry trends toward more flexible, efficient and sustainable production methods. As demand continues to rise across Southeast Asia for sophisticated label applications, Indolabel's investment strategy positions it to capitalize on market growth while maintaining operational excellence.

The Omet iFlex platform offers several advantages that align with market trends in the label industry. The servo-driven technology provides precise registration and consistent quality, while the modular design allows for configuration flexibility that can accommodate diverse application requirements. These capabilities are particularly valuable in markets where customers demand both quality and responsiveness.

The investment in multiple iFlex presses also provides operational advantages through standardization. By building expertise on a single platform, Indolabel has created efficiencies in training, maintenance and production planning that would be difficult to achieve with a mixed equipment base.

Technology enables ambitious goals

Indolabel's approach to technology adoption demonstrates how strategic partnerships can accelerate transformation in the label printing industry. The company's experience highlights the importance of comprehensive support throughout the transition process, from initial planning through ongoing optimization.

'This partnership has empowered us to chase our ambition of becoming one of the top label printers in Indonesia,' states Kartaraharja, reflecting on the journey that has seen the company install five Omet iFlex presses over recent years.

The investment trajectory showcases how Indonesian label converters are embracing advanced flexographic technology to compete in an increasingly sophisticated market. Indolabel's success provides a model for other converters seeking to modernize their operations while building sustainable competitive advantages.

The company's commitment to continuous improvement extends beyond equipment acquisition to encompass process optimization, quality enhancement and market development. This holistic approach has enabled Indolabel to maximize the return on its technology investments while building capabilities for future growth.



The successive investments in Omet iFlex technology reflect Indolabel's confidence in flexographic printing

"This partnership has empowered us to chase our ambition of becoming one of the top label printers in Indonesia"

Future outlook

With its world-class facility, advanced equipment and strong industry partnerships, Indolabel has positioned itself as one of the leaders in the Indonesian market and a significant player across Southeast Asia's expanding label printing sector. The company's success demonstrates the potential for domestic converters to compete effectively in regional and international markets through strategic investment and operational excellence.

The continued expansion of Indolabel's capabilities reflects broader economic trends across Southeast Asia, where growing consumer markets and increasing sophistication in packaging requirements are driving demand for advanced label printing services. The company's investment strategy positions it to capitalize on these trends while contributing to the development of Indonesia's manufacturing sector.

Looking ahead, Indolabel's experience provides valuable insights for other converters considering similar transformations. The importance of strategic partnerships, comprehensive planning and sustained investment in both technology and capabilities emerges as key factors in successful modernization efforts.

The company's journey from traditional letterpress to advanced flexographic printing illustrates how thoughtful technology adoption can create competitive advantages that extend well beyond immediate operational improvements. By building capabilities that anticipate future market requirements, Indolabel has positioned itself for continued growth in an evolving industry landscape.

Scan the QR code to learn more about Indolabel

PPG TESLIN® Label Material

When your label needs to climb to new heights of abrasion resistance



PPG TESLIN® label material makes it possible

You can reach the summit of abrasion resistance with PPG TESLIN® label material.

It's a tough world out there. Trust *Teslin* material to protect your labels from wear caused by handling and other damaging conditions. It is also difficult to remove printed text and graphics without destroying the material, resulting in tamper-evident performance without the need for laminate or protective coating.

Don't take chances. Trust the label material that has protected printed data from chemicals, abrasion, temperature extremes and water for more than 30 years. Trust PPG *Teslin* substrate.

To learn more or to request free samples, visit www.teslin.com/toughlabels.



Durable and versatile *Teslin* labels meet rigorous demands.

We protect and beautify the world™

© 2024 PPG Industries, Inc. All Rights Reserved.
The *PPG Logo* and *Teslin* is a registered trademark of PPG Industries Ohio, Inc.

sei LASER



IN-LINE UV INKJET+FINISHING+LASER CUT

SEI Laser presents the ultimate solution for self adhesive labels, 100% digital

KYOJET

KYOJET AND LABELMASTER

the unique solution "from pdf to shipment"



KYOJET: high-resolution, UV print 55m/min + **LABELMASTER:** state of the art laser cut
= completely digital and automatic in-line processing.
Zero waste, zero set-up, zero bottle necks.

Increase your company's efficiency, drastically reduce your costs and take advantage of your digital business

sei LASER

SEI S.p.A.
Consulting, Sales and Service
Via R. Ruffilli 1 – 24035 Curno (BG) Italy - Tel. +39 035 4376016 - Fax +39 035 463843
www.seilaser.com - info@seilaser.com

Xinma transforms with Flora

Having started its digital journey in 2021, Xinma is now planning its fourth press investment. Yolanda Wang reports

Focused on the tire label sector, Xinma has leveraged digital printing technology as the cornerstone of its business. By enhancing quality, improving efficiency and concentrating on high-value clients, it has blazed a trail for the digital transformation of the traditional label converter.

Founded in 2007 in Yantai, Shandong Province, Xinma relocated to its current factory in 2018. Presently, it employs over 50 staff, with a total workshop area of 4,500sqm. The company's core clientele includes renowned Chinese tire brands such as Linglong, Chengshan, Sailun, Haohua, Hengfeng, Yongsheng, Fengyuan, Xinghongyuan and Formax.

From diversification to specialization

Tian Xuping, founder of Xinma, has been engaged in the printing industry for nearly 30 years. He witnessed the industry's initial period of rapid growth, but now, like everyone else, faces increasingly fierce competition.

Xuping's printing career began with bill printing for government institutions, including post offices and electric power bureaus. Later, the company attempted to expand into new business areas, including label printing, gifts and catering. The gift and catering businesses were eventually shut down as its label printing business achieved rapid success. In June 2008, Xuping reorganized the company, renaming it Xinma Super Label and establishing a strategy focused on tire labels.

'This decision was based on two considerations. First, the industrial foundation of Yantai and its surrounding areas: 70 percent of the world's tires are produced in China. Tire enterprises in Yantai alone account for about 60 percent of the national total, presenting significant industrial cluster advantages. Second, the logic of long-term development means, rather than being an all-encompassing but unrefined multi-category supplier, it is better to deepen our presence in a segmented field and strive to become a leader in that industry,' Xuping explains.

Xinma expanded its production facilities. The company added 11 intermittent letterpress presses. In response to the special characteristics of tire labels – large in size, and requiring specialist materials – Xinma invested in coating equipment to produce its own self-adhesive labels, achieving quality and cost control over the entire supply chain. Additionally, its own intermittent gluing technology has solved an industry pain point of glue overflow after application, further consolidating its technological advantage.

Digital transformation

Xinma's digital printing journey began in 2019, with an investment in a second-hand digital press.

In 2021, Xinma installed its first Flora J-330 digital press in Shandong Province, gradually shifting small-run orders to this digital production line. 'The print-on-demand model enabled by the digital press not only enables rapid response to customers' urgent needs but also helps to optimize inventory management and achieve lean production,' he explains.

Xinma soon found that the long-term savings in plates, time, labor and inventory far outweighed the additional cost of digital inks. The company workers also gradually adapted to the fast-paced delivery model of digital production.

In 2023, the company added another Flora digital press to expand capacity. In March 2025, the third Flora press, Model J-350GT, was put into operation.

'After nearly six years of experience with digital printing technology, we found that, just like traditional flexographic, offset and letterpress printing, digital technology is not a one-size-fits-all technology,' Xuping states. 'So, in addition to considering the equipment itself, the supplier's service response capability is crucial. This is why we have always chosen Flora digital machines. Its after-sales service and response speed are extremely fast. For example, when we reported an issue with uneven laminating, the manufacturer quickly optimized the technology and applied it to its new-generation machines. This is the core reason for our long-term cooperation with Flora,'



Zhang Peng of Flora and Tian Xuping, founder of Xinma

"We found that, just like traditional flexographic, offset and letterpress printing, digital technology is not a one size fits all technology"

Today, short-run orders of 100-200 sheets (as the production mode of tire labels is roll-to-sheet) account for 70 percent of Xinma's total orders, and digital printing contributes half of its total revenue, becoming a key driver of the company's business growth.

Ecosystem expansion

Xinma operates in an intensely competitive market environment. Facing cost control pressures from brand clients, the company has maintained steady growth by leveraging its years of experience in in-house raw material production, equipment operation and maintenance, and quality control management.

Xuping has a clear plan for the future. Xinma plans to install a fourth Flora digital press and, at the same time, gradually reduce the number of letterpress printing machines to two or three units for special orders. Additionally, in 2026, the company plans to invest in flexographic and offset combination presses.

Xinma will expand into automotive-related label fields such as engine oil and adhesive labels. The company also plans to develop its own range of adhesives to reduce its reliance on the raw materials supply chain, and will attempt to replace release papers with release films to help clients achieve their sustainability goals.

Flora will be exhibiting its digital press range at Labelexpo Asia 2025. Scan the QR code to learn more

stick with us

TLMI

Where Labels, Packaging, Leadership, and Legacy Meet.

Finding the balance between competitive and collaborative.
At TLMI, we believe the future of the label and packaging industry is built together.

Whether you're a converter, supplier, or partner, TLMI is your platform for connection, innovation, and growth.
We're a community that shares knowledge, celebrates excellence, and supports one another in a rapidly evolving industry.

As a TLMI member, you'll gain access to:

- Industry-leading benchmarking and market insights
- Sustainability and regulatory guidance
- Exclusive networking and leadership events
- Workforce development and training resources
- A collaborative community that inspires its members and the industry

Already a member? Renew today and keep building with us.
New to TLMI? Join now and be part of something bigger.

2026 Membership Enrollment is Now Open
tlmi.com | office@tlmi.com

Stick With Us—Because Together, We Move the Industry Forward.

Be a part of our community in 2026

Dongding builds flexible service with digital printing

Moving from sheet-fed to web-fed flexo and digital printing, Dongding is deepening its digital transformation journey. Yolanda Wang reports

Founded in 2014 and located in Tianqiao District, Jinan City, Shandong Province, Dongding specializes in self-adhesive label production. Its products are widely used in sectors such as health supplements, food and pharmaceuticals.

In June 2025, Dongding relocated to a new factory covering 5,000sqm and equipped with a wide range of equipment, including flexo, offset and digital.

New business model

Sun Shasha, general manager of Dongding, explains that before the current company was founded in 2014, its main business was selling barcode printers, scanners, blank labels and blank die-cutting services. After seeing the decorated label business growing, Sun Shasha and her husband officially registered Dongding in 2014, marking a new phase of their business.

'Label printing and barcode printer industries share many similarities. Both have relatively low investment and technical thresholds, leading to intense competition as the market matures. So, from the start, we made it clear: Our business must be founded on the premise of ensuring quality and delivery of premium services,' says Sun Shasha.

All orders are tracked through the entire process from raw materials, printing, post-press processing, warehousing and delivery to customers, and any issues are resolved in the shortest possible time. 'We are more service providers than printers. Only by striving to satisfy customers in every detail can we achieve their long-term loyalty,' she adds.

The success of this strategy is evident: Existing customers now account for 60 to 70 percent of the company's client base.

Tech trial to capacity upgrade

Dongding has always kept a close eye on digital printing technology. The company first installed a Xerox sheet-fed digital press. 'At that time, small-run orders were scarce, so the machine sat idle for a long time. I even questioned myself if this was a flaw, whether it was an internal issue or a mismatch with customers,' says Sun Shasha.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, demand for small-run orders surged, and the idle machine was put back into use. After that, Dongding further expanded its digital printing capacity by adding a Konica Minolta AccurioLabel 190.



(Right) Sun Shasha, GM of Dongding, with employees

Increasing volumes of short-run work soon led the company to consider investment in a new digital press to boost capacity.

The decisive factor in choosing the Konica Minolta AccurioLabel 400 was a request from an overseas client for a new product launch with tight deadlines.

After the press was installed in November 2024, Dongding shifted all short-run orders to the new equipment.

'Compared to the previous model, the new machine adds white ink functionality, which is ideal for film label printing and what our core need. Over 60 percent of our labels are now film-based,' she notes.

To handle digital orders efficiently, Dongding hired dedicated pre-press operators.

'Digital printing lowers the skills requirements for machine operators but raises them for pre-press file handling, especially color control. Unlike traditional printing, where ink can be adjusted to modify colors, digital printing uses specific inks, so the pressure of color control falls entirely on pre-press technicians,' explains Sun Shasha.

Dongding has also invested in new digital embellishment equipment for processes like varnish and foil stamping.

People-centric path

Dongding currently has over 40 employees, and they adhere to a 'people-oriented' philosophy.

'Our equipment is usually updated every four to five years. When we moved to this new factory, we phased out our old offset printing machines and invested in three new Zonten intermittent offset presses. High-quality hardware not only ensures product quality but also provides employees with a better operating platform. New equipment and technology boost work efficiency and reduce waste,' says Sun Shasha.

"The new machine adds white ink functionality, ideal for film label printing, which is our core need. Over 60 percent of our labels are now film-based"

Additionally, Dongding has established a Mutual Assistance Fund, which is funded by revenues generated from waste reduction efforts. Beyond a monthly salary, employees receive supplementary medical benefits covering themselves and their family members, in addition to basic medical insurance. The company also directly provides elderly care allowances to employees' parents every month.

'A large proportion of our staff are long-term employees, many of whom have been with us since the company's early days,' Sun Shasha says.

To meet future industry challenges, Shasha believes companies should secure reasonable profit margins instead of competing for orders solely through low prices. 'Building differentiated competitiveness, such as high-quality products and services, and flexible production capabilities, is the key.'

Going forward, Dongding will deepen its focus on digital printing and digital post-press processing, while expanding into other printing areas like corrugated and non-woven fabrics to meet existing clients' label needs and beyond.

China's print industry trends will be showcased at Labelexpo Asia 2025. Scan the QR code to learn more

WEBGUIDE SOLUTION



UNIQUE AND TAILOR-MADE, BECAUSE THE ONLY STANDARD THAT TRULY MATTERS IS YOURS.

To achieve a specific **objective,** speed needs to be guided. Our web guiding systems are created with this purpose in mind, ensuring dependability even at **high speeds**. Each webguide is **custom-made** to cater to unique requirements and delivers **exceptional precision regulation** through a blend of **cutting-edge software** and **state-of-the-art components**.

Re

re-spa.com

LABELEXPO EUROPE 2025 REVIEW

In this special section, discover all the key innovations, emerging trends and standout exhibitors that defined Labelexpo Europe 2025

Labelexpo Europe 2025, held for the first time in Barcelona in its 45-year history, ended as the biggest show to date, and one that signaled how the industry is changing.

Labelexpo organizers say the event welcomed over 37,000 visitors to Barcelona at a new venue featuring over 43,000sqm of convention space. There was a notable increase in visitors from South America and North America.

This year, two emerging themes are clearly shaping the future of label printing and converting: automation and sustainability.

For flexo, digital and hybrid press technologies, the key themes converged around automation, cloud network integration and the first developments in AI-driven machine and user interfaces. Several of the digital launches are set to facilitate converters' entry to digital and enable suppliers to scale with them.

Nearly every supplier has some sort of sustainability messaging, but there is no one more actively engaged in it than the material suppliers at the show. And for good reason, with the European Union's Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulations coming into force, the time to act is now.

When the show returns to Barcelona from Oct 5-8 in 2027, it will do so under a new name and identity: Loupe Europe. Labelexpo organizers announced that it will change the name of its global events to Loupe, with an expanded remit to welcome the narrow and mid-web folding carton and flexible packaging sectors.

Continue reading for full coverage from the show floor of Labelexpo Europe 2025, an event for the history books.

IN THIS SECTION

74 Labelexpo rebrands
77 Show floor sales
83 Global Label Awards
87 Press technology
95 Finishing and converting
103 Materials
109 Inks and coatings
113 Workflow and inspection
117 Dies and tooling
119 Plates and platemaking
120 Ancillary equipment
125 Chinese exhibitors

LABELEXPO REBRANDS AS LOUPE

The first show under the new event branding will be Loupe Americas 2026. Chelsea McDougall reports

Labelexpo will rebrand to Loupe starting in 2026, as the event organizers move toward a broader embrace of additional printed packaging segments, while maintaining its focus on the label market.

The label converting industry is undergoing a transformation, creating 'one-stop' package printing operations that encompass the full range of packaging formats. Label converters have already diversified into flexible packaging and are identifying new opportunities in folding cartons. Loupe Global events will reflect that change.

"One thing should be perfectly clear: Labelexpo isn't dead; but the event is going through a rebirth with labels at the center of it"

'You can see it all over the show floor at Labelexpo. Label converters are not just converting labels anymore. They're adding cartons and flexible packaging into their portfolios,' says Loupe Global managing director Jade Grace. 'The show needed to evolve alongside the industry.'

Grace says the decision to change the name did not come lightly. The organizers had been exploring that direction for years, but the conversations gained further momentum after the Europe 2023 event, when over 25 percent of visitors had registered an interest in folding carton and 40 percent in flexible packaging. Grace says those numbers had been trending upward in the years prior.

In fact, Andy Thomas-Emans, strategic director for Informa's Labels Group (the company owns both Labelexpo/Loupe and Labels & Labeling), says the name change was years in the making.

'It seems amazing now, but we actually first considered changing the name of Labelexpo back in the early 2000s when Comco ProGlide MSP in-line flexo presses were converting shrink sleeves, flexible packaging and folding cartons,' Thomas-Emans says. 'It was clear even then that this was the future, but the labels industry was more fragmented, mostly small to medium-sized family businesses that were making great money from labels.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

The name Loupe represents a common magnifying tool found in printshops. A loupe is used to inspect print quality and detail up close.

For event organizers, LOUPE as an acronym stands for '**L**abels & **OU**ter **P**ackaging **E**mbellishment' and represents attention to detail, clarity, precision and craftsmanship.

'We've really thought long and hard about the name, and I think Loupe really honors the heritage of our industry,' Grace says. 'To us, a loupe symbolizes attention to detail, clarity and insight, all of that really characterize our industry so well.'

'Today, that landscape has changed,' he continues. 'Today, we see widespread consolidation with multi-site groups often incorporating labels, flex pack and folding carton operations. And in a fiercely competitive labels market with lower levels of growth, label converters are finding flexible packaging produces higher margins and perfectly complements their label business.'

Further, the name change was widely supported by the industry. Labelexpo hired a brand agency to conduct in-depth research with industry stakeholders, including suppliers, converters and trade associations.

'The results came up overwhelmingly in favor of a rebrand, much, actually, to the surprise of the management team,' Grace says. 'Since then, we've done a lot of work with branding agencies, internally, with stakeholders and associations.

'One thing should be perfectly clear: Labelexpo isn't dead; but the event is going through a rebirth with labels at the center of it. Label printing and converting is still at the very core and foundation of our group, so I don't want the industry to lose sight of that.'

Thomas-Emans adds: 'The idea behind the Loupe rebrand is not to become a "print everything" show like Drupa, or a packaging show like Fachpack or PackExpo. We are focused on how the core print technology developed for the labels industry – in-line, digital and hybrid – that will disrupt the flexible packaging and folding carton converting industries. You will not see a CI, gravure or offset press at Loupe, as we are not trying to compete at that end of the market. We are all about short-run, added value production of labels, flexible packaging and folding cartons.'

MARKET CHANGES

Over 25 percent of exhibitors at Labelexpo Europe 2025 have portfolios that reach across labels, flexible packaging and folding carton sectors.

Flexible packaging is no stranger to Labelexpo shows. For years, it has been largely seen as a 'natural evolution' for the label industry that leverages a label converters' existing strengths – adaptability, diversity and speed – and puts them in a position to serve one of the packaging industry's fastest growing segments. In more recent years, mid-web machinery from both flexo and digital manufacturers has become commonplace.

'By leveraging their existing assets, embracing new substrates and aligning with global trends, [label converters] can unlock new revenue streams, deepen customer relationships and future-proof their businesses,' says Chris Ellison, managing director of OPM Group, a UK-based converter who pioneered the move into flexible packing nearly 20 years ago.

Ellison also served as an Industry Ambassador for Labelexpo Europe 2025. 'The flexible packaging market is no longer a distant opportunity; it's a present-day imperative. For label converters ready to innovate, diversify and grow, the path forward is clear and flexible.'

The global flexible packaging sector is growing at a faster rate than the label sector. It's currently valued at about 250-300 billion USD globally, and growing at a rate of 4.7 percent, according to figures from Grand View Research.

It's a segment that's dominated by large, established converting companies, whose scale makes them less agile to respond to shorter production runs, SKU proliferation and the rise of challenger



"Sustainability regulation, SKU proliferation and rising energy costs have brought these capabilities to the forefront for a much wider audience, especially label converters looking to diversify"



LABELS & LABELING RETAINS NAME AND BRANDING

Labels & Labeling, which is owned by the same parent company, Informa PLC, will not be rebranding alongside the events.

'Labels & Labeling has been the trusted voice of the global label industry for more than 45 years, and our strength comes from a clear focus on the narrow- and mid-web converter and supporting ecosystem.

'While we applaud Loupe and understand the decision to rebrand, we will continue to cover the adjacent packaging sectors in the context of how it impacts the world of labels,' says Chelsea McDougall, editor of Labels & Labeling magazine. 'Preserving the magazine's name ensures that the Labels & Labeling continues that legacy, while supporting the broader vision of the global Loupe events.'

brands; all areas in which label converters excel.

Flexible formats like pouches and single-serve sachets are steadily replacing rigid containers on store shelves, driven primarily by their sustainability and customer convenience advantages. While flexible packaging is not inherently recyclable, there are products on the market for recyclable or compostable pouches. Further, flexible packaging requires significantly less environmental resources to ship and produce, compared to the rigid containers they are replacing.

Today's consumers also prioritize convenience. Flexible formats like resealable pouches and single-serve sachets are in high demand across food, beverage, personal care and pharmaceutical sectors. These formats align perfectly with the capabilities of narrow-web presses, which excel at short-run, high-mix production.

Folding carton, meanwhile, has been a relatively newer development, with the first signs of folding carton production appearing at Labelexpo Europe 2023. By 2025, Edale was the first and only manufacturer to show in-line flexo converting for folding carton at the show.

In-line carton production isn't new, it's just newly relevant, says Will Parker, a packaging executive and Labelexpo folding carton ambassador.

'In-line carton production isn't a new concept,' Parker says. 'For over 15 years, food-to-go packaging has quietly evolved using in-line flexo platforms to produce folded, glued and barrier-coated or lined fiberboard trays and wraps.'

He continues: 'Likewise, the beauty and personal care sectors have long relied on short-run, embellished carton production using hybrid workflows to create rigid boxes, sleeves and gift packaging often produced in line with hot foil, embossing and die-cutting in a single pass.'

What's new, Parker says, is the urgency of the conversation.

'Sustainability regulation, SKU proliferation and rising energy costs have brought these capabilities to the forefront for a much wider audience, especially label converters looking to diversify.'

HISTORY

Labelexpo was launched in 1980 with the inaugural Labelex 80 in London, featuring 44 label industry suppliers. Since then, the portfolio has expanded across the globe, supported by editorial from Labels & Labeling magazine. The magazine will not be rebranding (see boxout).

In 2023, Labelexpo Global Series joined Informa, the world's largest B2B event organizer, with more than 800 brands and 14,000 employees across 30 countries.

The ability to connect with multiple industries across complementary Informa events in the healthcare and pharma, food and nutrition, beauty and aesthetics sectors, provides sponsors, exhibitors and visitors access to wider knowledge and business opportunities, organizers say.

Loupe's Grace continues: 'We are going to carry on the same way as Labelexpo has done for over 40 years. Labelexpo is so successful because of the people in the industry. I feel we are kind of the guardians of this platform, and we're always trying to adapt to what the industry wants and needs, and Loupe will be no different. We are embracing a wider remit that is already part of our industry. We're just recognizing that formally.'

The first event under the Loupe moniker will be Loupe Americas 2026, when the event returns to the Donald E Stephens Convention Center in Rosemont, Illinois, from Sept 15-17, 2026. Labelexpo Asia, which takes place in Shanghai from Dec 2-5 this year, will be the last under the Labelexpo name.

Continue reading for full coverage from Labelexpo Europe 2025

Less Waste, Faster Flow

AVT Workflow Link - Turning inspection data into action.

AVT Workflow Link connects press and rewinder in one automated workflow - using inspection data to pinpoint defects, cut waste, and boost productivity.

Turn inspection into efficiency

AVT
WE ARE PRINT INSPECTION

www.avt-inc.com

From press to finishing



Maximize machine time

Reduce material waste

Improve process control

- Smart
- Connected
- Efficient

Direct Thermal Synthetic Film |Facestock|

88inch Wide
37~257μm Thickness

- Labels
- Tags
- Tickets
- Security Labels



Custom Design & Supply to Meet Specific Requirements

PHENOL FREE Phenol Free
Translucent
Water Resistance
Security
Hot Water Jet Resistance
Heat Resistance
High Sensitivity for Fast Printing
Alcohol Resistance
Solvent Resistance

DURICO
www.durico.co.kr

Korea Plant & H/Q: Durico C&T, Inc. Oedap 6-gil 33, Sangju-si, Gyeongbuk 37240, Korea | Phone: +82 2 525 8405 | e-mail: info@durico.co.kr
U.S. Office: Durico Imaging Inc, 6905 Oslo Circle Suit G, Buena Park, CA 90621 | Phone: +1 714 521 7000 | e-mail: sales@duricoimaging.com
Europe Office: Durico Imaging bvba. Villastraat 2C, 1830 Machelen, BELGIUM | Phone: +32 (0)470 632 965 | e-mail: euro@duricoimaging.com

SHOW FLOOR SALES

Labelexpo Europe 2025 proved once again to be a platform for business, as a significant number of equipment orders were signed and initiated on the show floor. Chelsea McDougall reports

Business was booming at Labelexpo Europe 2025, where converters came not just to browse, but to buy, signing deals on flexo, digital and hybrid presses, finishing systems and ancillary equipment that signaled a renewed confidence and growth across the industry. *(All entries are reported alphabetically)*

PRESS TECHNOLOGY

From high-speed flexo, to entry-level digital presses and hybrid technology, the latest printing equipment on display at Labelexpo Europe made it clear that visitors came to the show floor ready to invest.

Bobst celebrated a new partnership with UK-based label and flexible packaging manufacturer OPM Labels and Packaging Group, which signed for its first Bobst M6 press. OPM says the 'strategic investment marks a bold step forward in our mission to deliver world-class flexible packaging solutions with unmatched speed, quality and sustainability.'

Dantex reported that it generated significant sales and drew 'record-breaking' visitor interest in its technologies.

The company confirmed a string of sales during the show, including systems for Labelteq Unlimited USA, RV Brazil, Triflex USA and two additional unnamed customers. Dantex offered demonstrations of its PicoColour and PicoJet DRS, and unveiled its Aqua X flexographic plate processor.

Ben Danon, CEO of Dantex Group, says: 'Labelexpo Europe 2025 has been a tremendous success for Dantex. The reaction to our technology, especially the PicoColour and the launch of Aqua X, was phenomenal, with demonstrations that were packed from start to finish. Securing sales during the show was a real highlight, but equally important was the opportunity to spend time with customers, media and our distributor partners from around the world.'

Domino launched N410 LED, a new entry-level digital press, at the show. Also on display were its N730i, N610i and the K-Series monochrome printers. The inkjet press manufacturer also partnered with Grafotronic to showcase a hybrid press that combines Domino's N730i Integration Module with Grafotronic's DCL2 converting and finishing station.

Scancode Auto ID Technology, became the first Domino user in India, with the investment in an N610i-H hybrid digital label press. The press will launch Scancode's digital division, called Imprenta.

Durst also launched a new entry-level digital press platform, Tau G3, and showcased the Durst-Omet KJet hybrid press at Labelexpo Europe. Sales of its established RSC digital presses were secured by its sales partner in India, Newgen Printronics, which closed a deal on two Durst RSC digital presses. Additionally, Newgen has secured multiple deals for IML and shrink sleeve converting lines from **Polly Automatics**.

Gallus presented a number of technologies at the show, including the Gallus One, Gallus Five hybrid press and Gallus Alpha standalone digital press. The company reported several sales on its social media channels.

Gallus and MCC announced a strategic partnership, marked by the converter's recent investment in three new Gallus presses, including a Gallus One hybrid press at its facility in Lucca, Italy; a Gallus One hybrid press at its facility in Poznań, Poland; and a Gallus Labelmaster 570 in Warsaw, Poland.

Other Gallus machine sales being celebrated at Labelexpo Europe were: Yess Labels Dubai, UAE, which signed for its first Gallus One Digital Label Press; and Etpa Packaging, which invested in the first Gallus One in Greece.



A B Graphic and Printed Easy

"Our experience at this year's show reinforces that, despite continued challenging conditions for label businesses to navigate, the market is thriving"


Gallus and Nordvalls

Gallus also announced a partnership with Nordvalls, which invested in two new Gallus One presses, built on the manufacturer's System to Compose. Each press will feature a 430mm printing width, will be equipped with 6 colors + white, and will enable the seamless integration of multiple conventional print stations alongside the digital printing unit. Nordvalls has installed a 'double-digit number' of Gallus Labelmaster presses in recent years. With System to Compose, Nordvalls can easily incorporate its existing Gallus Labelmaster modules, including screen printing units and tooling, into the new Gallus One presses.

CEO of Gallus Group Dario Urbinati says that the outcome has surpassed expectations, with strong sales spanning the entire portfolio. 'There had been a lot of anticipation across the industry about how the first Labelexpo in Barcelona would perform, and from a Heidelberg and Gallus perspective, the outcome has surpassed expectations. Our experience at this year's show reinforces that, despite continued challenging conditions for label businesses to navigate, the market is thriving. It's hugely encouraging to see our customers adapt, innovate and flourish, and we are pleased to be part of that journey.'

Chinese digital press supplier **General Inkjet Printing (GIP)**,

a first-time exhibitor at Labelexpo Europe, showcased three digital label press series and sold two machines: the Label Smart 330S to a Spanish converter, and the Label Modular 330S to an Italian client.

Hontec reports that it has sold 20 machines during Labelexpo Europe 2025, across its flexo printing and finishing technology that was on display. The Chinese manufacturer showcased a FlexiCon460-8C, an 8-color servo-driven flexographic press. The press was sold to SugarPack in Spain and Yess Label in Dubai, UAE.

Dubai-based Fortune Pack invested in a Hontec-350 label printing machine, marking a significant expansion for the company. The investment represents the latest milestone for the converter, which was founded in 2021 to serve fast-moving consumer goods, logistics and industrial clients across the Middle East and Africa markets.

HP Indigo used Labelexpo Europe 2025 to launch its 6K+ digital press and showcase the HP Indigo V12.

Ireland-based Watershed Group, which was a beta site for the new press, confirmed an order for a second machine at Labelexpo Europe. Company director Kirwan Waters says: 'The press has strengthened our lead times, improved on-time delivery and given us the flexibility to shift shorter runs to digital, freeing up capacity across the business.'

HP announced multiple sales of the 6K+ at the show, including two to UK-based Baker Labels and one to Nordic-based Boxes&Labels. Baker Labels committed more than 1m GBP (1.3m USD) in new technology investments during Labelexpo Europe 2025 *(see more below)*.

Steve Baker, managing director, explained: 'At Bakers, we've always made it a priority to stay at the very forefront of label and packaging technology. Our long-standing partnership with HP has been central to that journey, and the introduction of the two new HP Indigo 6K+ presses strengthens our ability to deliver both speed and quality to our label customers.'

Sales of the V12 announced at the show included European converters Be Packaging and Labelisten. Two of the 200K presses were sold to Digital Etikett and ePac Europe.

Konica Minolta used Labelexpo to showcase its AccurioLabel 230, AccurioLabel 400, MGI's JETvarnish 3D Web 400 for digital embellishment. Also featured was the MGI Octopus Web for hybrid digital cutting and finishing, and the GM DC350Mini Basic for semi-rotary die-cutting and lamination. Konica Minolta also launched its AccurioLabel Prototype, designed for mid-range label production.

The company reports that it took orders for 15 machines: eight AccurioLabel 400s and seven AccurioLabel 230s. This is in addition to the signing of many letters of intent. Konica Minolta also reported a 25 percent increase in sales leads.

Toshi Uemura, head of industrial print at Konica Minolta Europe, says: 'In the year that marks a decade since Konica Minolta entered the label market, we were excited to showcase what is next as we help today's highly pressurized production environments address demands on productivity. We also wanted to demonstrate how we deliver technology excellence that manages shorter lead times, smaller job volumes, a shortage of skilled operators and environmental concerns.'

Mark Andy couldn't provide the names of its customers or specific sales figures, but the US-based press manufacturer was nonetheless pleased with its Labelexpo Europe performance. Mark Andy says it succeeded its sales goals by 14 percent.

'With the largest stand it has ever had at a Labelexpo and running four live press demonstrations throughout each day as part of its complete Pressroom display, Mark Andy hailed the last European event to be held under the Labelexpo brand as a major success,' the company says.

CEO Duane Pekar says: 'Labelexpo Europe 2025 was a tremendous success for Mark Andy. We were pleased to welcome label and printed packaging converters from every corner of the world, many of whom spent extended time in our booth exploring the latest advancements across our flexo, digital hybrid and total pressroom solutions.'

He continues: 'Interest was especially strong in the Digital Series HD HighSpeed 1200 hybrid press and the Mark Andy S9, our mid-web flexo platform designed for labels, flexible packaging and light carton applications.'

Nilpeter had two flexo presses on display under its 'The Future of Flexo' banner: a 7-color FA-26 and a 9-color FA-17. The Danish manufacturer reports that it sold a wide range of presses from its FA-line and FB-lines. Nilpeter also could not disclose customer names, but Martin Teilberg, Nilpeter's global marketing manager, says: 'What we can share is that the sales span many regions worldwide and go far beyond Europe alone.

'One of the highlights has been sales into countries where Nilpeter either had not sold before, or only to a very limited extent,' Teilberg continues. 'Entering new markets is always an exciting achievement for us. Labelexpo Europe 2025 once again proved to be a strong platform for Nilpeter to demonstrate our capabilities to a large and diverse audience. We are pleased to have shown ourselves as the most innovative player in the field of flexo, and we truly enjoyed Barcelona as the host city.'

Screen used Labelexpo Europe to launch a prototype of its Truepress Label 520AQ, a water-based inkjet press. The company also brought its Truepress Label 350UV SAI-S and Truepress PAC 520P water-based inkjet press for paper-based flexible packaging. The company reported significant sales to both new and existing customers on its social media channels.

Existing Screen customers turned to Labelexpo for a new Screen machine, including Irish converter Impact Labelling, which will expand its production capabilities with an additional Truepress Label 350UV SAI S. Grafiche Pradella, a Spanish converter, which was the very first user of the 350UV SAI S, has invested in a second press.

'We're excited to celebrate this recommitment of one of our oldest partners and the expansion of our professional collaboration,' Screen said.

Zaforsa, a Zaragoza, Spain-based company and longtime

"The show's move to Barcelona attracted attendees from different parts of Europe who we hadn't seen before, and we were also pleased to see lots of visitors from both North America and South America"



GEW and GraphiForm Maroc



Screen and Archa Etichette

"This agreement is more than just a sale, it's the beginning of a transformative journey for the region's label industry"

Truepress user, chose another 350UV SAI S to help them expand production capabilities for pharma, food and cosmetics labels.

There were also several first-time Screen customers announced during the show.

Archa Etichette, from Italy, chose a 350UV SAI S press. Spanish converter Navarra de Etiquetajes, part of the Grupo Docuworld Packaging, chose a 350UV SAI S with extended color gamut and Truepress digital primer to deliver labels for its customers in high-quality cosmetics, pharma and security sectors.

Italy-based La Prensa bought its first Screen press with and investment in a 350UV SAI E; and Spanish converter Novarex invested in its first 350UV SAI S.

R Garrigos, a Spain-based, family-owned label converter is another first-time Screen customer. The company chose a 350UV SAI S to support its fast-growing business needs.

Chinese press supplier **Wanjie** has secured three orders for its offset printing systems during Labelexpo Europe, with two sales in Spain and one in India. **Wanjie India** has sold its Advanced 350 Intermittent semi-rotary offset press to Pune, India-based Shreemulti Sticks & Labels.

FINISHING

While new presses drew plenty of attention at Labelexpo Europe 2025, finishing equipment proved just as vital for converters looking for end-of-line machinery to maximize efficiency and add value to every label produced.

A B Graphic International (ABG) celebrated what it called its 'most successful Labelexpo in recent years', with 14 machines on display across two stands.

At the forefront of ABG's showcase was the new DigiLase Duo, a next-generation laser die-cutting system designed to deliver double the efficiency by harnessing two light sources. The machine proved to be a standout attraction at the show, securing multiple sales, ABG says.

The first was to Cimpress Australia, part of the Vista group, in partnership with ABG's distributor, the Currie Group. ABG also sold another DigiLase Duo to Printed Easy in the UK. Printed Easy now operates 10 ABG machines across its portfolio, including DigiLases, Digicons and sheeting machines.

Elsewhere on the stand, ABG showed its nonstop unwinder and rewinder for the HP Indigo V12 digital press, along with a DigiLite, which was sold to Labelisten in Germany. On ABG's dedicated FlexPack stand, Litogrimamm in Mexico purchased the seaming rewinder that had been showcased during the event.

Matt Burton, ABG's global sales director, says: 'Labelexpo was a landmark event for ABG, not only because of the new technologies we launched, but also for the number of sales and partnerships secured across different regions. It was fantastic to welcome so many customers from around the world and the feedback and orders we received confirm ABG's position as the trusted market leader in digital finishing innovation.'

Burton adds that numerous extra deals were signed during the show, with further orders expected in the coming months.

Ashe Converting Equipment sold several machines at Labelexpo Europe 2025 as it launched its new Opal Series ALCL (Automated Label Converting Line).

Several deals were signed on the show floor, according to Matthew Godbold, sales director for wide web machinery at Ashe Converting Equipment, including to converters based in Europe, the US and the UK. 'We also saw many existing and new potential customers, and there was great interest in the machines on our stand,' he says. 'The show's move to Barcelona attracted attendees from different parts of Europe who we hadn't seen before, and we were also pleased to see lots of visitors from both North America — our biggest market — and South America.' Godbold adds that there was significant interest from label converters in Ashe's mid-web slitters, as companies move into flexible packaging applications.

Cartes confirmed 15 machine sales and more than 1,000 customer leads from over 100 countries during the show.

Cartes displayed seven machines across 550sqm of exhibition space, with a team of 50 professionals.

'The level of engagement we experienced in Barcelona exceeded expectations and confirms that converters worldwide are seeking approaches that deliver measurable production value alongside precision, speed and flexibility,' says Enrica Lodi, chief marketing officer at Cartes.

In addition to its HP Indigo investments mentioned above, Baker Labels also purchased a Galaxy Packtech GS 24 Plus 200 SBS pouch maker for its BakPac flexible packaging division.

BakPac managing director Steve Baker says: 'Galaxy Packtech has been a fantastic partner in BakPac's growth. Its pouch-making systems provide us with the reliability and scale we need to keep up with customer demand. These [Labelexpo Europe] investments reflect our confidence in the future and our commitment to giving brands and trade partners the innovation, service and agility they expect from Bakers.'

Graphimecc Group reported a sale of its end-to-end RFID converting line to UK-based Watermill Press Limited, a part of Nordvalls Label Group. The company chose a Revo RFID W converting line and Zero RFID W encoding and variable data, personalization system from Graphimecc.

Lee Mullaney, managing director of Watermill, says: 'Our customers demand item-level visibility and flawless traceability. With Graphimecc, we now offer a complete, automated RFID label workflow – from inlaid converting to encoded, verified personalization – executed at speed and with the quality we are known for. Importantly, we are the first to commercially deploy the operator-free Zero RFID W personalization system, which uniquely positions us to deliver automation-led consistency and scale.'

GM recorded a number of high-profile sales at Labelexpo.

Hungarian-based Mizsepack Kft invested in the GM LC350 laser die-cutter as a way to reduce delivery times, handle frequent job changes more efficiently, and eliminate the costs and delays of traditional die plates. They expect the label finishing to occur on the same shift and with the same operator who runs its AccurioLabel 400 from Konica Minolta.

'It's inspiring to see how Mizsepack is embracing digital finishing to transform its business,' says Jos Kabouw, global sales manager at GM. 'The LC350 gives them the speed, flexibility and independence they need to stay ahead in today's fast-moving label market. We're proud to support their journey.'

The GM LC350 was sold by Sándor Faragó, production printing



Grafotronic and NAP

sales manager, through Konica Minolta Business Solutions Hungary.

Italian label converter RotoCel purchased its third GM machine, with a DC350Mini.

'RotoCel is a very professional label printer with highly skilled staff, serving the most demanding customers across the Italian market,' notes Luca Marvini, general manager and distributor in Italy, who supported the sale.

Jordan-based Creative Printing press signed a deal with GM to expands into premium embellishment market with a new DC350Flex+ finishing line with digital varnish and foil capabilities. This will mark the company's entry into premium embellishment labels for beauty, personal care and luxury products.

The deal was facilitated by Maher Dakkouri, CEO of Sixth Dimension, GM's regional distributor.

'We are proud to bring the DC350Flex+ to Creative Press, marking a new chapter in embellishment and luxury label production for the Middle East,' comments Dakkouri. 'This agreement is more than just a sale, it's the beginning of a transformative journey for the region's label industry.'

Grafotronic also helped customers break into new markets with a number of reported sales. OPM Group invested in new finishing technology from boon-tech AB (Grafotronic).

'While this acquisition may be smaller in scale than our headline Bobst M6 press deal, it's every bit as important, especially for our dedicated OPM finishing team,' the company said. 'This new Grafotronic equipment will further enhance our finishing capabilities, supporting our drive for efficiency, flexibility and premium quality in every label and flexible packaging job.'

Grafotronic also reported that Slovakian converter NAP invested in its first multilayer labels machine.

Hontec displayed its Digifini MPX350, a multi-purpose digital finishing converter with UV digital varnish embellishment, suitable for premium wine label printing. The equipment was purchased by Stikler Europe.

The company's UniCon350, a digital finishing converter that is part of Hontec's Ready-To-Ship program for fast delivery and favorable pricing, was sold to Grafoplastika in Serbia.

Lemorau also reported a positive show that 'exceeded our expectations, both in terms of visibility and commercial results.' Lemorau welcomed over 500 visitors, representing 325 companies from 74 countries. The Portuguese manufacturer closed the sale of 14 machines to customers in Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Chile, Greece, Canada, US, Ireland, Romania, Ukraine, Spain and Turkey.

'We are very satisfied with these results and even more motivated to continue investing in innovation, customer proximity and international expansion. We are truly grateful to everyone who visited our stand, tested our solutions and placed their confidence in Lemorau,' says Natália Lopes of Lemorau.

Chinese converting and finishing equipment manufacturer, **Rhyguan**, has secured more than 30 orders for its finishing machines at the show, including its new RF-330 flexo press, which was sold to a Chinese converter.

"What was particularly pleasing was the geographical spread, with orders from all across Europe, the USA, India, South Africa, Egypt, Morocco, even as far as Martinique, and most countries in Latin America. It was truly a global event"

'Over 50 percent of Rhyguan's machines are exported to overseas markets, including Europe, the US, South Korea, Indonesia, Vietnam and Australia, with 300 units already installed across the European market,' says Alvin Cai, CEO of Rhyguan Group.

All finishing machines will be delivered directly to clients following the show.

Flexo Image Graphics has secured multiple machine bookings from Indian converters at Labelexpo Europe 2025.

Dhanlakshmi Labels from Hyderabad booked a new Rhyguan Top 450, marking its second Rhyguan machine from FIG. The first was a Rhyguan Plus-420.

Pioneer Arunachalam Packaging from Chennai placed orders for two machines: a Rhyguan slitter with **Luster** camera (17in) and a **DYM** automatic butt splicer (450mm). The company already operates a Rhyguan PLUS 420 slitter rewinder from FIG.

Super Labels, also from Chennai, ordered a Rhyguan slitter with Luster camera (17in). The converter has been delivering labels and labeling systems to clients across different sectors for over two decades.

Rotocon sold over 30 machines at its debut appearance at Labelexpo Europe 2025. The company demonstrated the Chrome 450 flexo press; the Ecoline RSI 540, a fully servo-driven finishing machine for label slitting, inspection and rewinding; and the Chrome RDF 340, a digital printed label converting and finishing system.

Sapa, a Chinese digital embellishment supplier, secured five orders during the event. Two customers purchased a DMS 330WFR machine, and three purchased its 800WP, designed for flexible packaging.

ANCILLARY

GEW marked a number of sales of its curing systems at Labelexpo Europe. Notable customers including: GraphiForm Maroc in Casablanca; Arti Group of Martinique; JMB Labels of South Africa; One Label of Colombia; Grupo Empresarial Sagitario of Bolivia; Copimad of Spain; La Etiqueta of Mexico; and Weber Marking Systems of Germany.

GEW's Robert Rae says: 'Labelexpo Europe was exceptional for GEW. Our stand was incredibly busy each day, and our air-cooled AeroLED2 UV curing system was the center of attention for many of our visitors. We also had great interest in our two newly introduced control systems, OxyGuard and DoseGuard, which are designed to give the operator ultimate control of the UV curing process.

'What was particularly pleasing was the geographical spread, with orders from all across Europe, the USA, India, South Africa, Egypt, Morocco, even as far as Martinique, and most countries in Latin America. It was truly a global event.'

Labelexpo Europe 2025 coverage continues with a recap of the Global Label Awards

Labels are everywhere.
High performance, excellent appearance.

Discover our tailor-made portfolio for the entire production chain to ensure cost-efficiency, reliability, and top quality for your production.
heidelberg.com/label



175 HEIDELBERG HOME OF PRINT

HEIDELBERG


pantec
Adding value to packaging
If you would like to offer your customers more than 'just a printed label' and make their products stand out on the shelf, think embellishment.
Pantec offers a range of embellishment systems and supports you with process know-how and its industrial network.
Learn more at
www.pantec-embellishment.com


Four companies.
One live production run.
Witness every step
• Non-stop unwinding
• Coating, laminating, die cutting
• Automated matrix waste handling
• Rewinding and end-of-line automation
Get the full story



INDUSTRY EXCELLENCE TAKES CENTER STAGE AT GLOBAL LABEL AWARDS

Labels & Labeling hosted its first Global Awards at Labelexpo Europe 2025, presenting awards for innovation, sustainability and Converter of the Year. Selah Zighelboim reports

At Time Out Market Barcelona, a venue overlooking a marina on the Mediterranean Sea, three companies became the first recipients of the Labels & Labeling Global Awards.

This year's award ceremony, hosted by L&L for the first time, was one of many firsts for this year's Labelexpo Europe show, which also saw a new venue and host city, an official expansion into the folding carton segment and the announcement of a new name.

The L&L Global Awards took place during the Festa Barcelona welcome party on the opening evening of Labelexpo Europe 2025. More than 600 industry professionals attended the event, where they networked, danced to live music and savored tapas from some of the city's best restaurants.

Three awards – recognizing innovation, sustainability and Converter of the Year – were presented to LemuGroup, Bio4Life and OPM Group, respectively.

Andy Thomas-Emans, strategic director of the labels group at Informa Markets, served as chair of the L&L Global Awards judging panel. Other judges included Mark Glendenning, owner and CEO of Inland and chair of TLMI; Philippe Voet, CEO of Etivoet and chair of Finat; and Chelsea McDougall, group managing editor of L&L.

The judges selected winners from a list of nominees picked by L&L's global editorial team, who selected companies that had made significant contributions to the labeling industry, based on news coverage from throughout the year. The editors who compiled the nominee list were McDougall, Akanksha Meena, Adyasha Sinha, Yolanda Wang, Piotr Wnuk and Selah Zighelboim.

"Each of the winners' achievements not only sets new benchmarks in the industry but should also inspire others to push the boundaries of what's possible"

'The selection process for this year's label award was particularly challenging, as the shortlisted companies all demonstrated remarkable innovation and excellence,' McDougall says. 'However, each of the winners' achievements not only sets new benchmarks in the industry but should also inspire others to push the boundaries of what's possible. The winners represent the best of the best in their field, and the recognitions are well deserved.'

INNOVATION AWARD

The Innovation Award, sponsored by Gallus/Heidelberg, recognizes an innovation that is novel, functional and impactful. This award was given to LemuGroup for its UltraCompact system, the company's end-of-line automation technology.



Bio4life, winner of the sustainability award, with Thomas Macina of Durst (far left)



LemuGroup, winner of the innovation award

Headquartered in Spain, LemuGroup offers automatic and semi-automatic slitter rewinders, finishing machinery and RFID insertion equipment, in addition to its end-of-line technology. The UltraCompact system uses robotics to pack rolls into boxes and palletize them. It also incorporates inspection technology into its UltraCompact system for quality control, ensuring that defective rolls are not automatically packed into boxes.

The company has been expanding globally, establishing its first US plant with a recent integration with Converting Equipment International.

The judges noted that LemuGroup's UltraCompact system provides significant benefits to label converters by enhancing automation, improving quality and helping with labor shortages. It enables label converters to shift employees away from the mundane task of packing rolls into boxes and palletizing them, into more value-added work.

'We took it very seriously trying to automate our machinery, trying to automate all of our customers' processes, and trying to improve their lives,' says Iñaki Larrea, CEO of LemuGroup. 'It has been a great honor to be awarded here.'

The two companies shortlisted for this award were Mark Andy for its Digital Series HD High-Speed 1200 press and Esko for the Print Clone AI color matching tool.







"This award means a great deal. It's been a long journey, a lot of learning, and it's nice to be recognized by the industry for the service and the commitment that we put into the industry"

SUSTAINABILITY AWARD

Bio4Life, a Dutch supplier of compostable self-adhesive materials, received the Sustainability Award, sponsored by Durst Group.

This award recognizes a sustainable product or process that reduces environmental impact and advances recyclability, promoting a circular economy.

Bio4Life received the Sustainability Award in recognition of its home-compostable pressure-sensitive adhesive. This product is suitable for direct food contact applications and certified to break down in home-composting environments.

The judges selected Bio4Life as its adhesive reduces packaging waste, meets EU PPWR requirements and offers a sustainable alternative to PS adhesives.

This is the second time that Bio4Life has taken home a sustainability award from Labelexpo Europe, having received this honor at the 2014 show.

'Our adhesive, and products that will be made based on this adhesive, break down in the environment,' Bio4Life co-owner Arjan Klapwijk says. 'It's not intentional that you throw them out in the environment, but if it happens – and it happens a lot – it will break down safely in CO2, water and compost, so that's a real big advantage of our product.'

'It's making the world a better place, and that's something that we're really proud of,' adds Bio4Life co-owner Marcel de Oude.

The other shortlisted companies for the Sustainability Award were Elkem for its recycled release liner silicones, and Polish converter Masterpress for the shrink sleeve magnetizable inks it developed in partnership with Magnomer.

CONVERTER OF THE YEAR

The final award of the evening, the Converter of the Year award, was given to OPM Group, a family-owned company based in Leeds, West Yorkshire, England. Flint Group sponsored this award.

To receive this recognition, converters must meet specific criteria, including fostering a diverse and inclusive work environment, developing and implementing training programs for individuals within the company, making contributions to community/charitable initiatives, sustainability initiatives within the company, and introducing innovative products or programs that contribute to end-user satisfaction.

Chris Ellison, Labelexpo Europe's flexible packaging ambassador, and Sue Ellison lead the OPM Group, with the next generation of the family actively involved.

'This award means a great deal,' Chris Ellison says. 'It's been a long journey, a lot of learning, and it's nice to be recognized by the industry for the service and the commitment that we put into the industry.'

'We've enjoyed bringing our family into the industry, too. It's an amazing journey, but it's never felt like a journey because we've done it together, and so it's been easy in some ways,' Sue Ellison says with a laugh.

The other shortlisted nominees were Masterpress and German converter Schreiner Group.

To read more about Converter of the Year, OPM Group, turn to page 31

THE PICOCOLOUR IS BACK!

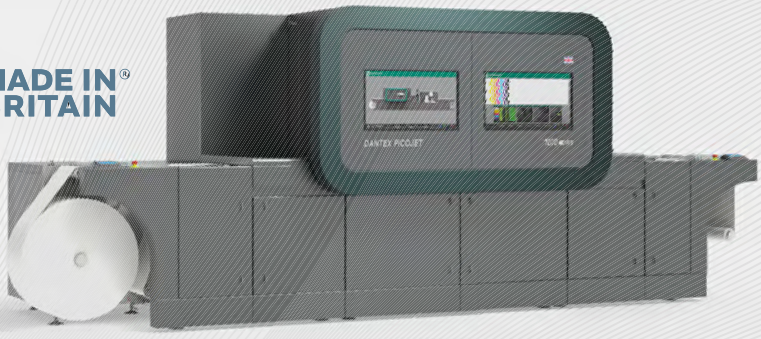


the ultimate
entry-level digital press
from DANTEX

MADE IN BRITAIN

PLUS - SEE THE PICOJET IN ACTION!

MADE IN BRITAIN



PICOJET 1200 *DRS*

**The True Hybrid
UV Digital Inkjet Press
from DANTEX**

OPTIONS INCLUDE:
SUPERWHITE/ADDITIONAL COLOURS (ORANGE/VIOLET/GREEN)
COLD FOIL/INLINE LAMINATION/FULL OR SEMI-ROTARY DIE CUTTING

Contact info@dantex.com for details

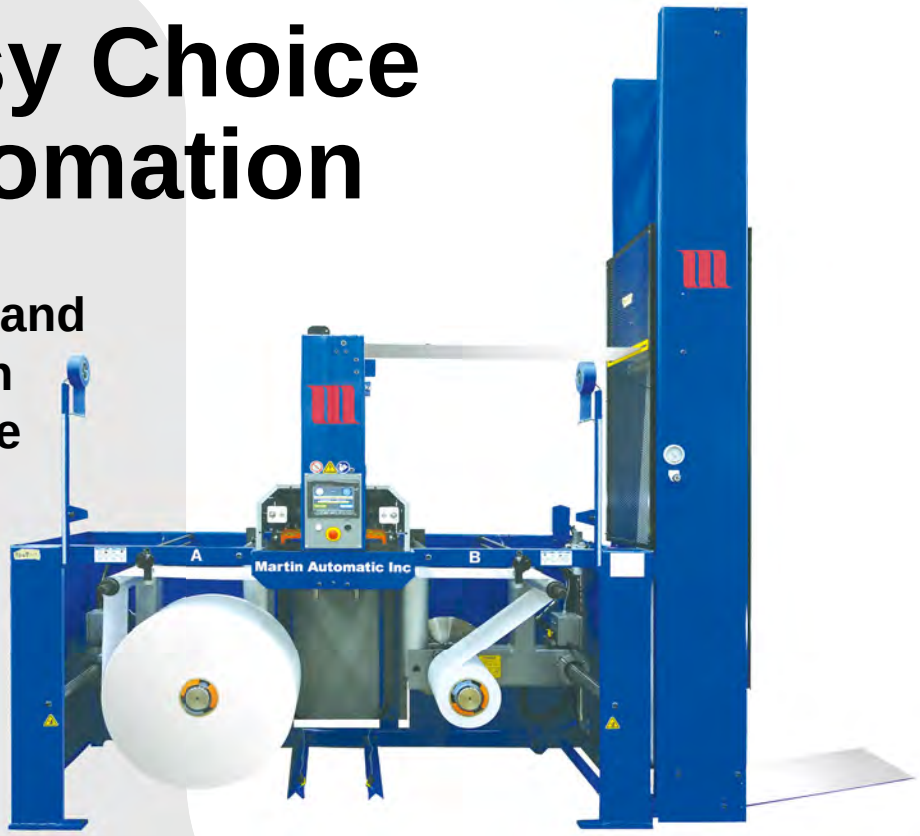
DANTEX GROUP

DANTEX. EMPOWERING DIGITAL.

The Easy Choice For Automation

Easy to Use
Easy to Understand
Easy to Maintain
Easy to Integrate

...Easy to Own



Martin Automatic

www.martinautomatic.com
info@martinautomatic.com

HIGH PEFORMANCE NON-STOP UNWINDS, REWINDS AND TENSION CONTROL SYSTEMS

SUSTAINABLE LABELING

YUPO®

BENEFITS OF CLEANSORT

- For white, light or natural bottles/containers.
- Labels are liberated during recycling process.
- Improved quality of PCR.
- PCR: Increases supply, enhances quality & expands demand.
- Terrific shelf-appeal.
- Improves economics for plastics reclaimers.
- Eliminates solid waste b/c no liners.
- Most durable labeling method.
- Simplifies the manufacturing process.
- Saves time & warehouse space.



YUPO SYNTHETIC PAPER
PREMIUM SYNTHETIC SUBSTRATES
PRINT | PACKAGE | LABEL | DESIGN
WWW.YUPO.EU
YUPO EUROPE GMBH

PRESS TECHNOLOGY

Automation, digital integration and the first signs of AI's potential to revolutionize label production were key features of the show. Andy Thomas-Emans reports

Labelexpo Europe 2025 was, in many ways, a landmark show for conventional and digital print technologies.

We saw a demonstration of what AI-driven press automation looks like on the **Brotech** FF-X530 press, launched at the show, which was developed in partnership with AVT and X-Rite. On-press cameras and spectrophotometers feed data to an AI system, combined with sensors monitoring a range of production factors including ink viscosity, temperature, substrate variations and environmental conditions.

The AI system then makes real-time adjustments to maintain color consistency while reducing setup time and minimizing material waste and downtime.

Ramon Lee, Brotech managing director, explains: 'Our team has been working for almost two years to integrate AI into conventional flexo printing, with the belief that data-driven intelligence can transform print operations just as digitization once did for digital printing, such as Indigo. This technology is not going to replace people, but empower people to make production easier, greener, faster and smarter.'

We saw other flexo press manufacturers demonstrate real-time data exchange with a cloud-based processing hub. Real-time and historical data are then used to optimize the press setup for the next time the job is run.

Omet, for example, demonstrated its Sfera software for real-time production analytics. Parameters available for analysis include power consumption, waste, ink consumption, press utilization and overall job costing. Sfera is part of a suite of modules including Nova for virtual remote assistance, Gaia for 'AI-integrated machine management' and the Tasker workflow automation system.

Nilpeter also demonstrated its 'Digital Shadow' system, first unveiled at Labelexpo Americas in Chicago last year, which provides real-time modeling of the press during setups and throughout the print run.

FLEXO LAUNCHES

Demonstrating the vibrant state of modern flexo technology, Omet, Lombardi and Multitec launched new presses at the show.

Omet launched its KFlex K6 sleeve-based modular press platform, featuring the Switch system for rapid exchange of print, coating and converting modules. The flexo groups are directly driven with automated register and printing pressure.

Also new at the show was a sleeve-based offset module that allows for rapid change between repeat lengths. The unit incorporates four inking rolls in contact with the plate and five servo-driven oscillating rolls for improved ink grinding.

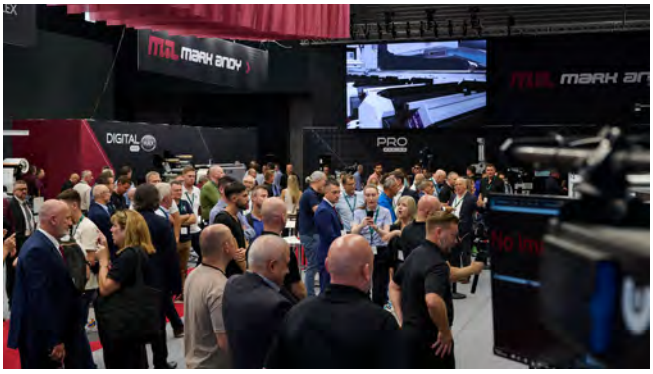
Other interchangeable K6 units include a rotary screen, an ECDC die-cutting module, and a cassette-style die-cutting/embossing unit.

The K6 incorporates Omet's new Multivision camera technology, which only requires a 6mm strip down one side of the web for color-to-color reading.

Available in 430mm and 520mm widths, the press operates at up to 200m/min on a substrate range down to 12-micron film.

Lombardi launched the latest version of its Synchroline flexo press, now rebadged as the Viper, with a smart new look and redesigned for easier operator access. 'We have simplified processes for the operator for more of a B2C than a B2B experience,' says Nicola Lombardi, marketing manager at Lombardi.

The press is available in widths from 350mm to 620mm and



"Data-driven intelligence can transform print operations just as digitization once did for digital printing"



WIDER WEBS

With its remit increasingly extending into flexible packaging, Labelexpo Europe is attracting players outside of its traditional narrow and mid-web base.

Web offset specialist **Manroland Goss** was exhibiting for the first time, with Wolfgang Hiesinger, SVP packaging and newspaper solutions, confirming that the show is now firmly on the company's radar. Manroland Goss was showing samples of flexible packaging and shrink sleeve labels printed on a 40in Varioman press.

Although this space is currently dominated by CI flexo and gravure, Hiesinger says offset has key advantages, particularly in the low cost of printing plates. 'The sweet spot for web offset is from 3,000 to 100,000sqm against CI and gravure. Although the initial investment is higher, the ROI is better.'

Giave was another first-time exhibitor. The company was promoting its new Gialux LED-UV stack press. Available in widths from 850 to 1050mm in up to 10 colors, speeds are 350m/min. The LED-UV system was developed by GEW.

Comexi was promoting its mid-web 670mm and 870mm F4 CI press technology, specifically designed for short-run flexpack and filmic labels. Comexi reported a lively interest in this technology from show visitors.

accepts the full range of Synchroline modules, including cold and hot foil, embossing, rotary and flatbed screen, semi-rotary die-cutting and sheeting.

Also on the stand was an Invicta i1 530 optimized for flexible packaging, which is an increasingly important growth area for Lombardi. An 800mm-wide Invicta was sold to a Taiwanese converter for flexible packaging, with two more flexpack-configured presses going to Vietnam.

Multitec launched its sleeve-based S3S press, incorporating chilled impression and anilox cylinders, to allow printing on filmic materials as thin as 10 microns. Automation features include on-the-fly pre-registration, dynamic print pressure adjustment and register stability during acceleration and deceleration. The S3S press is available in web widths of 450mm to 670mm.

The press at Labelexpo Europe was equipped with six LED-UV curing stations and two conventional UV curing units, still required for coatings. The press was demonstrated changing between a variety of substrates, including 12-micron PET, 35-micron BOPP and PS stocks. The average setup waste between jobs when using a fixed color palette was just 5 meters.

Amit Anhuja, managing director of Multitec, says the S3S press addresses the growing market for in-line flexible packaging production. 'This year, half of our press production is already going to flexible packaging.'

FLEXO AUTOMATION

Nilpeter nailed its colors firmly to the flexo mast with its 'The Future is Flexo' theme. The company showed two presses, an FA-17 and FA-26, both with full automation packages and integrated into Nilpeter's expanding 'Digital Shadow' Cloud network – itself a part of Nilpeter's Project Darkroom, which has the final goal of fully automating the flexo printing process.

The 9-color FA-17 was demonstrating a non-stop changeover between two 4-color jobs while the press was running and with just a few meters of waste, as previewed exclusively in the last edition of Labels & Labeling magazine.

'The change-on-the-fly system offers full flexibility, meaning that it could also be changing between two 6-color jobs on a 12-unit press,' says Nilpeter CTO Carsten Clemensen. 'It is also possible to add a second die-cutting unit to change both die-cut and color stations between jobs.' Aniloxes and ink chambers can be changed on the fly for faster makereadies.

With the biggest stand at Labelexpo Europe 2025, **Spande** demonstrated its full press program. This included an AC-series press (see the 'mid-web' section below) and an 8-color 450mm-wide S7, featuring automatic pressure setting and registration, dual die-cutting units and combined LED-UV and hot air-drying. The press was sold to Hyderabad-based Citrus Innovations.

A 12-color Spande S5 press was also demonstrated along with a hybrid press developed with GIP).

Hontec had a very successful show, selling five FlexiCon flexo presses. Available in web widths up to 570mm and featuring dual servos per print unit, the FlexiCon prints at up to 150m/min.

CEO Leo Zhang shares that flexible packaging will be a key focus going forward. 'This will include more information on flexible packaging materials and laminations, coatings and anilox choice to teach our label customers how to work effectively in the flexible packaging market. These customers are now facing intense price competition in labels and can find more profitable markets in short-run flexibles.'

Zhang identifies a sweet spot for label converters between 70 and 500kg. 'That is the gap between digital and CI where it makes sense to invest in an in-line flexo press.'

Weigang showed its ZJR 350G flexo press, which converts a wide range of substrates from 12 microns to 400gsm, including shrink sleeves and IML. The company reported overseas revenue growth of nearly 40 percent year-on-year in 2024, with plans to build global technical service centers starting in 2026 to provide 24-hour customer response.

Other Chinese flexo press manufacturers included **Dowell Europe**, which demonstrated its SF-series press printing at up to 200m/min.

First-time exhibitor **Qianrun** showcased the new servo-driven Label King S5-370-8C in-line flexo press with automated print pressure and inking pressure setting.

Label Source demonstrated non-stop production with its F6-370-10C flexo press, featuring non-stop unwind and rewind, and non-stop matrix waste removal.

Zonten showed its ZTR in-line flexo press configured with cold foil and LED-UV curing. The press includes intelligent job presetting, remote diagnostics support, automated register control and adaptive tension control.

Hongshen showed its SFLEX-450 flexo press and secured a deal with Spanish converter GSP Etiquetas on the first day – the company's second HS flexo press.

"The K6 incorporates Omet's new Multivision camera technology, which only requires a 6mm strip down one side of the web for color-to-color reading"





FOLDING CARTONS AT LABELEXPO

Edale-Canon scored a first for Labelexpo by demonstrating single-pass folding carton production from the reel to finished pieces.

The Edale CartonLine FL6p press was configured with a turnbar for reverse-side printing, UV flexo print units, Edale's EZ cold-foil with foil saver, cast and cure holographic lamination and in-line flatbed emboss/crease/die-cut with waste ejection. Finished cartons were delivered to a shingling conveyor.

James Boughton, director regional sales and operations development, labels and packaging at Canon, says, 'I was surprised by the number of conversations we had with carton printers who were probably at the show to investigate labels. Consolidation among label printers may also present an unrealized opportunity. Larger groups with both label and carton operations appear to have a strong interest in single-pass carton solutions, perhaps because they are familiar with both flexography and carton production.'

Many other folding carton applications were spotted. **Actega** was showing samples of barrier-coated boards replacing PE-laminates for confectionery applications, while **Technifold** promoted its Technicrease rotary creasing cassette for web presses and converting lines. Crease settings can accommodate substrates up to 460 microns.

Fujifilm showed foiled folding carton samples produced on its Jet Press 750S cut-sheet digital press and finished on a Kama ProCut 76 Foil.

"The 9-color FA-17 was demonstrating a non-stop changeover between two 4-color jobs while the press was running and with just a few meters of waste"

Semi-rotary flexo is a niche technology that offers short-run capabilities as an alternative to digital, while retaining existing flexo tooling and workflows.

Rhyguan launched its first flexo press at the show, capable of switching between semi-rotary and full rotary modes. The Rhyguan RF 330 builds on the company's expertise in developing standalone semi-rotary finishing systems and prints at up to 180m/min in full rotary mode and 60m/min in semi-rotary mode on a 330mm-wide web.

Caisheng showcased its CS-J380F semi-rotary flexo press.

MID-WEB FLEXO

Labelexpo Europe 2025 demonstrated the continued rise of the mid-web flexo press, with machines in the 670-850mm width range. **Spande** demonstrated an 8-color 800mm-wide AC series press operating at speeds up to 250m/min. Each flexo printing station incorporates nine servo motors and handles substrates ranging from 12 to 800 microns. The AC series supports both roll-to-roll and roll-to-final-package workflows, with modular in-line finishing technologies that include embossing, creasing, die-cutting, stripping, inspection, sorting and stacking.

Mark Andy showed its mid-web S9 sleeve press in Europe for the first time. Built on the established Performance Series platform, the press has a comprehensive automation package and was demonstrated communicating via the AVT inspection system with a Rotoflex VLI rewinder.

Mark Andy CEO Duane Pekar points out, 'Although the press was designed primarily for flexible packaging, it can also print labels at 1,000ft/min with the added flexibility of the rail system. This is important for label converters looking to move into adjacent markets like flexible packaging and looking at investing in a multi-million-dollar machine. The fact that it can also run labels incredibly fast with high productivity allows customers to get into flexible packaging in a low-risk way. This machine will also run cartons.'

Nilpeter showed a 7-color 670mm-wide FA-26 with an advanced automation package. During the roll-to-roll demo, the press ramped up to an extraordinary 400m/min with no operator intervention.

Omet demonstrated an 8-color, 670mm-wide X7, configured with an extended dryer for applying water-based coatings. **Rotatek** showed a print unit from its redesigned Universal 850 rotary offset press.

MPS demonstrated a new EF Packaging print unit, which extends the company's EF platform into flexible packaging.

INTERMITTENT OFFSET

Miyakoshi demonstrated an LPS13A semi-rotary offset press with the latest upgrade to its Yaless AI system press monitoring system.

Yaless AI constantly monitors ambient temperature, dampening water conditions and ink temperature and prompts the operator to make manual adjustments. The new Professional upgrade enables the press to make autonomous adjustments to dampening water and color density settings based on the AI model.

Other intermittent offset presses at the show included the **Weigang** ZX320, **Wanjie** WJPS-350, **Zonten** ZTJ and **Nickel** FS-350.

HYBRID

Heidelberg-Gallus continued its strategic move to integrate digital and flexo through its 'System to Compose' program with the launch of the Gallus Five.

The Gallus Five offers the same 1,200 DPI resolution as the original Gallus One digital press, but increases production speed to 100m/min. This is achieved by a combination of Heidelberg's newly developed high-pigmentation Saphira UV05 ink set, optimized LED-UV pinning and curing, and new control software.

The Gallus Five is built on the same frame as the Gallus One in widths of 340mm and 430mm, for full compatibility with the Labelmaster flexo platform. The Gallus One can be retrofitted to the Gallus Five specification.

New to the 'System to Compose' is the SDC Pro semi-rotary die-cutter operating at up to 100m/min, allowing rapid job changeovers.

The Gallus Five comes as standard in a 6-color configuration (CMYK+OV), which covers some 95 percent of the Pantone Plus V4 color library. Digital white can be added at full press speed.

Gallus has conducted extensive TCO costings, establishing 10,000 linear meters as the optimum crossover point for the Gallus Five hybrid with conventional printing.

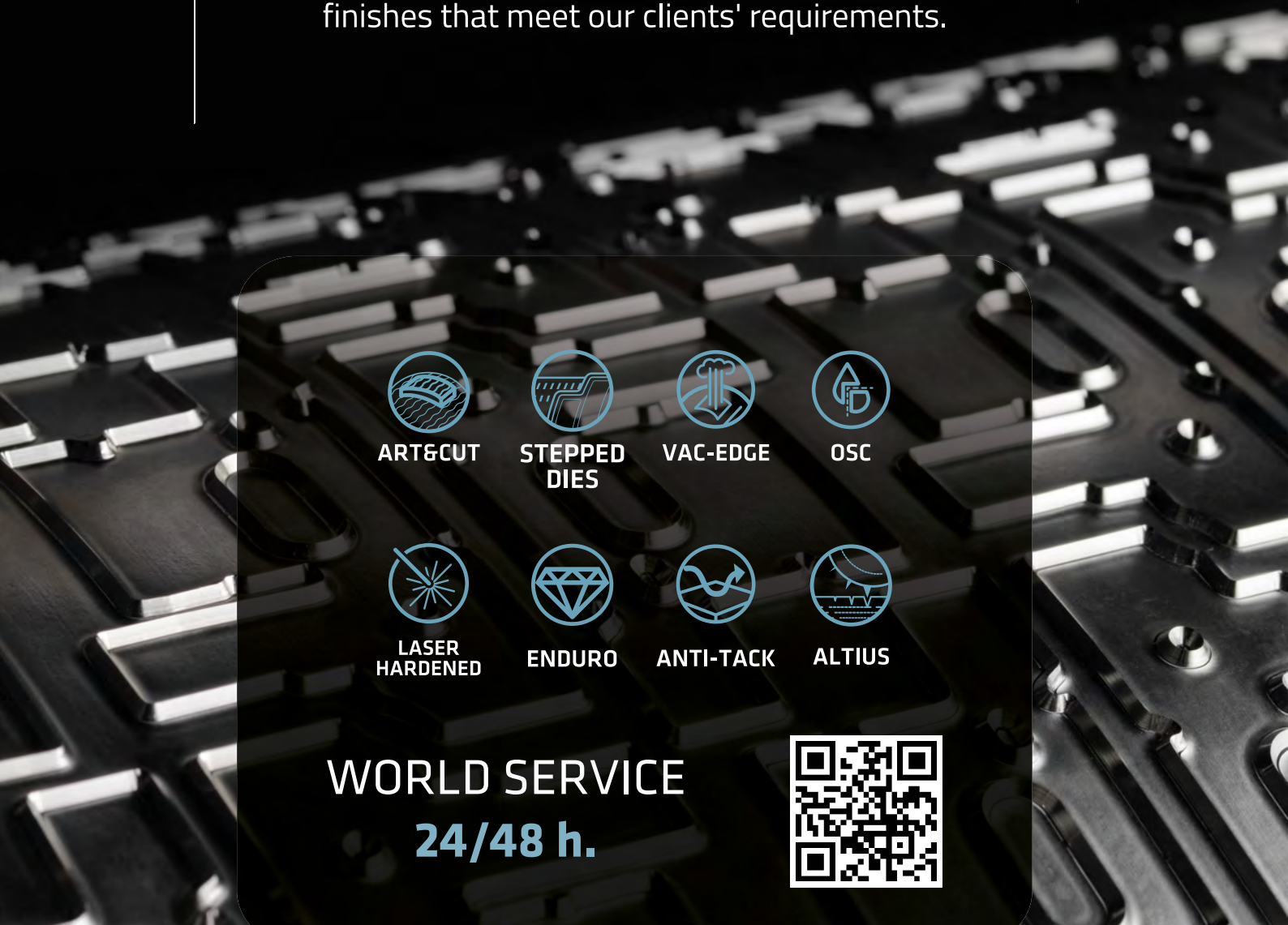
Gallus Group CEO Dario Urbinati stresses that the Gallus Five will not replace the LabelFire hybrid press, which continues to be sold into bespoke applications, including folding cartons.

Durst showcased the KJet hybrid press, which combines the Durst Tau RSCi print engine with flexo and finishing units from Omet's modular KFlex platform. Going forward, the KJet will incorporate the new Omet K6 sleeve-based modules launched at

LARTEC

GUARANTEED PRECISION AND DURABILITY

We manufacture custom-made Flexible Dies for every need, featuring hardening, coatings and finishes that meet our clients' requirements.



ART&CUT

STEPPED DIES

VAC-EDGE

OSC

LASER HARDENED

ENDURO

ANTI-TACK

ALTIUS

WORLD SERVICE

24/48 h.



"The fact that it can also run labels incredibly fast with high productivity allows customers to get into flexible packaging in a low-risk way. This machine will also run cartons"



the show as well as Durst's new G3 print engine.

Mark Andy demonstrated for the first time in Europe its Digital Series HD High Speed1200 press printing at speeds up to 146m/min. The speed milestone was achieved in partnership with Hybrid Software companies Global Graphics and Meteor Inkjet. Mark Andy's ProWorx workflow system is powered by the Global Graphics Smart DFE, and streaming real-time raster data is streamed directly to the Meteor printhead electronics.

Lombardi showcased its Digistar 330 hybrid press, showcasing the company's close cooperation with **Screen Europe**, which supplies the Truepress Label 350UV SAI S print engine. Comments Nicola Lombardi: 'I am delighted that Screen has now extended our partnership beyond Italy, allowing the Digistar/Screen hybrid presses to be sold throughout Europe. This allows Lombardi to retrofit existing Screen presses with modular flexo converting equipment from the Digistar platform. This is a major step forward.'

Spande and **General Inkjet Printing** displayed the Label Modular 450HD hybrid press on the Spande stand. First seen at Labelexpo South China last December, the press is built on the Spande S7 flexo press platform and can integrate any of those print, decoration and converting modules. The GIP digital engine uses Kyocera heads for a print resolution of 1,200 DPI in eight colors (CMYK+W+ three spot colors) at 75m/min.

HanLabel showed a hybrid press configured with a 1,200 DPI 8-color inkjet engine, four flexo stations with non-stop unwind, rewind and matrix removal. HanLabel is a partnership between HanGlory, which provides the LabStar 330HD digital engine, and Label Source, which provides the modular flexo platform.

Flora showcased its Orca 350 hybrid press, with a CMYK+OVG+W print engine in-line with cold stamping, varnishing and laminating, along with a digital varnish unit. The print engine covers more than 85 percent of the Pantone color gamut.

DIGITAL PRESSES

Key digital themes at this Labelexpo included the expansion of the options for water-based inkjet and new entry-level presses, allowing both label and commercial printers a first step into the digital ecosystem.

WATER-BASED INKJET

Labelexpo Europe 2025 saw an upsurge in interest in water-based inkjet for labels. These presses are targeted mainly at the food, beverage and pharma markets where brand owners might be reluctant to use UV, or where low migration UV ink systems are required to reduce odor, often requiring the addition of nitrogen inerting.

Epson initially led the way in water-based inkjet with its hugely successful L-4033 and the successor L-4733.

The company launched its next-generation water-based press, the SurePress L-5034, which greatly increases both productivity and print resolution.

The L-5034 is a 6-color machine (CMYK+OG) equipped with Epson's PrecisionCore printhead technology delivering 1200 DPI resolution at a speed of 13.5m/min compared to the 5m/min of the L-4033/4733. The six-color print engine, using Epson's AQ pigmented ink series, covers 90 percent of the Pantone gamut.

A key innovation is the AQ optimizer, applied just ahead of the color, which pins the ink to the substrate, speeds drying and enhances ink adhesion on a wide range of substrates from coated and uncoated papers to films.

Like the L-4733, this is an intermittent-feed design, using a longer table to achieve the higher speed. The web width is 340mm, and the press accommodates up to 120kg rolls.

Marc Tinkler, head of product marketing at Epson Europe, says maximizing uptime was a key development factor, 'and this is more important than speed.' Tinkler points to Epson's proprietary automated real-time nozzle verification technology (NVT), along with nozzle compensation and an automated printhead cleaning system.

Screen is becoming a major powerhouse in the aqueous inkjet sector, not only for commercial and flexible package printing, but also with the launch of a new concept press for the labels market.

The prototype Truepress Label 520AQ uses the same SC+ VOC-free inks and NIR drying technology as the company's Truepress Jet commercial presses. It makes use of Screen's proprietary RIP and substrate control systems, all managed by Equios workflow software.

Screen showcased a partnership with **UPM**, which has developed a special top coating for the Truepress Label 520AQ to enhance ink adhesion, allowing 'immediate' drying at 100m/min at 1200DPI resolution on both paper and films.

UPM has optimized a number of substrates for the press, including polypropylene self-adhesive label face stocks and BOPP films. For paper-based applications, UPM's Jet Matte paper has a special coating optimized for use with water-based inks.

Screen's 600 DPI Truepress PAC 520P water-based inkjet press for paper-based flexible packaging was on the stand, and Screen showed samples from its water-based Truepress PAC 830F for flexible packaging films.

Arrow Systems displayed its ArrowJet Bolt Hybrid Pro M press, which uses Memjet Durabolt technology with dual-head redundancy to achieve speeds up to 150m/min with in-line flexo priming and varnishing stations. Also shown was an ArrowJet Aqua

330R printing at speeds up to 45m/min at 1,600 DPI.

UP Group demonstrated its LQ-MD 320HD water-based label press, equipped with Epson I2300-HD printheads with 1,200 DPI resolution printing at speeds up to 48m/min.

Pulisi promoted a water-based flexible packaging press, which the company showed in prototype at Labelexpo South China last year. A production machine is expected to be on stand at Labelexpo Asia 2025 in December.

Arojet is another supplier that promises a digital flexible packaging press at Labelexpo Asia 2025, although using water-cooled LED-UV rather than aqueous inks.

UV INKJET

Durst Group launched its new digital press platform, the Tau G3, initially featuring two press models. The G3 will replace the Tau RSCi model going forward, although the entry-level E-Tau 340 RSC-E will remain.

'This is the result of extensive feedback obtained from users of the RSCi presses,' explains Martin Leitner, product manager labels and flexible packaging at Durst. 'The press is more automated, making tasks easier for the operator, easier to maintain and more efficient. It is an evolution of the RSCi design rather than a revolutionary change.'

The Tau G3 Core and Tau G3 Peak models offer native 1,200 DPI resolution, with speeds reaching 61m/min and 80m/min, respectively. The Peak model can be optionally expanded to 100m/min, depending on the configuration. Print widths range from 244mm to 510mm across both models.

The platform supports CMYK + OVG+W, available with both UV and LED curing. The substrate range is between 20 and 500 microns.

New features include Durst ARC (automatic register control) and Durst MEP (material edge protection), which safeguard printheads with optical edge sensors and protective plates. The optional Durst Hawk AI monitoring system automates color-to-color register and provides closed-loop nozzle correction during printing. A redesigned cooling system and electrical cabinet enhance component accessibility, facilitating simplified handling and maintenance.

The first Tau G3 systems have been in beta testing at customer sites since August. The official market launch is planned for Q2 2026.

Domino launched the N410 LED inkjet press, providing a lower-investment entry point to its established N-series label press technology. The press operates at 30m/min, with a 50m/min high-speed mode, in five colors (CMYK+W) at 600 DPI resolution, capable of hitting 86 percent of the Pantone gamut.

The press is powered by Domino's new AI-driven Sunrise DFE, also launched at the show. The N410 is supplied with a range of core Sunrise modules, including print cost estimating. The N410 DFE is integrated into the main press frame, allowing for a compact footprint with no external control cabinets.

Heidelberg-Gallus launched the Gallus Alpha standalone digital press targeted at converters looking for a cost-effective entry point into digital printing. The Alpha is 340mm wide and is supplied in two configurations: 4C+ white and 6C+ white, both with a print resolution of 1,200 DPI and printing at 65m/min.

Screen demonstrated a Truepress Label 350UV SAI S UV Inkjet press configured for continuous operation in conjunction with a new finishing line developed by Nilpeter.

The Refine Compact 2 digital finisher can be used in-line or off-line, configured with varnishing and laminating modules. It incorporates automation functions that enable cutting and varnishing stages to be aligned with upstream print data.

Dantex showed upgrades to its PicoJet digital press. The Dynamic Resolution System (DRS) now offers eight gray levels, allowing for improved resolution, finer halftones and smoother tonal transitions, along with a new 'small dot' technology to further increase print definition.

The company demonstrated the GM DC350 Mini Finisher, which combines rotary flexo, semi-rotary die-cutting, lamination, cold foil, waste matrix removal, cutting and slitting in the same unit. The new PicoEngine DFE was developed in collaboration with Global Graphics' Smart DFE, integrated with a new-look PicoPilot press operating system.

Dantex also launched a new series of high-viscosity UV inks,

NEW HORIZONS

Wide-format digital presses are not a common feature at a Labelexpo show, so **Canon** took a bold step by placing the newly developed UVgel Factory for Labels at the front of its stand. This comprises Canon's Colorado M-series, the Fotoba Jumbo Roll JRL 17 and a Colex flatbed cutting table. Visitors could view the automated roll printing and digital finishing of a wide range of applications, including kiss-cut self-adhesives and labels.

Fujifilm demonstrated its 'Super Color' Revoria SC285S toner press. Developed for commercial print applications, a wide substrate range gives the press the versatility to sit in a package printing operation for short runs and proofing applications. The SC285S includes an additional specialty toner station to allow five-color printing in one pass.

Fujifilm also promoted an interesting partnership with **Actega**. All Actega Ecoleaf units can now be equipped with an integrated 1,200 DPI Fujifilm 46k print bar capable of printing a high-resolution trigger image consistently and reliably.

Speaking of print bars, **JetFX** demonstrated its full range of digital embellishment technologies covering the space from labels to flexible packaging and announced a collaboration with Track + Trace systems developer Authnow.

JetFX president Ed Weigand says: 'We're very excited about our collaboration with Authnow. They are truly disrupting the authentication space, both through breakthrough features like JetFx's synchronized variable holograms with multi-layer security and through a pricing model that finally makes authentication affordable for a much wider range of customers and brands.'

Bobst announced a fully digital in-line multi-layer label manufacturing system capable of producing labels with up to five layers in a single pass.

The FlexJet module prints digitally at 1,200 DPI on the front, back, liner or adhesive surfaces in a single pass at process speeds. Flexjet is available as an option on the Digital Master 340 and 510 platforms.

An early adopter is Litograf Slovakia, with FlexJet installed on a Bobst Digital Master 340. Production manager Eduard Vidra says profit margins are up by 25 percent compared to using conventional multi-layer equipment.

The Flexjet will only be available on new Digital Master press purchases and will not be available for retrofit.

An interesting development on the **Monotech** stand was the Tracesci Loop, a compact tabletop unit designed for TIJ variable data printing and code verification on small rolls. Online OCR/code verification is achieved using a smart camera with an integrated alarm. The Loop unit operates at speeds up to 40m/min and is suitable for secure track and trace in small-to mid-size label volumes.





"Xeikon sees the TX300 press substituting UV inkjet in a range of applications where food safety and durability are required"

anticipating the CMR and SVHC regulations effective from 2027.

Weigang launched two UV inkjet presses at Labelexpo. The WG S350 Ultra prints at 1,200 DPI using Kyocera KJ4A printheads at up to 75m/min on a print width of 310mm. The press comes as standard with CMYK+W, with optional spot color and digital varnish stations. The press has LED-UV pinning and arc UV final cure.

The entry-level WG S230 prints at 60m/min at 600 DPI native using Epson S3200 printheads on a 230mm print width. The press ships with CMYK+W, with varnish and spot colors available as optional extras.

Pulisi showcased two Aobead digital presses with 1,200 DPI print resolution.

First-time exhibitor **General Inkjet Printing** demonstrated its Label Smart UV inkjet press in a CMYK + double white configuration. It showed the Label Ultra digital press featuring an upgraded 1,200 DPI printhead.

UP group showcased a 6-color UV inkjet press with integrated digital varnishing and foiling capabilities.

Jetron demonstrated its D2Roll LB3550 UV inkjet press configured with digital embossing and opaque white, driven by the company's Saga Lite workflow. New was Jetron's PB400 printbar, offering speeds up to 75m/min, both with printing and digital embossing capability.

TONER TECHNOLOGIES

HP launched the HP Indigo 6k+, which integrates the new SmartControlSystem with AI-driven workflow tools and diagnostic systems that greatly increase press productivity.

Ireland-based Watershed Group was a beta site for the new press and confirmed an order for a second machine at Labelexpo Europe. Company director Kirwan Waters says, 'The press has strengthened our lead times, improved on-time delivery, and given us the flexibility to shift shorter runs to digital, freeing up capacity across the business.'

HP announced multiple sales of the 6k+ at the show, including two to UK-based Baker Labels and one to Nordic-based Boxes&Labels.

The SmartControlSystem requires significant software and hardware upgrades, meaning it is not retrofittable to existing 6K presses.

Joining the 6K+ press on the stand was an HP Indigo V12 Digital Press operating at 120m/min, incorporating ABG non-stop unwind and rewind. Sales of the V12 announced at the show included European converters Be Packaging and Labelisten.

Two sales of the 200K press were announced at the show to Digital Etikett and ePac Europe.

HP also announced an expanded portfolio of in-line primers, the result of new collaborations with Actega, Sun Chemical, and established partner Michelman.

Xeikon launched the TX300 toner press, bringing the company's Titon toner technology to the wider labels sector.

Titon integrates a specially engineered dry toner with a low concentration solid initiator. A final in-line LED-UV curing station cross-links the polyester-based toner particles to form the extremely tough toner layer. Titan toner is food-safe, heat-resistant – designed to withstand pack sealing temperatures up to 260 deg C – resistant to scuffing and scratching, water, sunlight and solvents without requiring a protective varnish or lamination.

Titon toners are approved for both coated and uncoated papers and PP facestocks and do not impact recyclability.

Xeikon sees the TX300 press substituting UV inkjet in a range of applications where food safety and durability are required. The Titon toner delivers a matte finish, as opposed to UV inkjet's inherent gloss, often preferred for premium food and beverage packaging applications.

The TX300 press prints at speed up to 30m/min.

Xeikon also demonstrated a PX3300HD inkjet press integrated with a label converting unit (LCU), allowing a single operator to produce finished labels in a single pass. This signals a new strategic approach from Xeikon to offer fully integrated label production lines from the X-800 DFE through to finishing.

This PX3300HD prints at 1,200 DPI resolution in five colors (CMYK+W) on a print width of 348mm. Xeikon's PX-Cure LED HD inks allow up to 88 percent of Pantone colors to be printed to deltaE2, or 94 percent at deltaE3. Printing speed is 70m/min in five colors. The press incorporates an in-line camera scanner, verifying registration and with missing nozzle correction.

Konica Minolta showed a prototype successor to its hugely successful AccurioLabel 230 toner press. The prototype press prints at the same speed of 23.4m/min but has an increased print resolution of 1,200 x 2,400 DPI.

A new option is the Intelligent Quality Optimizer (IQ), previously seen only on the top-of-the-range AL400. The IQ system delivers a boost in productivity by automating workflows, maintaining color registration and enabling longer print runs up to 1,600 linear meters. No date has yet been given for commercial availability.

Mark Andy is already looking at integrating the new engine into its Digital Pro press.

Labelexpo Europe 2025 coverage continues with a review of finishing and converting equipment on display

LABEL ACADEMY



ILLUSTRATED CONVENTIONAL LABEL AND PRINTING PROCESSES

Despite the recent advances in digital printing, the great bulk of self-adhesive labels are still printed by conventional printing processes, namely flexography, letterpress and offset.

Conventional Label Printing Processes explains the fundamentals behind each process, how they fit within the industry, and how they are changing. It is an essential read for label converters, end-users and the wider label printing industry.

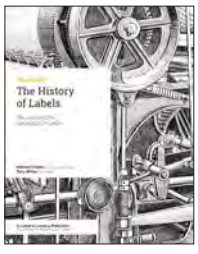
The chapters in this book will specifically look at:

+ The changing landscape of label printing
+ The letterpress printing process
+ The flexographic printing process
+ The combination press

Also in the series:







LABELS & LABELING

A Labels & Labeling Publication

Order online at **WWW.LABEL-ACADEMY.COM**

FINISHING AND CONVERTING

Automation, digital technology and laser systems drive finishing innovation. Piotr Wnuk reports

The finishing and embellishment sector demonstrated remarkable innovation at Labelexpo Europe 2025, as converters seek technologies that combine automation, flexibility and premium aesthetic capabilities to meet evolving market demands.

Throughout the exhibition halls, suppliers showcased systems designed to address critical industry pressures: labor shortages, demand for shorter runs with faster turnaround times, and brand owners' increasing requirements for distinctive, high-end finishing. The response has been a wave of automated, digitally enabled finishing equipment that reduces manual intervention while expanding creative possibilities.

AUTOMATION REDUCES OPERATOR DEPENDENCY

The drive toward automation dominated finishing equipment demonstrations, with suppliers introducing systems that minimize operator involvement while maximizing productivity.

'The overarching trend is to bring much more automation to machine processes to help operators and business owners achieve smooth operations,' explains Pedro Teixeira, managing director at **Lemorau**. 'What we are exhibiting here at the show demonstrates machines that do the job while automation allows the operator to simply supervise the machine operation.'

The Portuguese manufacturer emphasized that its approach focuses on making operators' jobs easier, regardless of their skill level. By implementing software that automates processes, minimizes waste, and reduces setup time, Lemorau aims to support converters who struggle to find highly skilled personnel.

Automated turret rewinders emerged as a focal point for this automation push. **Grafotronic** unveiled the Infinity, a fully automated turret rewinder powered by Serame, designed to eliminate downtime during roll changes.

GM presented its semi-automatic turret with zero-waste job changeover capabilities, reducing changeover time from approximately 30 seconds to just five seconds. The system automatically reads barcodes to manage various jobs and includes automatic registration to correct cutting positions in real-time.

'It's clear that fewer and fewer people are available to operate the presses in the print shop,' notes Uffe Nielsen, managing director at GM. 'People are looking for affordable ways to make production more efficient. Anything you can do to reduce the number of operators needed in the print shop.'

Nielsen emphasized that the challenge varies by region, with some markets experiencing more acute labor shortages. During a recent business tour in Japan, he observed that labor availability has become a critical issue, with converters actively seeking automation technologies to maintain production capacity.

Bar Graphic Machinery launched the BGM Elite 550iSR, a 22-inch finishing system incorporating GPS gear positioning technology that enables operators to load master rolls with self-alignment, requiring no operator intervention. The system features constant air pressure technology and integral roll lifting capabilities.

Ashe Converting Equipment introduced its Opal Series ALCL, featuring a new autoset glueless four-spindle turret rewinder that sets itself automatically and requires no tooling change when adjusting core size. The machine runs at a guaranteed continuous production speed of 250m/min.



"Anything you can do to reduce the number of operators needed in the print shop is what's driving the trend today"

'The new Opal Series ALCL brings converters more potential applications thanks to its wider width and quick set, and is 20 percent more efficient,' comments Matthew Godbold, sales director for wide web machinery at Ashe Converting Equipment. 'It optimizes productivity and efficiency with better throughput and fewer skills required by an operator to set the machine.'

Lemorau showcased its Smart-L Premium, equipped with next-generation software developed in-house. The unified platform enables automatic initial positioning of tools, fast register setup and barcode scanning for tool recognition, drastically reducing setup times and material waste.

'Lemorau is committed to creating intuitive, high-performance technology that simplifies complexity and delivers measurable value to our customers,' comments Natália Lopes, part of the international sales team at Lemorau.

DIGITAL EMBELLISHMENT EXPANDS CREATIVITY

Digital embellishment technologies represented one of the most significant trends at the show, offering converters the ability to add premium finishing effects without traditional tooling requirements. This shift eliminates substantial upfront investments in screens, dies and foil tooling while providing the flexibility to change designs instantly.

The rapid adoption of digital embellishment reflects a fundamental transformation in how the industry views inkjet technology. Digital inkjet is now seen as a manufacturing method, not just a printing process.

Printbars are being increasingly integrated into new machine configurations or retrofitted onto existing presses, enabling printers to meet the growing demand for label embellishments with greater efficiency and precision, without the need to replace entire systems.

Embellishments such as varnish, foil and raised textures are strongly associated with premium packaging. These features not only enhance the visual appeal of goods but also create a tactile experience that reinforces brand value. In sectors such as wine, spirits and luxury goods, embellishment of labels and packaging is often a key differentiator.

Digital embellishment is no longer a nice-to-have but is now a must-have feature for many original equipment manufacturers.

'What's driving it this year is digital embellishment,' GM's Nielsen explains. 'We are showing some amazing stuff with digital varnish and digital foil, and that's really helping in the print shops, because doing that before would require a specialist in screen printing. And these are the dinosaurs. They are hard to get. So having something where you can load a PDF and do the same amazing artwork, that's really a trigger.'

GM featured its digital embellishment and foiling unit designed specifically for wine and spirits labels. The compact 1.6-meter frame fits into existing presses as a retrofit or new line, enabling short-run production with ease of use. Visitors witnessed the machine producing labels with complex foiling and varnish effects.

Cartes showcased its proprietary Jet D-Screen technology across multiple machines, combining digital embellishment capabilities with laser converting systems. The technology creates multi-layer effects, spot coating, complex tactile raised volumes, Braille printing, detailed foiling and metallic doming transfer.

'Visitors particularly recognized Cartes for its ability to combine digital finishing with patented laser technology and modular platforms,' comments Virgilio Micale, global sales manager at Cartes. 'These are the pillars that allow our customers to differentiate in the marketplace while optimizing efficiency.'

'The level of engagement we experienced in Barcelona exceeded expectations and confirms that converters worldwide are seeking approaches that deliver measurable production value alongside precision, speed and flexibility,' states Enrica Lodi, chief marketing officer at Cartes.

Actega featured live demonstrations of EcoLeaf, its on-demand metallization technology, configured with a Gallus One digital press. Considered the new standard in sustainable metallic label embellishment, on-demand metallization helps converters and brand owners reduce their carbon footprint while delivering eye-catching labels and packaging designs.

'One kilogram of EcoLeaf flakes replaces 3,000kg of foil. As industry innovators, this is a carbon footprint reduction that we cannot ignore,' comments Marco Van Hooff, chief commercial officer at Reynders Label Printing. 'Our on-demand metallization system, called S-Sential, is a true game-changer. It's not just the carbon dioxide and waste reduction, such as eliminating the PET carrier film, that makes S-Sential compelling. It's also the quick turnarounds achievable and the creative possibilities to use shiny metallization to differentiate your products.'

Actega also introduced Signite applicator technology, making its Labelexpo Europe debut. This decoration for glass, PET and aluminum containers delivers approximately 30 percent lower Global Warming Potential compared to similarly sized pressure-sensitive labels or shrink sleeves.

LemuGroup presented digital finishing equipment featuring an inkjet module for high-volume varnish application. The Mi 350 Digital Inkjet applies varnish in large volumes with maximum precision, eliminating varnish waste and requiring no tooling, screens or plates.

JetFx displayed its full suite of embellishment systems, including Solo, Solo FlexPack and Fusion, designed for seamless integration onto existing web presses, creating a single-pass workflow.

Brotech showcased its iDM800 digital embellishment system, capable of jetting white, digital foil and varnish, with capabilities for imaging Braille and adding textures, metallic and gloss effects.

Prati presented for the first time its DigiFast20000 in a high-performance configuration, expanding its portfolio beyond narrow web to mid-web with capabilities for finishing all digitally printed jobs within the 760mm range with thicknesses from 12 to 450 microns. The machine handles flexible packaging, pouches, sleeves, labels and cartons, with finishing processes including spot white printing, protective UV or water-based varnish and digital embellishment.



"One kg of EcoLeaf flakes replaces 3,000kg of foil. As industry innovators, this is a carbon footprint reduction that we cannot ignore"

'If the end user wants to highlight their uniqueness and stand out in the market, now they can do so through finishing, adding extra value to their products,' the company stated.

Xaar showcased how its printhead technology enables digital embellishment across multiple applications. The company's Versatex Printbar, powered by Nitrox printheads, allows brands to incorporate high-opacity white, intricate textures, varnish effects and digital cold foiling. The Versatex's High Creativity mode enables the simultaneous application of multiple textures and digital embellishments between 15 and 100 microns in one pass.

With the ability to jet three varnish effects at once, it eliminates the need for multiple substrate passes, improving production efficiency while reducing energy consumption and costs. At the Brotech stand, Xaar's 2002 printhead was showcased within its varnish embellishment module, chosen for its superior productivity and versatility.

LASER TECHNOLOGY ADVANCES FLEXIBILITY

Laser die-cutting technology emerged as a critical innovation for converters seeking flexibility and waste reduction, with multiple suppliers showcasing advanced systems designed for high-mix, short-run production.

ABG's DigiLase Duo proved to be a standout attraction, securing multiple sales at the show. By incorporating two independent laser light sources instead of one, the system achieves speeds up to twice that of a single-laser unit. A significant innovation within the system is Repeat Flow, which enables the automated switching of die lines within each web repeat, eliminating waste and requiring no operator input.

'The DigiLase Duo is the result of listening to our customers and pushing the boundaries of what's possible with digital laser cutting and in-house software development,' notes Mark Norman, technical director at ABG. 'By introducing dual independent lasers, we've been able to deliver enhanced speed, flexibility and reliability, while also helping customers minimize waste.'

GM's laser technology attracted consistent crowds throughout the show, particularly for its ability to handle extremely short runs. The system demonstrated zero-waste job changeover and ease of operation, with the machine changing jobs continuously.

'There's a crowd around this laser all the time, especially for super short runs where you can stack 100 jobs in one roll,' Nielsen observes. 'The laser team is constantly busy answering questions about how the technology works.'

Grafotronic unveiled its next-generation Sci-Fi Laser, a fully modular laser finishing system available in roll-to-roll, roll-to-parts or hybrid versions. The company showcased more than 10 cutting-edge machines at Labelexpo Europe 2025.

Cartes featured its GE362WL-Dual, described as the fastest laser converting system developed by the company, equipped with patented Invisible Laser Cutting and lifetime unlimited laser source technology.

DPR Group showcased the Taurus X2 laser die-cutter, which features dual cutting heads generating 700 watts of laser power and can handle rolls up to 800mm in diameter.

Anytron promoted an upgraded Any-Cut for laser cutting, lamination and matrix removal, integrated with the company's new automation software featuring hot folder-based job import, auto-nesting and auto-contouring.

PREMIUM EMBELLISHMENT

The push toward premium, high-end finishing has become a defining characteristic of the label market, with converters investing in embellishment capabilities to meet brand owners' differentiation requirements.

'This industry has been growing in the embellishment area,' explains Virgilio Micale of Cartes. 'Customers are continually raising the bar higher and higher, and the range of products being offered continues to diversify. I believe the companies that are following this path are having success and will continue to succeed.'

Gietz unveiled a premium spirit label design that demonstrates the capabilities of its Rofo 450 ECO hot foil stamping unit through a sophisticated multi-stroke embellishment process on matte black paper. The complex label design incorporates four distinct production strokes, featuring precise, delicate lining and deep embossing textures.

The company utilized Kurz's DreamComposer software to visualize and optimize the design in 3D before production, allowing for careful selection of structures and color transfers.

ABG announced a partnership with Gietz to integrate the Gietz Rofo 450 or Rofo 570 units into its finishing equipment. The Gietz Rofo 450 Eco module provides a stamping area up to 24in in running length, a stamping force of 100 tons and up to 22,000 strokes per hour.

Kurz showcased live demonstrations of its DM-Uniliner 3D system and presented its expanded range of transfer products, including Silver Line, developed to provide labels with a premium appearance, and Lumafin, which offers a semi-transparent finish. Many Kurz products are now available on reduced thickness carrier materials of 10 or six microns.

The company focused on three distinct digital embellishment technologies at the show. The first, transfer-on-toner technology, demonstrated in partnership with Xeikon, uses heat to reactivate toner as an adhesive layer for metallic transfer. The second, inkjet-on-transfer technology, expands the substrate range from unsupported film to standard prime labels and uncoated materials. The third technology, inkjet-on-substrate 3D technology, enables tactile effects and gloss effects.



Stéphane Royère, head of business area packaging and print at Leonhard Kurz, speaking at the press conference, emphasized the importance of design in embellishment. 'The start of labels is the design, is the creativity, is the emotion,' he explained. Kurz presented its DreamComposer software showcased at the show, enabling users to add digital labels on screen and experiment with various embellishments.

Grafotronic unveiled new high-quality Haptic embellishing technology, advancing the company's finishing capabilities for premium label applications.

Vinsak showcased its Label-Decore finishing machine, generating significant interest from visitors seeking premium label embellishment capabilities. The machine delivers decorative effects, including foiling, embossing and tactile finishes.

'Finishing is no longer just an added step, but a key driver of differentiation and consumer engagement,' according to Vinsak.

Prati's DigiFastOne converting line targets wine and spirits applications, processing materials ranging from 12 to 350 microns in thickness. The system featured a 330mm web width with UV varnishing, semi-rotary hot foil stamping, digital screen printing, semi-rotary die-cutting and rewinding units.

CONNECTED WORKFLOWS

Integration capabilities emerged as essential for modern finishing equipment, with suppliers emphasizing how their systems connect with workflow software, printing presses and other production equipment to create seamless, automated processes.

Grafotronic's IQ workflow automation system enables its DCL modular finishing line to perform job changes autonomously, handling all job settings automatically. During production, it constantly monitors and adjusts the register if required, functioning as a virtual operator. IQ sets and keeps the modules it is installed on in perfect register, using a pre-printed mark and cross with no external input required. Grafotronic calls this instant automation.

The system addresses the needs of every label producer who wants or needs faster setup times, less waste during setup, consistent workflows and automatic register quality assurance throughout the production run. IQ is part of Grafotronic Collab Workflow, which unifies and automates the full workflow of label producers, creating a seamless and highly efficient production environment.

The company's Collab workflow system unifies and automates the full workflow of label producers. From JDF/JMF to REST API, Collab offers comprehensive integration options. The Collab Rest API streamlines machine integration with real-time control through HTTP-based interactions and live WebSocket notifications.

Grafotronic showcased its Hybrid system in collaboration with Domino Printing Sciences, combining Domino's N730i Integration Module with Grafotronic's DCL2 converting and finishing stations. Under the theme We are hybrid, the collaborative showcase demonstrated fully integrated hybrid label production. The complete machine unites digital printing with high-performance finishing in one streamlined process.

Visitors to the Domino Grafotronic Hybrid Arena experienced the complete process live from substrate preparation through to printed and fully finished label rolls, all in a single pass. This collaboration delivers flexibility, speed, efficiency and print quality to label converters, demonstrating how integration eliminates material handling between processes and accelerates throughput.

LemuGroup presented a complete self-adhesive label conversion line in collaboration with **Martin Automatic**, **ETI Converting** and **Lundberg Tech**. The fully automated system begins with Martin Automatic's MBS non-stop splicers feeding ETI's Cohesio modular machine, efficiently transforming raw material into finished labels.

A particularly striking feature was the structure designed jointly by the companies: a five-meter paper bridge suspended over the

SisTrade®

Shaping the Future of Industry

Software Solutions
for printing and packaging



Total Integration | Process Automation | Cost Reduction | Continuous Improvement | Productivity Improvement

ERP | MIS | MES

Elevate your business with our advanced software
Contact us for a customised demo

sistrade.com SisTrade 25 Years inov@sistrade.com

GIETZ

since 1892



ROFO 450 ECO

The core model in narrow web

Developed specifically for narrow web embellishment processes, the ROFO 450 ECO offers an ideal solution for label production and high-quality packaging finishing.

Key benefits

- Speeds of up to 22‘000 strokes/hour or 120m/min
- Dynamic foil web transport
- 90° rotating foiling unit
- Proven flat-flat stamping principle
- Large stamping area of 430 x 610 mm
- High stamping force of up to 100 metric tons

See the ROFO 450 ECO in action!

www.gietz.ch



"Finishing is no longer just an added step, but a key driver of differentiation and consumer engagement"

aisle connecting the two stands, allowing attendees to pass underneath.

'This project represents a strategic collaboration between Martin Automatic, ETI Converting, Lundberg Tech and LemuGroup,' the companies stated. 'Each company contributes its expertise, enabling the construction of a highly productive machine.'

Prati's DigiFast20000 operates both near-line and off-line, integrating with digital printing systems to handle flexible packaging, pouches, sleeves, labels and cartons with processes including registered white, protective UV or water-based varnish and digital embellishment.

SPEED AND PRODUCTIVITY ADVANCES

Finishing equipment suppliers demonstrated significant speed improvements, addressing converters' needs for higher throughput to handle increasing volumes of short-run work.

Grafotronic unveiled its X-1 semi-rotary die-cutting unit, which the company describes as the fastest single-anvil system globally. The machine features a single anvil design for enhanced control from setup to high-speed operation with up to 200m/min. The ultra-high-speed semi-rotary die-cutting unit represents a significant development in finishing technology.

The company also showcased the updated ultra-compact finisher SCF, now running at 100m/min, demonstrating how even entry-level equipment benefits from speed improvements.

Grafotronic presented innovations including the Next Generation Sci-Fi Laser, the fully automatic turret Infinity powered by Serame, a brand-new semi-automatic turret with auto-closing system and the market's easiest multilayer module, Grafotronic MLL.

The latest version of the AI-driven computer vision virtual operator IQ+ is part of the Grafotronic Collab automation suite.

Brotech's SpeedMaster semi-rotary flexo and die-cutting system runs at 110m/min in semi-rotary mode and up to 150m/min in full rotary, equipped with the company's proprietary Digital Pressure Control system.

Bar Graphic Machinery's 370eDSRT easy load die-cut slitter semi-automatic turret rewinder achieves rotary die-cutting speeds reaching 250m/min, with users reporting productivity improvements of up to 60 percent.

Prati's Jupiter control table offers inspection speeds up to 400m/min and features semi-rotary die-cutting capability, handling mid-web print runs in a 670mm web width configuration. The system was presented for the first time with semi-rotary die-cutting, offering maximum safety, 100 percent quality and flexibility.

Nicely Machinery introduced the EG-8002 series slitter rewinder, offering expanded capabilities for high-volume production, with support for rewind diameters of up to 1,200 millimeters and speeds of up to 800m/min.

GM launched a new, upgraded DC350Flex fast finishing system. The Flex model range is a modular finisher engineered for high-speed digital label production, offering die-cutting up to 120m/min with semi-rotary and single anvil capabilities.

RFID CONVERTING ADVANCES

RFID label converting technology demonstrated significant advances, with suppliers introducing systems designed to meet the rapidly expanding market for smart labels.

BW Papersystems launched the SpeedLiner X, a radio frequency identification converting machine that delivers up to 25 percent higher annual output compared to conventional systems. The machine supports up to four tracks for simultaneous production, enabling converters to dramatically increase output.

'With the RFID market expanding at over 30 percent annually, converters worldwide are under pressure to increase throughput, improve reliability and scale efficiently,' explains Felix Waniek, strategic product manager at BW Papersystems. 'The SpeedLiner X is a game changer. With up to four tracks, it delivers unmatched throughput, allowing you to produce more, faster.'

The machine features smart automation, including auto get-ready, auto sync and auto register functions, combined with an intuitive human-machine interface and advanced assistance systems that enable operators to set up and control the machine with minimal training.

The modular design allows configuration to meet current and future production needs, with the ability to add multitrack capabilities or additional attachments as requirements change.

GM unveiled the LR250+ RFID inspection system, providing 100 percent in-line RFID tag testing, high-speed RAIN/NFC encoding and automatic marking of any faulty tags. Fully integrated into GM's modular rewinder, the LR250+ enables converters to achieve seamless inspection, encoding and rewinding in one continuous workflow.

LemuGroup presented the LI 220 RFID in combination with the Voyantic Tagsurance 3 module, offering real-time coding and quality control in a compact, modular system for high-quality smart labels.

DeltaModTech showcased its RFID label converting products with a live demonstration on its Delta Crusader platform running at 120m/min.

INSPECTION TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION

Inspection systems have continued to evolve from standalone quality control devices to integrated data sources that inform production decisions and optimize workflow.

Bar Graphic Machinery's 450 Label-I 200 percent Automatic Inspection Slitter Rewinder inspects both sides of the web simultaneously while slitting and rewinding. Optional features include 2D and 3D inspection, PDF management, reporting and comparison, plus UV and RFID inspection capabilities.

Prati's Saturn control table in 450mm web width featured camera inspection for fast-moving consumer goods and personal care labels, while the Saturn Bidi bidirectional inspection table serves pharmaceutical, cosmetic and security sectors with 100 percent quality control, with inkjet heads for variable data overprinting.

The company also unveiled Saturn Next, an intelligent control system featuring automated quality control with defect rejection and splicing capabilities. Key highlights include the Fastcut self-sharpening cutting system with automatic blade positioning and smart features such as Make Ready for quick job changes.

The company invested significantly in its exhibition presence, with a stand of almost 800sqm designed to provide visibility to eight lines with nine machines on display. In total, Prati showcased 12 machines, with three Saturn units also featured at the booths of partners AVT, DecoSystem and BST Eltromat Italia.

LabelTech showcased its Ortles slitter rewinder featuring 100 percent inspection, along with the Sciliar horizontal bidirectional rewinder with variable data print and verification.

Rotocon presented the Ecoline RSI 540, a fully servo-driven finishing machine for label slitting, inspection and rewinding, combining user-friendly operation with low maintenance requirements and production speeds of up to 300m/min.

MODULAR AND FLEXIBLE CONFIGURATIONS

The trend toward modular equipment enables converters to configure systems precisely for their needs while maintaining upgrade paths for future requirements.

Flexor presented modular machines for label finishing, including slitting, die-cutting, inspection and digital processing.

Each system is built to order and tailored to customer needs, combining flexibility, ease of use and high productivity.

Brotech's SDF PLUS 370 smart modular digital label finishing platform offers flexibility with a patented intermittent flexo unit featuring quick changeover to rotary mode. Available in 330, 370, 420 and 520 sizes, it supports bidirectional workflow.

Rotocon's Chrome RDF 340 features a modular architecture that supports customized configurations as converters' needs evolve, including options for hot and cold foil, embossing, multilayer labels, in-mold labeling and screen printing.

'Our goal has always been to deliver services that combine innovation, reliability and cost-effectiveness,' commented Rotocon's board of directors. 'The positive response and strong sales reaffirms that our technology is helping printers and converters enhance performance, efficiency and value for their customers.'

RELATIONSHIPS AND SERVICE

Several suppliers emphasized that equipment sales represent only the beginning of customer relationships,



"There's a crowd around this laser all the time, especially for super short runs where you can stack 100 jobs in one roll"

with ongoing support and service determining long-term success. Pedro Teixeira of **Lemorau** highlighted how the company differentiates through customer relationships. 'The support is very important for us, because the first machine is the sales team that makes it sell, but second, third, and so on will be the support. We have many customers worldwide who believe in us, and we are really happy with what we are achieving.'

Prati dedicated an entire area to after-sales services to showcase the benefits of its new Fastlane platform, providing fast technical s upport accessible around the clock from the Prati website for submitting requests.

The system enables customers to open tickets and track various resolution steps in real-time, with remote connection capabilities for telediagnosis and troubleshooting.

MARKET OUTLOOK

The finishing and embellishment sector's evolution reflects fundamental shifts in the label industry. As labor availability tightens and run lengths shorten, automation becomes essential rather than optional.

Digital technologies eliminate the need for specialist skills while expanding creative possibilities. Laser systems provide the flexibility required for high-mix production environments.

The integration of finishing equipment with broader workflow systems signals a maturing industry where isolated machines give way to connected production environments.

Premium embellishment capabilities have evolved from specialized offerings to mainstream requirements as brand owners seek differentiation in competitive markets.

Equipment suppliers demonstrated remarkable innovation across the technology spectrum, from entry-level systems enabling smaller converters to access finishing capabilities to sophisticated multi-unit lines that combine numerous processes.

The emphasis on sustainability, evident in technologies like EcoLeaf on-demand metallization and laser systems that eliminate die waste, indicates how environmental considerations increasingly influence equipment design and material selection.

For converters, the message from Labelexpo is clear: finishing and embellishment technologies now offer the automation, flexibility and creative capabilities necessary to thrive in an industry defined by shorter runs, labor constraints and escalating quality expectations.

The convergence of digital embellishment, laser converting and automated workflows creates new possibilities for differentiation and operational efficiency.

The significant number of machine sales and partnership agreements concluded during the exhibition demonstrates strong market confidence in finishing technology investments.

Suppliers reported order levels exceeding expectations, with particular strength in laser systems, digital embellishment equipment and automated turret rewinders.

As the industry advances, finishing and embellishment capabilities will continue to differentiate successful converters from those struggling to meet market demands. The technology showcased at Labelexpo Europe 2025 provides the foundation for this differentiation, combining productivity, quality and creative possibilities in ways previously unattainable.

Labelexpo Europe 2025 coverage continues with a review of materials

DIGITAL HD SERIES

UNLOCK THE POWER OF AND

> HIGHSPEED 1200



The *HIGHSPEED 1200*,
the ***fastest***, ***most productive***
digital hybrid press in the industry

480 fpm > Single or full color VDP > 1200 DPI

mark andy

mark andy PRINT PRODUCTS | ROTOFLEX | markandy.com

RK PRINTCOAT INSTRUMENTS LTD
sales@rkprint.com
+44 (0)1763 852187



THE FIRST NAME IN SAMPLE PREPARATION EQUIPMENT

FLEXO
INK TESTING

SCAN ME



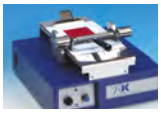
FLEXIPROOF 100/UV
PRESS QUALITY PROOFS



ESIPROOF
PORTABLE PROOFER



K LOX PROOFER
QUICK AND EASY



AUTO K LOX PROOFER
REPEATABLE PROOFS

www.rkprint.com

ZEBRA | BlueStar

ZT411 Linerless Industrial Printer

Removing the backing liner enhances labeling, making it better every day by reducing waste and simplifying applications.



ZEBRA and the stylized Zebra head are trademarks of Zebra Technologies Corp., registered in many jurisdictions worldwide. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners. ©2025 Zebra Technologies Corp. and/or its affiliates. 25/09/2025.

Moisture Measurement Implementation: Paper & Pulp

MoistTech Corp.

MOISTURE LEVELS AFFECT PRODUCTION:
Moisture and coating detection provide improved quality, reduced production costs, and increased plant efficiency

MOISTTECH'S NIR TECHNOLOGY:
Enables precise & continuous moisture analysis across a wide range of products

OUR TECHNOLOGY:
While we primarily measure moisture, we also monitor coating weight & glue thickness

BENEFITS:
Instant & continuous measurements enhance product quality, boosts productivity & energy efficiency and reduces waste

MoistTech Corp.
Sarasota, FL USA

Discover the Effect of NIR Moisture Control: Get a Quote Today!
941-727-1800

CELLOPACK



PROFESSIONAL LABEL MATERIALS PRODUCER

Cellopack Egypt
export@cellopack.net
Tel. : +20 127 612 9000

www.cellopack.net

MATERIALS

At Labelexpo Europe 2025, the focus of the material scientists was on being innovative while complying with upcoming sustainability regulations. Adyasha Sinha reports

The overarching theme of material suppliers at Labelexpo Europe 2025 was clear: every component of a pressure-sensitive label, from the release liner to the final adhesive bond, is being redesigned to meet the demands of a circular economy.

The industry demonstrated its response to global mandates like the EU's Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR) and the Deforestation Regulation (EUDR).

Sylwia Jurys, vice president, markets EMEIA at UPM Adhesive Materials, highlights the regulatory pressure driving these developments: 'Selecting the right label is essential to elevate sustainability, especially now as the EU's PPWR requirements place even more pressure on packaging.'

On the same note, Günther Birkner, president of Innovia Films, shares: 'Our strategy is clear: renovate, localize and decarbonize label film solutions for a market where sustainability and performance can no longer be mutually exclusive.'

RECYCLABLE AND PCR MATERIALS

The biggest trend at the exhibition was the rapid commercialization and scaling of label materials utilizing post-consumer recycled (PCR) content. This represents a critical shift from simply producing recyclable labels to producing labels that support the recycling of the entire package.

Avery Dennison emphasized its commitment to circularity with a portfolio centered on solving key recycling challenges. The company introduced PET labels with chemically recycled content for the automotive and durable goods sectors, a move aimed at meeting specific OEM requirements where performance cannot be compromised. The automotive industry, for instance, requires high durability, which recycled content previously struggled to match.

Beyond films, Avery Dennison also promoted AD CleanFiber, an INGEDE12-certified paper label range utilizing a new adhesive technology that cleanly separates during the recycling process, ensuring higher quality pulp for paper and cardboard production.

UPM Adhesive Materials dedicated significant resources to innovations that enhance logistics and consumer durables through sustainable materials. The company launched new products featuring solvent-free adhesives and PET



"The evolving EU regulatory environment is not a limitation. It's an invitation to innovate more boldly"

PCR materials, simplifying decision-making for brands that require labeling modern appliances with multiple tags for energy ratings and QR codes.

'Our decisive efforts have enabled strong and measurable progress on our 2030 climate commitments. Moving forward, we will increasingly concentrate on delivery to our customers, investing in our LCA and Scope 3 services and in reducing the carbon footprint of our products. By collaborating with our partners and keeping our ambition to meet our climate goals, we can reduce impact at scale,' states Robert Taylor, director, global sustainability at UPM Adhesive Materials. UPM emphasized that its Carbon Action plastic label materials assist brands in demonstrating quantifiable reductions of their carbon footprint.

The shift was equally visible in the synthetic film producers. **Innovia Films** showcased its Encore range of sustainable films, which integrates up to 35 percent mechanically recycled content. These films maintain the high optical clarity, barrier performance and durability expected for both food and non-food applications, providing converters with a practical path toward decarbonization.

Simon Huber, managing director of Innovia Films Europe, notes that the material changes are a response to regulatory pressure, confirming that the company is delivering 'materials aligned with circular economy goals like the PPWR'. The company also debuted next-generation BOPP label films that are thinner and lighter, reducing raw material usage while maintaining print quality.

Similarly, **Taghleef Industries** presented its Dynamic Cycle Solutions, an offering designed to support brands transitioning from multi-layer plastic structures to more sustainable materials, with a focus on bio-based, biodegradable and recycled polypropylene options.

Ambra Stocco, European marketing and communication manager and label lead at Taghleef Industries, acknowledges the foundational industry change: 'Even in 2025, the packaging industry continues to be in the midst of transformation, urged on by increasing demands for new, more sustainable solutions that comply with new regulations.' The company's reDesign service assists partners in creating customized technologies that comply with PPWR guidance, demonstrating that sustainability must be engineered at the design stage.

Polyart Group, specializing in papers and films, showcased its r-range of products, including r-Polyart, an HDPE film containing 30 percent PCR HDPE, specifically designed to meet the EU 2030 packaging target for recycled content. For paper-based applications, its r-JetPrint Aquaskin uses 100 percent recycled paper with unique barrier coatings, targeting markets like wine labels that require both sustainability and elegance.

Fedrigoni Self-Adhesives mirrored this commitment with its Re-Play Tintoretto product, a premium wine labeling material made from recycled fibers, reinforcing the integration of post-consumer materials into high-end aesthetics. For demanding industrial applications like tire and pharmaceutical labeling, Fedrigoni featured materials with chemically recycled content, ensuring durability and optimal end-of-life outcomes.

Even components outside the label laminate itself are seeing high recycled content integration. **Ahlstrom** debuted its Acti-V RF liners, which utilize 15 percent post-consumer recycled (PCR) fibers in its manufacturing, and the Acti-V RF Natural liners, a blend of at least 50 percent unbleached and 15 percent PCR fibers.

Elkem launched Silcolease Re Poly 11362 and Silcolease Re Poly 368, two additions to its silicone range that are 100 percent recycled silicone-based

and solvent-free. Developed using a patented depolymerization technology, these products have a 70 percent lower carbon footprint than their non-recycled counterparts while delivering identical technical performance.

LINERLESS LABELS

The linerless label segment was one of the most dynamic areas of material innovation, driven by the clear objective of eliminating the single largest source of label waste: the release liner. Moving beyond simple logistics applications, the new products focused on reliable adhesive performance, high-speed dispensing and application diversity.

Herma was a key player in this space, promoting its Herma InNo-Liner system. This technology focuses on eliminating liner waste and reducing associated logistics costs. The technology features the unique 82S adhesive, which is only activated at the moment of dispensing and then immediately and permanently sticks to the substrate. According to the company, the complete elimination of this residue also means the complete elimination of the previously necessary and expensive disposal or recycling processes. Users, print shops and the environment can also rejoice for other reasons: because there is no liner, more labels fit on a roll, which in turn are easier to transport and take up less space in the warehouse.

Lintec expanded its linerless offering with a novel approach for packaging and logistics. The company showcased a linerless sealing tape that uses water-activated adhesive applied directly to the base material. This product merges shipping information with the sealing function, cutting label consumption and eliminating liner waste. Lintec highlighted that a key benefit is the secure detachment of address details to safeguard personal data upon removal.

HB Fuller supported the linerless trend with specialized adhesive technology, featuring its Gel-Tac Linerless technology. This is part of its microsphere adhesive range, engineered for self-wound products where residue-free removal and consistent adhesion are crucial throughout the product lifecycle. It expands the application of linerless technology beyond logistics to consumer products that require repositionability.

Henkel Adhesive Technologies showcased high-performance PSA adhesive products specifically developed for linerless label applications, noting that they 'reduce the amount of material used and increase process efficiency in label printing.' Philippe Daval, head of market strategy packaging Europe at Henkel Adhesive Technologies, underscores the significance of holistic problem-solving: 'Companies aiming to remain competitive must address sustainability, performance and regulation as a whole and work with partners from the industry to overcome the challenges.'

COMPOSTABLE MATERIALS

While recyclability remains the dominant pursuit, compostable materials were featured to address specific niches, particularly food waste packaging and short-cycle, high-organic-waste applications. These materials are designed to break down effectively in industrial composting facilities, preventing label residue from contaminating organic waste streams.

Fedrigoni Self-Adhesives featured compostable paper and film alternatives prominently in its portfolio. These products target applications where the label and the package contents (like food) are disposed of together, or where recycling infrastructure is weak but composting is available.

Polyart Group introduced Fiberskin Tag, an innovative 100 percent paper that is not only recyclable and biodegradable but also compostable. This material offers excellent tear resistance, making it suitable for demanding applications like plant tags, while adhering to environmental end-of-life standards, the company says.

Mondi showcased its broader commitment to sustainable packaging with its FunctionalBarrier Paper Ultimate. While primarily a high-barrier paper for flexible packaging, its underlying material science principles, focused on paper-based structures with high functionality, inform the future of paper label substrates. This development supports the push for monomaterial paper packaging, where labels must be easily repulpable or fully compostable.

Global Label Award winner for sustainability, **Bio4Life** exhibited its certified range of film and paper face stocks paired with its BioTAK home-compostable adhesive. It emphasized the necessity of using a fully certified laminate structure (face, adhesive and liner) to ensure the entire label breaks down efficiently. Bio4Life directly addressed the challenge of fruit and vegetable labeling, offering products that safely enter the organic waste stream without contamination.

WASH-OFF LABELS

Wash-off label technology was a significant focal point, as it directly supports two crucial industry goals: enhancing the quality of recycled resin (especially PET) and enabling container reuse (particularly for glass bottles). The separation of the label from the container during the washing phase of recycling is non-negotiable for achieving high-grade recycled materials.

Avery Dennison presented an expanded AD CleanGlass portfolio, including a new white film option, developed for reusable glass packaging. The clear and white versions are engineered to wash off completely in a conventional bottle washer at 80 deg C. This development is key to supporting brand-owner mandates for refillable and reusable glass bottles.

Herma highlighted its advanced wash-off adhesive, which is engineered to ensure a 100 percent film label wash-off rate for PET bottle recycling. This level of clean separation is essential to prevent contamination of the PET flake stream, which is then reprocessed into new bottles.

Henkel demonstrated its leadership in adhesive science with its recyclable pressure-sensitive adhesives showcased under the theme 'Enabling circularity in labels with adhesives and coatings.' The company's wash-off PSAs are designed for PET bottles and can be removed without residue, even at lower temperatures, which helps save energy in the recycling process. This line includes Aquence PS

"Selecting the right label is essential to elevate sustainability, especially now as EU's Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation requirements place even more pressure on packaging"





"The material changes are a response to regulatory pressure, confirming that the company is delivering materials aligned with circular economy goals like the PPWR"

3017 RE, which was a recognized award winner, underscoring the performance aspect of sustainable adhesives.

HB Fuller offered multiple adhesives for the wash-off requirement. Its Fulltak SE 8308 is a water-based adhesive offering best-in-class cold water wash-off performance, enabling the clean removal of paper labels from various substrates. For glass, particularly beer and wine bottles. Fulltak SE 8306 is designed for alkali wash-off while maintaining ice water resistance for chilled products. The company stresses that its wash-off adhesives 'support sustainable solutions for both plastic and glass packaging, enabling paper and filmic labels to be cleanly removed across a wide range of surfaces.'

SECURITY AND DURABILITY

While sustainability dominated the show, brand protection and product integrity remained critical drivers for material innovation, especially in pharmaceuticals and durable goods. This area involved using advanced substrates and unique material compositions to ensure traceability, resistance and anti-counterfeiting measures.

Avery Dennison addressed brand protection and durability for sensitive products with a UV Barrier film label range for pharmaceuticals. This clear film protects UV-sensitive medicines while maintaining high transparency, allowing healthcare professionals to visually inspect the contents. Additionally, in the durable goods and electric vehicle battery sectors, the company's chemically recycled PET labels can incorporate features such as flame retardancy and be combined with RFID technology to support complete product traceability and authentication.

The focus on high-performance films was evident across other suppliers. Lintec showcased materials specifically for medical and pharmaceutical applications, including specialized skin-contact tapes from its Mactac group. The launch of Re Chill, a removable label material for chilled applications like food and logistics, also contributes to product integrity by adhering reliably in cold, damp, or oily environments, yet remaining easily removable to facilitate recycling.

Nobelus focused on premium aesthetic and brand differentiation through its specialty finish films for prime labels. Its portfolio, which includes soft-touch, prismatic holographic patterns, and other unique effects, is vital for brands aiming for high-end shelf stand-out and perceived quality, which is itself a form of brand protection. These unsupported films provide the high-quality finish required for demanding brand specifications.

PSA INNOVATION

The adhesive segment is the linchpin of label performance and sustainability. Beyond wash-off capabilities, material suppliers aggressively launched new pressure-sensitive adhesives, prioritizing water-based, solvent-free and high-performance options for all major label categories.

HB Fuller emphasized its water-based expertise, launching Swifttak PS 8405, a water-based PSA with non-water whitening properties. This is essential for achieving the popular 'no-label look' on PET containers, offering superior clarity and resistance to water whitening, a crucial performance feature for beverage and personal care brands.

Henkel Adhesive Technologies focused on reducing the environmental impact of its production process alongside product performance. Henkel also promoted its UV-curable PSA adhesives, which offer high energy efficiency during the curing process and strong resistance for demanding applications like the medical sector.

Herma's material innovations, such as the linerless adhesive, are rooted in advanced PSA engineering. The company's comprehensive expertise covers the entire self-adhesive chain, which means its new wash-off PSAs are designed to function optimally with its own film and paper substrates, achieving the highest performance standards for PET recycling.

VPF emphasized its role as a flexible partner and specialist in non-standard materials and adhesives. Its VPF Modular System allows for a combination of over 400 facestocks with over 30 specialty adhesives, including permanent, removable, hotmelt and special products like UV-Acrylics and pasteurizable grades. VPF confirmed its commitment to sustainability with a focus on 'innovative, flexible and versatile' products, including those with wash-off properties and durable performance for extreme conditions.

Sappi contributed significantly to the infrastructure supporting PSAs with its specialty papers for release liners. Its new Sol BCK liner is a CCK paper designed to replace traditional PCK papers, promising a greatly improved carbon footprint by eliminating plastic coating and improving recyclability. Sappi emphasized that this technology offers 'significant cost savings' alongside sustainability benefits, providing the crucial base material for the PSA industry to advance its own circularity goals.

WEIGHT REDUCTION

Beyond recycled content, the drive to use less material without compromising integrity was evident through the broad adoption of down-gauged films and monomaterial constructions. Suppliers exhibited a focus on BOPP, PE and PET films that are thinner and lighter, directly translating to lower raw material consumption and lower transport emissions.

Innovia Films explicitly linked its investment in new European extrusion technology to the ability to produce thinner, lighter, and higher-clarity films like CPE and WPE, which significantly reduce the carbon footprint.

Simon Huber, managing director of Innovia Films Europe, notes that the material changes are a response to regulatory pressure, confirming that the company is delivering 'materials aligned with circular economy goals like the PPWR.' The development of RayoFloat, a low-density material that floats in recycling wash tanks, ensuring clean removal and preventing PET stream contamination, highlights the engineering focus on end-of-life performance for filmic substrates.

Taghleef Industries focused on lightweight materials to save significant resources, ensuring that the minimalist and functional design of its flexible films does not compromise protection or aesthetics. The films are designed to meet a wide range of demanding applications, from food to cosmetics,

demonstrating the industry's ability to combine performance with resource efficiency.

Taghleef Industries unveiled three new films at the show. Rather than presenting them in a conventional format, the company displayed each as a work of art. Shape360 TDSW is a white film for TD shrink sleeve labels, specifically developed for light-sensitive products. It also launched a new decorative film substrate. And finally, an innovative detachable in-mold label film technology that is widely used for decorating rigid PP containers. The key breakthrough is the film's detachability, which is fully aligned with the PPWR and RecyClass guidelines.

Stocco shares: 'The evolving EU regulatory environment is not a limitation, it's an invitation to innovate more boldly. These films represent not just product advancements, but a new mindset around what labeling and packaging solutions can achieve.'

Mondi's paper-based products, such as the high-barrier paper, represent a shift toward maximum functionality in a mono-material paper structure, capable of replacing multi-layer plastic or aluminum. This development underscores the overall trend towards simplification of materials to improve the effectiveness of recycling processes, a goal shared by the label and flexible packaging sectors.

Armor Iimak, focusing on thermal transfer media, launched the AWR XL wax ribbon, which features the thinnest 3.35 micron PET film in the industry. While a separate component, this innovation directly contributes to the industry's goal of material reduction, resulting in up to 26 percent less plastic waste per roll. This highlights the industry-wide commitment to down-gauging across all components of the labeling process.

Aluminum Feron focused on materials engineered for durability and specialized operational requirements across various industrial and tracking applications. The company featured its range of durable substrates for labels and tags, including specialized substrates like Tritex, which are engineered for extreme durability, metal detectability in certain food production environments, or for integration with RFID protection in logistics and asset tracking.

Comercial Arque highlighted its range of specialty aesthetic papers and films targeted at the premium branding segment. Its focus was on materials that provide unique tactile sensations or visual effects (such as deep embossing or holographic finishes) while ensuring compatibility with high-speed digital printing technologies, allowing luxury brands to achieve differentiation in short print runs.

Fangda Packaging presented its diverse portfolio of flexible packaging and label materials, with a specific emphasis on high-barrier mono-material solutions. Its focus was on enabling the conversion of multilayer, non-recyclable flexible packaging structures into simpler, label-friendly formats that maintain the necessary oxygen and moisture barriers for fresh food applications.

Frimpeks showcased its comprehensive position as a supplier of inks, coatings, and labelstock, demonstrating how the three components can be optimized for challenging applications. It featured a range of UV-curable PSAs and coatings designed to provide superior chemical and abrasion resistance for durable industrial and automotive labels, ensuring compliance and longevity in extreme conditions.

Hueck Folien, known for its expertise in high-security and holographic materials, introduced new anti-counterfeiting filmic substrates for labels. These materials integrate micro-text, visible, and invisible security features directly into the film structure, making them essential for high-value goods, pharmaceuticals, and duty stamps, protecting brand integrity while remaining compatible with standard label converting processes.

Jinya Label highlighted its specialty in thin-gauge, high-yield label face stocks. Its exhibit focused die-cutting and dispensing, particularly in the thermal paper and direct thermal film segments, by optimizing material thickness and coating chemistry for maximum efficiency.



"Companies aiming to remain competitive must address sustainability, performance and regulation as a whole and work with partners from the industry to overcome the challenges"

MLJ Industries focused on industrial and automotive applications, showcasing durable film and foil materials designed to withstand engine oils, brake fluids and sustained high temperatures. It presented a new high-adhesion, chemical-resistant acrylic adhesive that maintains its bond strength on low-surface energy plastics and metal surfaces, even under prolonged exposure to harsh conditions.

Synthogra introduced its pioneering approach to flexible packaging and label films through its High-Barrier One-Substrate Film. This technology addresses material reduction and recyclability in one product. By offering a true mono-material composition in a high-barrier format, Synthogra minimizes complexity in the recycling stream. Talking more about the products, Nanette Thomas comments: 'At Synthogra, performance, productivity and responsibility go hand in hand. One example is our Syn-Durable, a product we continue to refine. It delivers speed and efficiency on the press while also reducing plastic use by adding more than 40 percent minerals. The result: less plastic, without compromising quality or productivity. This is how we combine high performance with responsibility.'

Yupo introduced its latest highly sustainable synthetic paper grades. These new materials are designed to be fully recyclable where a mono-material polypropylene stream is established. Yupo focused on its enhanced surface treatments that ensure superior print fidelity and fast-drying times for both UV inkjet and HP Indigo digital presses, maintaining the durability and water resistance that synthetic paper is known for.

ENGINEERED MATERIAL SCIENCE

Labelexpo Europe 2025 confirmed that the label industry is undergoing a profound transformation, moving from incremental improvements to engineered material technologies that address the mandate for circularity. The showcased materials, from chemically recycled PET films and PCR-content papers to wash-off adhesives and the complete elimination of waste through linerless systems, all reflect a cohesive strategy.

Labelexpo Europe 2025 coverage continues with a review of ink and coating technology

S.foils®

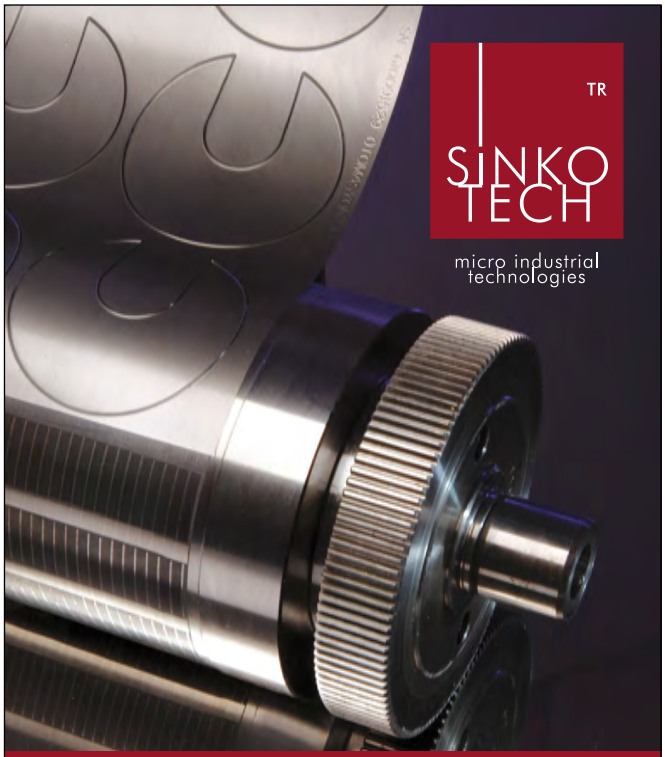
FAR EAST YU LA INDUSTRY LTD

Manufacturer &
supplier on quality stamping foils

- Cold Foil
- Glass Grade Hot Foil
- Digital Foil
- Pigment Foil
- Hot Stamping Foil



Tel:+86-21-68060380
Email: sales@sfoils.com.cn
www.sfoils.com.cn



Top-Class Manufacturer of;
• Flexible Dies • Magnetic Cylinders • Anvil Cylinders & Tools
PRECISION is our Character...

www.sinkotech.com
export@sinkotech.com
Whatsapp: +90 533 302 44 01

Create Luxurious Labels And Packaging

UNIQUE FINISHES FROM NOBELUS

From unforgettable soft-touch and sandpaper textures to ultimate scuff-proof protection, Nobelus unsupported wet films make an immediate connection with consumers. Explore the full portfolio to elevate your labels and packaging today.



nobelus®
CONSIDER IT FINISHED

nobelus.com

Dare to Dazzle and Feel the Magic of...

www.cartes.it

CARTES

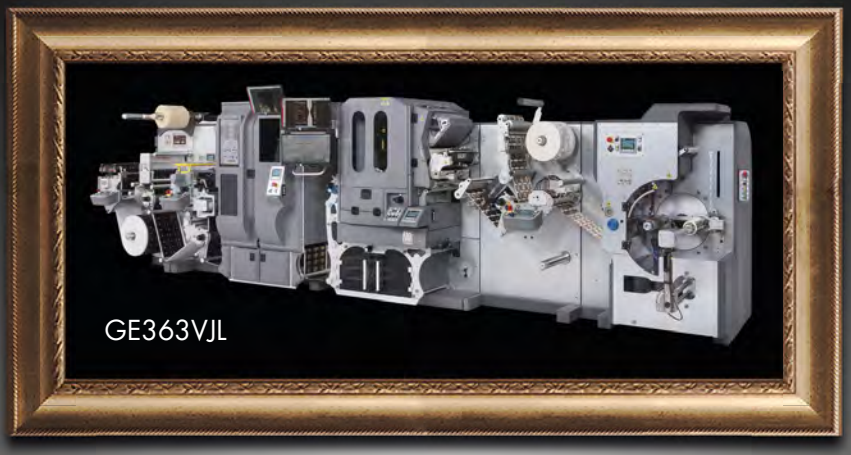
ADVANCED LABEL TECHNOLOGY



















How we did it ?

CARTES

CARTES USA Inc www.cartes-usa.com
CARTES s.r.l. Headquarters www.cartes.it

INKS AND COATINGS

At Labelexpo Europe 2025, the spotlight was on regulatory compliance and making inks and coatings safer while enabling efficient production, Akanksha Meena reports

Inks and coatings innovations shown at Labelexpo Europe 2025 were no longer just about color and aesthetics; they are about answering the urgent calls of the industry for regulatory compliance, sustainability, efficiency and safety. Manufacturers demonstrated products that support a future-safe pressroom.

UPCOMING REGULATIONS

One of the most significant trends in inks and coatings at this year's Labelexpo was the strong focus on upcoming regulatory changes in Europe, the Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR) and, in particular, the German Printing Ink Ordinance (GIO). These aren't distant concerns.

The German Printing Ink Ordinance, set to take effect on January 1, 2026, aims to protect consumer health by controlling the migration of hazardous substances into food. It sets rules for printing inks with direct or indirect food contact, using a positive list of approved substances and defined migration limits.

The EU's Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR) is a cornerstone of the circular economy, reshaping the entire packaging supply chain, including labels. It is moving forward with strict deadlines designed to make packaging more sustainable across the European market.

Heather Buchhloz, global marketing director, packaging technologies at **Archroma**, notes: 'People are still trying to fully understand the PPWR, what it means for them, how it applies to their company and products and what impact it will have. Our stand was located right behind The Pulse, which has worked to our advantage, as many visitors stoped by and asked, "I'm not sure how this affects me?" It's clear that collaboration across different roles is essential to achieve sustainable packaging, and that's why these sessions at events are so valuable.'

She adds: 'We've had several conversations where people are realizing that materials are the next frontier in making packaging truly sustainable. With the growing shift toward flexible and folding carton formats, and the rebranding of Labelexpo to Loupe, it feels like everything is coming full circle.'

These regulatory shifts are creating a ripple effect throughout the label and packaging supply chain. For ink and coating manufacturers, the challenge is no longer about incremental adjustments, but about rethinking formulations to ensure compliance.



"People are realizing that materials are the next frontier in making packaging truly sustainable"

Caroline Melis, sales manager at **Toyo Ink Europe**, says: 'Multiple legislations are coming into play, and as an energy-curing business, we see the ongoing hunt for photoinitiators in the EU; particularly around substances like 378 and 184, which will significantly impact labeling. As ink manufacturers, we're constantly reformulating, and it's a real challenge. Our advice to customers is simple: if you want to stay ahead of regulations, choose food-safe, GIO-compliant inks. But there's still a big price gap and many customers remain highly cost-driven.'

Similarly, Hansruedi Nef, product manager, business unit narrow web EMEA at **Siegwerk**, adds that the company showcased updates in preparation for the upcoming GIO. 'We're seeing two major trends shaping the market: UV LED flexo and GIO-compliant food packaging. Both are driven by the need for regulatory compliance, low migration and safer, more sustainable curing technologies.'

'The GIO sets very strict requirements for ink safety,' Nef continues. 'Many raw materials we previously used can no longer be applied, so we've had to rethink, reformulate and develop new ink series. Fortunately, we had a strong foundation to build on. In addition, designers are increasingly asking about PPWR, recyclability, and how to align with circular economy goals, showing how sustainability and compliance are now influencing every stage of packaging design.'

As a result, innovation is accelerating. Low-migration inks, food-safe coatings and UV LED-curable systems are gaining prominence as converters and brand owners demand products that not only perform on press and in end-use environments but also meet environmental and health standards.

Complying with these regulations is challenging enough, but the rapidly approaching deadlines make it even tougher, which doesn't give manufacturers enough time to innovate compliant products.

Gary Seward, managing director of **Pulse Roll Label Products**, says that most of the R&D work today is being driven by regulatory changes rather than true innovation. We only have a limited number of people, and much of their time is spent ensuring compliance with new raw material requirements or sourcing alternatives because existing materials are being declassified. This process is time-consuming, and once you find a substitute, it still needs to go through customer approval.'

That's the downside of rapid regulatory change: it stifles innovation and exhausts resources.

FOOD-SAFE AND UV LED INKS

Food-safe packaging is becoming a critical focus for the label and packaging industry as stricter regulations approach and consumer safety remains paramount. With increasing scrutiny on the migration of substances into food, brand owners and converters must ensure their inks and coatings meet the highest safety standards.

At Labelexpo, **Toyo Ink** introduced Steraflex GIO, a new low-migration flexographic ink designed to meet the stringent requirements of the GIO. Free from intentionally added photo initiator 379, it ensures compliance with evolving food and pharmaceutical packaging regulations.

Sun Chemical introduced a new migration-compliant screen ink portfolio for labels, along with migration-compliant varnish, tactile varnish and digital ink technology featuring LED curable options with updated formulas.

INX also promoted its low-migration inks for non-direct food contact products and screen printing inks for low-migration self-adhesive labels. Flexo inks were also available for shrink sleeves.

The transition from traditional UV curing to UV LED technology was another key focus at the show. Several companies introduced inks designed to support easy shift for converters, combining low migration risk with significant energy savings.

Siegwerk showcased its Siucra Nutriflex LEDTec and Siucra Nutriflex 10 inks, both of which are compliant with GIO for primary food packaging. The company also introduced Siucra Flex, a non-low-migration dual-cure flexo ink for non-food and select food packaging where barrier properties prevent migration.

Sun Chemical promoted high-performance inks, coatings and adhesives for labels and packaging, including UV, UV flexo, UV LED, water-based and EB systems. Highlights included the SolarWave UV LED flexo inks and coatings, SolarWave Panther high-density blacks, and SolarScreen Wave UV LED screen inks. With sustainability a priority, the company also presented recyclable solutions, such as SolarWave Integra UV LED ink with EV-LU029 coating for retention-grade applications.

Jonathan Sexton, marketing manager, energy curing products, Europe at Sun Chemical, explains: 'The biggest trend in the narrow web label market is the rapid shift to LED curing, and it's happening fast, with nearly half of our ink sales now LED-based. While there are still challenges in optimizing for different applications, LED has become a standard technology across the industry.'

He adds: 'There's also a growing demand for food-compliant inks, not just in packaging but also in labels and shrink sleeves. Many printers now prefer to use low-migration inks across all jobs to maintain consistency and safety, even when food compliance isn't strictly required.'

Zeller+Gmelin presented its Uvaflex LED FCM Y581 for food packaging, the Uvaflex LED Y580 for non-food use and the Toracur W580 for waterless offset printing.

Henkel Adhesive Technologies presented high-performance products for CO2 reduction, including PS adhesives for linerless labels and UV-curable PSA adhesives.

Frimpeks showcased UV, LED, low-migration, and water-based inks for high-speed production, along with specialty coatings that ensure compliance and enhance shelf appeal in food, beverage, and pharmaceutical applications. The company also displayed self-adhesive label materials and adhesive systems for flexible packaging, including solvent-free, water-based and solvent-based options.

Elkem also promoted its release liners range: Silcolease RE Poly 11362 and RE Poly 368, which are 100 percent recycled, solvent-free, with a 70 percent lower carbon footprint. The company also promoted UV coatings, which can now be cured under UV LED.

Flint Group highlighted its next-generation UV Hg curing ink series, engineered to meet the demands of food-safe packaging, complemented by the EkoCure Ancora dual-cure series. Flint also promoted its new range of FCM-grade high-opacity opaque whites.

Rotometal is also diversifying beyond tooling. The company has developed a new line of UV and LED inks, coatings and adhesives, including food-safe formulations, to be launched in 2026.

Fujifilm promoted its CuremaX inks and varnishes. 'The biggest shift we're seeing is the move from conventional UV inks to LED inks, not just for the ink itself, but for the energy-efficient curing technology,' says Ralf Peterson, application and solution manager EMEA at Fujifilm.

UK-based Paragon ID, one of Fujifilm's customers, has experienced significant energy-saving benefits of switching to LED UV. Paragon ID has installed three Fujifilm LED UV curing systems across its eight flexo presses. The shift has delivered energy savings of 70–84 percent, with ROI achieved in 13-18 months. The LED systems eliminate ozone, reduce heat and odor and improve operator comfort while allowing faster press speeds.

The company saves at least 66,000 USD per year in energy costs and is targeting carbon net zero by 2040 as part of the Paragon Group. Jamie Parker, head of operations at Paragon ID's Hull, notes: 'LED UV was a no-brainer investment for both sustainability and business performance.'

"Many raw materials we previously used can no longer be applied, so we've had to rethink, reformulate and develop new ink series"





"Our advice to customers is simple: if you want to stay ahead of regulations, choose food-safe, GIO-compliant inks. But there's still a big price gap and many customers remain highly cost-driven"

SUSTAINABILITY

As Stefano Rogora, marketing manager Europe at **INX**, puts it, sustainability is not a trend, but a daily commitment for the company.

The same holds true for the labels and packaging industry, where every stage, from pre-press to finishing, is working toward more sustainable practices. Ink and coating manufacturers at Labelexpo showcased products that support sustainability.

Henkel Adhesive Technologies showcased products to help brands meet EU PPWR requirements and design future-proof packaging. Highlights included recyclable PSAs to boost circularity, such as wash-off adhesives for PET bottles (including Aquence PS 3017 RE) and repulpable adhesives for paper labels.

Archroma Packaging Technologies debuted its range of water-based and partially bio-based products covering narrow web, tape and label, paper and board and flexible packaging.

Flint's Evolution series enhances label recycling and supports the transition to circular packaging. Also at the booth were the latest expansion of the Vivo Colour Solutions platform: a new module, Vivo ColourMatch, designed to achieve brand shades and manage press returns.

The Signite label technology by **Actega** significantly reduces both carbon emissions and labeling costs. Compared to traditional options, Signite technology delivers 28 percent lower CO2 emissions than pressure-sensitive labels and 30 percent lower than shrink sleeves, according to Actega. Signite allows brands to directly replace existing labels or create a true no-label look, applying decoration only where needed, eliminating die-cutting and matrix waste.

The company highlighted overall system savings from reduced waste, up to 40 percent more labels per reel and 20 percent more uptime on press.

Following its Innovation Award win at Labelexpo Americas 2022, Signite established an exclusive partnership with All4Labels, expanding from Europe to South Africa, South America and Central America. Production and demo sites are now active in the UK, Spain, Italy, and South Africa, with Brazil set to follow.

Signite has also partnered with Makro Labelling, part of Sidel, to adapt rotary labeling technology for its system, now serving the cosmetics, personal care, food, wine and spirits markets.

Pulse Roll Label Products showed visitors how they can reduce their ink usage. Seward of Pulse Roll Label Products says: 'By using less ink, you're ultimately reducing packaging, since ink itself is part of the package. Ink may dry on the label, but it starts wet, and it's made of plastic and oil. So, using less ink means using less plastic overall.'

From an ink perspective, sustainability still has limited real adoption. Everyone talks about recyclability, but only a small part of the market is truly acting on it, according to Seward. Cost is also a deciding factor when it comes to opting for sustainable packaging.

Natalie Gerard, global segment leader, general release, pressure-sensitive industries at Dow, echoes the sentiment: 'What we see as well is that cost control is very important for customers. They prefer cost-effective solutions that will help them to be competitive as well as offer the best products to their customers.'

EFFICIENCY

Inks and coatings are evolving alongside printing technology, enabling faster and more consistent ink distribution to enhance print accuracy and overall press efficiency.

Pulse Roll Label Products showcased PureTone inks, offering high-strength, single-pigment formulations. Pulse also discussed bespoke ink mixing, which helps achieve the Delta E target and color match. Also on display was Monolox, a fixed anilox printing system for spot colors that standardizes anilox selection. The company has developed a system that allows a single, low-volume anilox to be used for all spot colors, enabling consistent color matching across digital and flexo printing.

Sun Chemical introduced its first HP Indigo-approved primer for label applications and HP Indigo 6x00, 6K, 6K+, 8X00 and 8K presses, designed for use with the in-line priming unit. The new SunEvo EV-LWR09 WB LEP primer will roll out across EMEA from Q4 2025.

The primer can be used across a wide range of PSL substrates and delivers instant ink adhesion with reduced coat weights and lower voltage corona discharge, cutting energy use and media damage while preventing yellowing and voltage burns.

Marcos Valdezate, business development manager, SunEvo – digital coatings at Sun Chemical, explains: 'Allowing customers to choose primers from multiple approved vendors helps address supply chain challenges and creates a win-win situation. It also enables new applications, as different primers offer unique features and added benefits for the label community. The feedback from customers has been very positive. We have been testing these primers with multiple HP customers for quite some time before releasing, so it is a proven solution.'

Actega also introduced its new water-based ACTDigi LEP Primer as part of HP's expanded in-line primer portfolio. Designed for the HP Indigo 6K, 6K+ and 8K presses, the primer enhances ink adhesion and print quality across a wide range of substrates, from coated papers to synthetics and even textured wine labels.

Compliant with key regulations and easy to clean, the primer supports both in-line and near-line HP Indigo processes. Its water resistance makes it suitable for durable applications like beer labels and other long-lasting prints requiring additional finishing, such as hot foil stamping or thermal transfer printing.

A SUCCESSFUL SHOW

Exhibitors reported a successful show and appreciated the move from Brussels to Barcelona.

Melis of Toyo Ink notes that customer response was positive. 'The move from Brussels to Barcelona has been a great decision. Nearly everyone we met mentioned they planned their visit to spend an extra weekend here. The city itself is a huge draw, attracting visitors from across Europe. We've met customers from southern France, Greece and Italy.'

Exhibiting for the first time, the show provided Archroma the opportunity to introduce itself to the industry, connect with customers and interact with global media outlets.

'Our focus and commitment to the tape and label industry will continue to expand with a focus on enabling circularity with our chemistries. While we are still relatively new to this market, we believe the opportunity to exhibit in 2025 and at future events will further elevate our profile in the industry,' says Buchholz.

Labelexpo Europe 2025 coverage continues with a review of workflow and inspection



STRONGER FOCUS.
WIDER LENS.



LOUPE

formerly **Labelexpo**



loupe-global.com

WORKFLOW AND INSPECTION

By introducing new AI capabilities, moving software onto the cloud and integrating with other systems across production facilities, workflow software and inspection technologies are offering greater levels of automation, accessibility and waste reduction. Selah Zighelboim reports

At Labelexpo Europe 2025, workflow and inspection technology suppliers highlighted integration capabilities, introduced cloud-based versions of their software and showcased how AI can reduce waste, save time and improve accuracy. New products and tools launched at the show make technology easier for operators to use, mitigate cybersecurity risks and automate steps in complex job orders.

These innovations are helping converters navigate pressures in the industry, as they face hiring challenges, as well as growing demand for shorter runs and faster turnaround times. Converters are looking to implement automation to improve their efficiency and reduce their reliance on manual labor, and workflow and inspection technology are enabling them to do that.

REDUCING MANUAL LABOR

Software plays a unique role in helping converters implement automation, as it drives job processes across the entire production workflow. It improves efficiency and reduces manual labor by accepting customer orders, streamlining pre-press work and optimizing workflows.

Ultimate Tech made its debut at Labelexpo Europe 2025. The company, an established player in the commercial printing space, is expanding into labels, underscoring the ongoing convergence in the printing industry.

Having come from the commercial printing industry, where smaller margins drive print shops to implement significant automation, Ultimate Tech is well-versed in using its technology to reduce its clients' need for manual labor.

Ultimate Tech undertook a significant amount of R&D and enhanced its technology with nesting and step-and-repeat capabilities before entering the labels market. In the label space, its software is targeted toward converters that need technology that's flexible and easily automated. At Labelexpo, Ultimate Tech highlighted its Ultimate Impostrip software, which is capable of integrating with web-to-print systems and is available on the cloud. Impostrip can receive and batch jobs and automatically optimizes imposition. It operates with printing and finishing equipment and can handle variable data printing.

'When customers are doing short runs, that's when they have the biggest workflow challenges because there are more files to deal with,' Ultimate Tech CEO Julie Watson says. 'When you have fewer files, you still shouldn't be doing it manually, but you don't notice it as much. As soon as you have more varied work, that's when customers realize, [they] need to find a solution. [They] can't keep doing all of this manually. The label industry is getting more and more of this on-demand work.'

Infigo, a web-to-print e-commerce platform provider, enables converters' clients to view products and pricing, submit orders and approve jobs. Infigo aims to make short-run work easier for converters to accept.

'What we're trying to enable them to do is take smaller orders and smaller runs without turning them away or losing money on them. Because if you've got someone that wants 250 labels or even 5,000 labels, and you're having to email them back and forth, give them a quote, design it for them, touch it up for them, go back and forth and touch it lots of times, you're losing money on it every time,' says Alex Bowell, managing director at Infigo. 'We're trying this automated, hands-off approach.'



"When customers are doing short runs, that's when they have the biggest workflow challenges because there are more files to deal with"

Suppliers are also using AI to reduce converters' need for manual labor. **HP**, for example, presented HP Nio, an AI agent launched earlier this year. HP Nio works within HP PrintOS, connecting with HP presses to provide insights and detect issues, optimizing production and increasing productivity.

Hybrid Software introduced several AI-powered products that increase efficiency: Matches, a tool that searches and finds print jobs with similar components, available to CloudFlow users; SmartDFE, a technology for digital presses that optimizes jobs to increase press productivity; and jAlmes, which automatically creates orders, particularly reorders, from emails.

Hybrid Software also announced its acquisition of Conics, a Belgian software development company. As a part of Hybrid Software, Conics will remain its own business unit. Conics brings project management and consultancy expertise to Hybrid, as well as AI knowledge. At Labelexpo Europe, Hybrid launched a new joint product with Conics called the Digital Pouch Factory. This technology links with CloudFlow and enables users to edit and create 3D models of packaging.

Hybrid Software also presented Packz Max, an upgrade to the company's PDF editor, Packz technology, which integrates RIP capabilities, and CloudFlow Colorspace, a color management tool.

Cerm highlighted how its software can help converters automate, including during daily live Studio Session presentations.

The company introduced its new Cerm Copilot, an AI tool that integrates into its MIS. Its capabilities include converting emails into job orders, generating reports and making Cerm MIS easier for new employees to learn how to use.

Additionally, at its first Studio Session live presentation at the show, Cerm featured its Scheduling Optimizer, an AI tool that helps clients maximize productivity when scheduling

various jobs. At Labelexpo Europe, Cerm launched the newest generation of its Scheduling Optimizer.

With Labelexpo's official expansion into folding cartons, Cerm presented an exclusive premiere of its Cerm MIS Production Flows, which automates imposition for folding cartons. Other technology featured at Labelexpo Europe include Cerm's new user interface, Smart BI tool and Lumi AI assistant.

INTEGRATION

Suppliers for workflow and pre-press software, as well as for machinery, highlighted how their technology can integrate with other systems on the production floor. This integration enables greater levels of automation and makes data more insightful.

'One aspect that we always highlight in our developments is automation. One of the ways to get automation is integration. Integration with pre-press systems, integration with production equipment, integration with different systems that people have in their facility,' says Peter Heyse, head of product management and software development at Cerm.

'From the moment you can start integrating this, we bring automation, we avoid additional manual work, we avoid mistakes and we streamline the whole process.'

Amtech Software, which acquired **Label Traxx** last year, showcased its products, such as Scorekeeper, which integrates with shopfloor equipment to measure actual job performance against estimated job performance, and a new tool called Visual Analytics, which uses continuously updated Label Traxx data to create dashboards and reports.

Grant Emison, product manager at Amtech Software/Label Traxx, notes that integration capabilities are becoming increasingly important in label and packaging software.

'It's important to use best-in-class software across the different functions within a company. Label converters, traditionally, haven't been doing that, but there's greater and greater use of different software packages for different functions,' Emison says. 'Being able to exchange information back and forth with those packages is really important.'

MOVING TO THE CLOUD

Exhibitors throughout Labelexpo Europe 2025 noted that converters are looking to move their data to the cloud, rather than keep it stored on their own servers.

According to Paul Cooper, vice president of Europe and Asia at **eProductivity Software (ePS)**, cloud-based or browser-based software is easier for users to manage, as it transfers responsibility for cybersecurity and updates to the software supplier, rather than the client.

ePS highlighted its own move to the cloud at this year's Labelexpo, where it launched a cloud version of its software.

'Traditionally, when you have an on-premise solution, a local customer has to become an IT expert, has to have the capability to not have that threat or not have that risk,' Cooper says. 'By hosting that solution, we take care of all that. All that security. That uptime, in terms of making sure there isn't downtime and the system's always going to be available. We take all that responsibility, and also, the upgrades become our responsibility.'

Other new capabilities that ePS featured included its partnership with CarbonQuota, which enables clients to provide data about the environmental footprint of their products in quotations. Additionally, ePS presented its new Radius Hub platform, a customer portal. This platform is customized with converters' branding, allowing them to share their products and for their customers to make orders, among other capabilities.

Esko highlighted its technologies that are now available on the cloud. Since introducing the Esko S2 cloud platform last year, which provides the benefits of the cloud such as AI integration and easy scalability, the company has continued to lean into cloud technology. For instance, this past summer, Esko launched its WebCenter Pack, a cloud-native version of Esko's Web Center product, enabling customers to upload and preflight jobs. Esko also featured its cloud-native technology, Print Clone, that can perform color matching from a printed sample of packaging. Rather than spending time trying to color-match a printed sample through trial and error, converters can match the color on the first attempt, creating a PDF that can be sent to a digital printer. This saves on material and ink and reduces press downtime.

Bjorn Willems, senior director, global software sales at Esko, says that industry consolidation and AI, which integrates well with the cloud, are motivating companies to move to the cloud.

Theurer also featured its browser-based software, as well as its mobile technology. This mobile technology includes its Logistics App for warehouse management and its C3 Mobile CRM.

COLOR MANAGEMENT

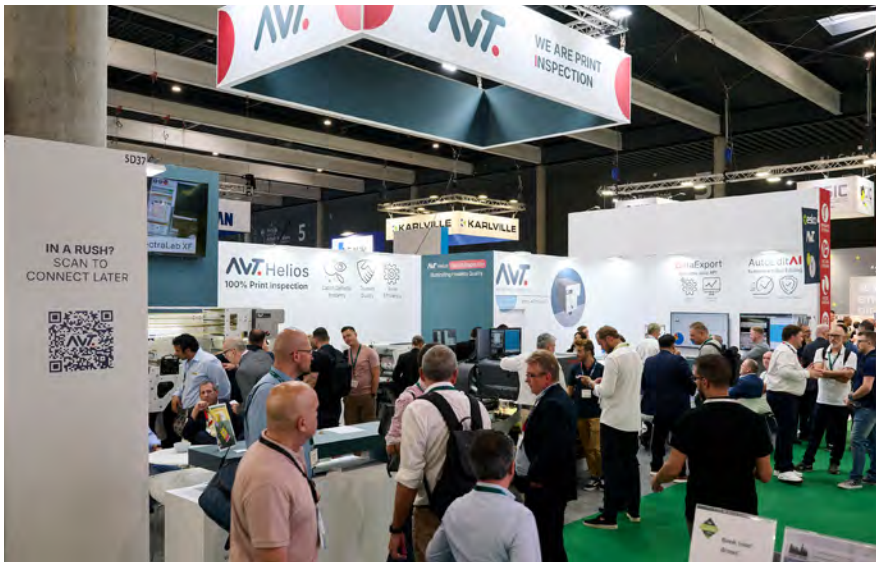
Many of the same trends that exist in workflow and pre-press software, such as automation and integration with other systems, exist in color management software as well.

ColorConsulting showcased the new version of its Color Software Suite, featuring improved performance for its automated color-matching technology. The company also provides connector software, which enables integration with an ERP.

GSE Dispensing is using its technology to advance both automation and sustainability for its clients. The company showcased several different ink dispensers, as well as its Ink Manager (GLM) software. The software helps improve efficiency and reduce waste by tracking inks. It can also automate various tasks, such as purchasing and creating color recipes, and is capable

"One of the ways to get automation is integration. Integration with pre-press systems, integration with production equipment, integration with different systems that people have in their facility"





"Traditionally, when you have an on-premise solution, a local customer has to become an IT expert, has to have the capability to not have that threat or not have that risk. By hosting that solution, we take care of all that"

of integrating with ERP systems. GSE's data collection capabilities also assist with sustainability reporting.

INSPECTION

Inspection technology is becoming a crucial source of data, integrating with workflow systems to provide converters with a more comprehensive understanding of challenges in their processes.

At Labelexpo Europe 2025, **AVT** launched Data Export, a data collection technology. The company also showcased its inspection system for labels and narrow web, as well as its embellishment and varnish detection technology, which AVT introduced at Labelexpo Americas 2024.

Data Export is capable of integrating with other systems that collect data, resulting in more information insights. The response at Labelexpo Europe to this technology was positive, the company says, with AVT expecting dozens of orders.

'The majority of the big printers in the world today already have some kind of data system,' AVT product manager Aviram Vardi says. 'It can be an MIS, management information system. It can be an MES, which is more of a performance analysis. But if they only have the data about how many meters or how much time, they don't know the root cause of the problem or what caused them.'

By integrating AVT's inspection data with other press production data, the data paints a fuller picture. For example, AVT's inspection data about a problem with a varnish, combined with data indicating that the issue occurs on a specific press or with a particular material, would be more beneficial to converters.

BST also highlighted its ability to collect and handle data from its inspection technology. The company introduced TubeScan V8, the latest version of its inspection technology, which provides inspection throughout the whole print production process. It's also capable of variable data printing inspection.

New to Labelexpo Europe 2025 is TubeScan's Multiplexing capability, which uses different types of light simultaneously for inspecting different components, such as RFID technology and embellishments.

EyeC exhibited its inspection technology for the entire print production process. This included a new version of its Proofiler Graphic pre-press inspection technology, which can integrate with other systems and compare print-ready files against approved artwork files. This cloud-based technology is expected to become available at the end of 2025.

EyeC also showcased its ProofRunner in-line inspection system, capable of integrating with printing and finishing machines. EyeC featured the ProofRunner Highlight with AI technology, as well as its ProofRunner Evo, a baseline system, also with AI, that is modular and can be upgraded to the Highlight or Highlight HD.

EyeC pre-trains its AI inspection technology using data from partners, enabling the technology to recognize which defects are significant and allowing press operators to work more efficiently.

Erhardt+Leimer presented its SmartScan 200 percent inspection technology, which features new capabilities, such as tools to measure web width and the position of RFID antennas, as well as a new PDF comparison tool.

The company also presented its Elscan OMS5 web monitoring system, which became available on the market earlier this year. It includes two high-resolution cameras, each with a distinct field of view. The new version of this web monitoring system is more intelligent, with new functions such as Delta-E color measuring.

DecoSystem exhibited the new version of its CIS sensor for its Sentinel inspection systems, capable of up to 900 DPI. This is an upgrade from the 600 DPI of the previous version. Decosystem also introduced Sofia, its AI platform that reduces false error detection by more than 70 percent and classifies errors.

Nikka Research's inspection technology supports automation by creating detailed reports on inspection data and by integrating with other systems. The company specializes in customized systems; for example, if a converter has a large client whose products require a specialized inspection system, Nikka Research can provide that.

Unilux held live demonstrations of its UniPrint inspection system, as well as its handheld and stationary stroboscopes to detect defects on the press. The company also featured LED UVX strobes, which can verify security features and UV-visible inks at full production speeds.

Baldwin, a subsidiary of **BW Converting**, featured its Print Quality Verification (PQV) inspection system, with its new 4.0 version that brings greater levels of automation and ease of use. With a new interface, the PQV 4.0 automates Delta-E color monitoring, barcode recognition and sensitivity and lighting presets. Essentially, all an operator needs to do is indicate if they want to use it and what tolerance to set it at. This allows an operator who doesn't have a lot of training to operate the system.

'It's about automation,' says John Cusack, a product line leader at Baldwin. 'It's about being able to support the emerging technologies, digital hybrid applications. Inspection systems inherently manage a lot of data, so as a business, we're very well adapted to the new digital world.'

Labelexpo Europe 2025 coverage continues with a review of dies and tooling

HARPER®
CORPORATION OF AMERICA

ENHANCE YOUR PRINT QUALITY



With Superior

ANILOX ROLLS



Protect Your Investment

HARPER® SCIENTIFIC



11625 Steele Creek Road, Charlotte, NC 28273 USA

www.HarperCorporation.com

DIES AND TOOLING

At Labelexpo Europe 2025, exhibitors showcased tools that support automated, user-friendly and environmentally conscious production, Akanksha Meena reports

The tooling technology displayed at Labelexpo Europe 2025 demonstrated how the industry is simplifying operations for a younger, tech-savvy workforce and focusing on precision and processes that reduce waste.

AUTOMATION

At this year's show, automation took center stage in tooling to make operations more intuitive and accessible to a new generation of press operators, making the print process less of a craft and more of a standardized process.

'Our goal is to make machines that require less operator intervention,' says Pol Estrada, CEO of **Tecnocut**. 'Ten years ago, machines were highly mechanical and demanded deep technical knowledge. Today, even a beginner-level operator can run advanced equipment and achieve excellent results.'

Ease of use has become a design priority. 'Most of our products were mechanical in the beginning, but now they're digital. They're far more user-friendly, easy to operate and understand, much like a mobile phone. Once you start using it, you immediately know how it works. That's exactly the idea behind our design approach.

'In the past, the operator's skill defined the output. Now, with cutting-edge automation, the machine plays the leading role, and in the future, one operator may be able to run multiple machines at once,' Estrada adds.

Similarly, **Maxcess** emphasized the importance of intuitive interfaces and smart systems as it adapts to a generational shift in the workforce.

Keith Laakko, global vice president of marketing and business development at Maxcess, says: 'One of the biggest changes we're seeing is the retirement of highly experienced professionals, people with 30 years of craftsmanship in labels and printing. They're being replaced by a younger, more tech-savvy generation. That means we have to develop products that align with this new mindset.'

Under the RotoMetrics brand, the company showed the EcoPrint Print Cylinder, Longest Running Flexible Dies, the RotoScan Adjustable Anvil, featuring proactive die strike monitoring with AI enhancements; and the RD Scorer HP, a high-performance scorer for film and paper applications. Maxcess also promoted SmartSlit, operator-safe automated narrow web slitting system, and RD AutoScore, an automated back-scoring system.

WASTE REDUCTION

Sustainability continues to drive innovation in tooling as well. Maxcess is extending product lifecycles of its products through repair and refurbishment programs available in Europe, the US and Asia.

'We're helping customers reduce waste and scrap by repairing and refurbishing existing tooling rather than replacing it. It extends product life, reduces costs and supports environmental goals,' Laakko says.

Kocher + Beck underscored its sustainability focus through new anti-stick coatings for flexible dies that meet environmental standards and its TecScreen processing unit now features a water recycling system.

Other products showcased were GapMaster EM interactively alongside the new Variable Gap System. The company also promoted the new, Industry 4.0-ready digital KMS Pressure Gauge System, and its latest motorized version.

Similarly, **Westland Group** showcased the Eco Sleeve, developed by its subsidiary Ligum. Designed for multiple reuses, these ultra-thin sleeves reduce material consumption and energy use, extending the product's life while minimizing waste.



"Today, even a beginner-level operator can run advanced equipment and achieve excellent results"

The trend toward lighter, more efficient components is gaining momentum. **Rotometal** reported strong growth in its aluminum lightweight cylinders, particularly in the UK.

'Most competitors only offer stainless steel, which is heavy and increases manual handling and freight costs. The demand for lighter options has grown massively,' says Lee Hadley, regional sales manager, UK and Ireland at Rotometal.

'We are also seeing strong growth in hybrid and digital printing trends in the UK, along with a shift toward wider web machines. We are adapting by offering tooling for both narrow and wide web applications,' Hadley adds.

SPECIAL EFFECTS AND PRECISION

The drive for higher-quality and more tactile print finishes was evident across several exhibitors. **Acme Rolltech** presented its Advanced Channel Engravings (ACE) technology, combining tonal printing benefits with high-density channel engraving. Its specialty aniloxes such as ATAC for raised effects, AHDW for opaque whites, AGLT for glitter and ATXR for texture offer decorative effects.

Sandeep Sharma, director of Acme Rolltech, says: 'At Labelexpo Europe, visitors were impressed by the embellishment anilox samples first introduced in India. People couldn't believe these effects were achieved on anilox rolls. With the third machine coming in, we will push these capabilities even further. By Labelexpo India 2026, it will be a completely new level.'

Cheshire Anilox Technology also demonstrated TactiLoX for high-build tactile finishes and easyFlo HD for high opacity whites in a single pass.

Precision and performance stability were also a focus. Kocher + Beck's GapMaster EM (Electronic Move) and Variable Gap System offer high control, while the company's digital KMS Pressure Gauge System delivers higher stability and Industry 4.0 readiness.

The new Quick-Change die-cutting station enables magnetic cylinders to be pre-mounted during an ongoing job, significantly reducing changeover times.

Labelexpo Europe 2025 coverage continues with a review of plates and platemaking technology



Fullerton, CA
Monroe, NC
West Chicago, IL

ACHEM

1-800-213-3321

- Flexible Packaging Heat Sealable Polypropylene
- Clear and Matte Selfwound Lamination
- Excellent Scuff Resistance
- Thermal Transfer Printable
- Quiet Release Lamination
- Clear Unsupported Lamination Film
- Emulsion Acrylic Adhesive
- UL Recognized
- Excellent UV Resistance on Polyester Lamination

Achem Industry America Inc.

www.achem-usa.com

PLATES AND PLATEMAKING

New technology automates steps in the platemaking process, improves ink transference and reduces energy consumption. Selah Zighelboim reports

Labelexpo Europe 2025 attendees interested in plate and platemaking technology saw a dynamic show, with numerous product launches. These new products are introducing greater levels of automation to platemaking, while reducing its environmental footprint, such as through the use of the latest LED technology. Meanwhile, plate screening is improving ink transference and innovations in plate mounting continue to minimize reliance on manual labor.

Vianord presented three innovations. The first was an Evo dryer with improved heat distribution, reduced energy consumption and faster drying speed, resulting in an 81 percent improvement in energy efficiency. The second was an LED exposure machine. Vianord also highlighted its Freedom inliner, a compact system that integrates with imaging and exposure machinery, enabling a plate to move automatically from the imager to the exposing unit to the processor.

Glunz & Jensen also highlighted an automatic platemaking system called Flex-Line, which automatically moves a plate from the washout processor to dryers, light finishers and into stacker holding slots. Additionally, the company unveiled a new wider-web 52x80in version of its LED Flex-Pose exposing unit.

Print Systems presented nine machines, including several new ones from its Quicker brand, such as the Quicker UV LED Combo, designed for plate pre-press shops and large flexo printers, developed in collaboration with **Toyobo MC**. This in-line machine provides mask removal, rinsing, drying, exposure and curing.

Eco3 launched the Magis Pro-Eco 300+, an all-in-one aqueous processor that includes UV LED exposure, washing, drying and finishing. Eco3 also featured its Spir@l screening capability. Screening is a process of creating shapes in the dots of the plates to enhance image quality. Eco3 creates tiny spirals in its dots for its screening technique, hence the name. Surface screening improves ink transference, achieving finer details in printing.

Esko presented its new CDI Quartz platemaking machine, also offering screening, which provides additional structure to the dots, improving ink laydown and even, the company said, potentially reducing ink consumption. Additionally, Esko exhibited its XPS Spark 4835 UV LED exposure unit, launched at Labelexpo Europe 2025, and its XPS Crystal exposure unit.

Xsys offers screening technology in its Thermoflex Edge, the third generation of its laser imager, which it launched at Labelexpo. Currently in beta testing, the Thermoflex Edge has demonstrated speeds of up to 15 sqm/hour with a single head at the 2,450 DPI. The Woodpecker Nano surface screening technology has demonstrated speeds of up to 8.5 sqm/hour, and the Woodpecker Sharp surface screening has exhibited speeds of up to 12 sqm/hour.

Fujifilm launched its Midori plates. This latest version of the company's Flenex water-washable plates is optimized for LED exposure, while still suitable for UV exposure. Alongside the new plates, Fujifilm also launched the Flenex Pro processor.

Asahi Kasei introduced AWP-Revo plates that use Asahi's CleanPrint technology, eliminating the need for detergent for washing, making them a more sustainable option. The plates are part of an ecosystem that includes a machine from Asahi that uses specialized brushes and water to wash the plates instead. This machine also recycles the water that it uses, another environmentally friendly feature.

Crownflex exhibited its complete platemaking system, including its speed dry cleaning processing machine. The dry cleaning machine uses thermal processing, rather than chemicals or water, so users don't have liquid waste to dispose of afterward. Instead, a user only needs to dispose of a piece of cloth.



"As we see the transition to more complex jobs, and operator skills being more difficult to come by, we are seeing a shift to the automatic system"

DuPont Cyrel celebrated 25 years of its Cyrel Fast thermal platemaking system. At Labelexpo, the company featured the newest generation equipment, the Cyrel Fast 1000 TD, which has recently become commercially available.

Meanwhile, platemounting machinery is trending toward higher levels of automation, reducing reliance on manual labor.

For the first time at Labelexpo, **Lehner** demonstrated a robotic arm integrated with its platemounting machine. The arm picks up plates and places them onto the plate mounter, which then automatically wraps the plate around the cylinder. The only task an operator would still have to perform is inserting the cylinders. Lehner has not actually installed this particular setup at any client facility, though it received a positive reception at Labelexpo. The next step for this setup is to automate cylinder insertion.

AV Flexologic exhibited its latest SAMM 3.0 platemounter, offering more automation than previous versions. Earlier this year, the supplier launched Automated Visual Inspection (AVI), an AI-powered technology that integrates with platemounting equipment. It's capable of identifying damaged mounting marks, and it improves accuracy and speed in the platemounting process.

Heaford showcased the manual, semi-automatic and fully automatic versions of its platemounting technology. Back by popular demand, the supplier also held its platemounting competition to demonstrate the speed and efficiency of its semi-automatic model. Sebastian Bolingbroke of MPS Systems won first place with a speed of 11.56 seconds.

Heaford's semi-automatic plate mounter is the company's most popular version, says sales director Tim Paul, though converters are increasingly investing in the fully automatic version.

'As we see the transition to more complex jobs, and operator skills being more difficult to come by, we are seeing a shift to the automatic system,' he says.

Labelexpo Europe 2025 coverage continues with a review of ancillary equipment

ANCILLARY EQUIPMENT

Ancillary equipment at Labelexpo Europe 2025 was geared toward increasing efficiency, quality and sustainability. James Quirk reports

Ancillary equipment encompasses a broad gamut of different technologies, from aniloxes to applicators, from cleaning to curing. But despite the plethora of ancillary equipment on display at Labelexpo Europe 2025, there was a common theme to be found. These crucial products continue to be optimized to increase the efficiency, quality and sustainability of the label converter's production environment and output.

ANILOXES

Acme Rolltech showcased its Advanced Channel Engravings (ACE) technology, which offers the advantages of tonal printing, including hexagonal engraving and the density of channel engraving. The company also showed its specialty aniloxes for embellishments: ATAC and ATAC2.0, Acme Tactile for screen-type raised effects; AHDW and AHDW 2.0, Acme High-Density White for opaque white printing for solids and text; AGLT, Acme Glitter for transferring glitter particles; and ATXR G and M, Acme Texture gloss and matte for texture effect.

Apex Europe promoted its GTT 2.0 engraving technology, developed as an alternative to traditional cell-based engraving. Unlike conventional rolls, the GTT design features a wave/channel that allows for better movement of ink, resulting in lower pressure and, therefore, no build-up on the back of the doctor blade.

Cheshire Anilox Technology launched a new anilox sleeve design developed to extend the sleeve's lifespan by protecting its edges, and a new engraving designed to overcome the most common narrow web print issues and improve print quality. Also on display was Maxflo+, an innovative engraving design that has been refined over 12 years to enhance the transfer of ink to the plate, thereby reducing foaming, ink spitting, mottling, pin holing, plugging and dot gain. Cheshire also demonstrated its full range of engraving technologies, including TactiLoX for high-build tactile finishes and easyFlo HD for high opacity whites in a single pass.

Pamarco highlighted its latest innovations in anilox technology and surface engineering. Its next-generation coating Terolux is said to offer exceptional durability, superior ink release and high-definition print performance even under demanding production conditions. The company also presented its range of precision-engineered anilox rolls, manufactured using proprietary laser-engraving techniques that ensure consistent cell geometry and volume.

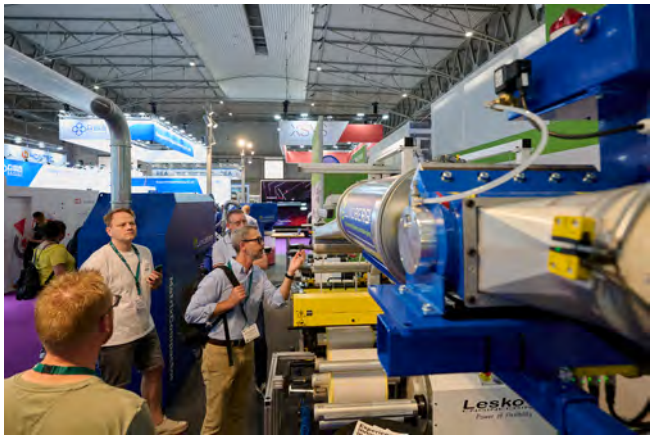
APPLICATORS/DISPENSERS

Cab Produkttechnik demonstrated the Roxi label dispenser, designed for the precise supply of printed labels. Cab units range from 'out of the box' desktop devices to modular systems for installation into automatic plants. The new Roxi applies pre-printed adhesive labels at belt speeds up to 30m/min onto flat and curved surfaces.

Dispensa-Matic showed its ranges of US-manufactured label dispensers and applicators. With more than 40 years of experience, the company holds the patent on the first motorized semi-automatic label dispenser.

Open Data showed its range of handheld labelers, label applicators, various types of self-adhesive labels, and thermal rolls.

Ravenwood expanded its Nobac 40 range with the new airless Nobac 40B entry-level linerless label applicator. It applies labels up to 200mm long and 40mm wide around various bottle sizes, achieving application speeds of 75 bottles per minute. The company also introduces a new scanner for its Com 500 coating machine, delivering new accuracy levels. Ravenwood also launched a new Stripe Roller Support Shaft for the Com 500 Coater, replacing the traditional ETP locking bush system.



"It has been a great show – our stand has been very busy"

CLEANING SYSTEMS

Alphasonics launched the DPH430-4 digital printhead cleaning system, which includes a nano-chemical cycle to supplement the advanced ultrasonics, and is developed to ensure complete yet safe cleaning of any printhead. David Jones, managing director of Alphasonics, says: 'Nano chemistry effectively does the same job as ultrasonics, but chemically rather than mechanically, thus making it an ideal medium to operate in confined spaces. Nano-Surge Technology complements our existing ultra-safe Alphasound Technology perfectly to deliver impeccable cleaning of these expensive and difficult-to-clean items. We are very confident that this device will take printhead cleaning to a whole new level.' The system on display could clean up to four heads at one time, but systems are available to accept more if required.

DC DruckChemie showed its range of cleaning products for every stage of the printing process, from plates to sleeves to anilox rollers and doctor blade chambers. The company ensures proper waste treatment during service visits and a reusable packaging concept that reduces environmental impact and waste. Cleaning fountains can also be rented.

Flexo Wash showed its full range of cleaning products and ran live demos of its Anilox Cleaning Liquid and Laser Anilox Cleaner. Also on display were the parts washer, plate washer and screen washer. The company also demonstrated its new anilox cleaner, which can clean four aniloxes with a 630mm face length simultaneously. 'The trend is towards sustainability, reusing cleaning liquid, extending the life of the anilox rolls and minimizing waste,' says CEO Anders Kongstad. 'No one wants to do the dirty work, so we do it for them.'

Graymills Corporation presented its ranges of parts washers, inking systems and industrial pumps. Among the equipment on display was the PrintClean HP Indigo parts washer, a product which received 'lots of interest' according to Robert Stanley, managing director of Graymills' UK distributor Stanley Press Equipment. 'It has been a good show, we have received lots of inquiries,' he said.

Inglese introduced its LX-series plate-cleaning machines,

which can be configured to be Industry 4.0-ready and with an automatic infeed conveyor belt. Inglese also showcased its new automatic anilox cleaners, which utilize high-pressure water, and a plate-mounting system engineered for labeling.

LaserClean demonstrated its ALCS 1000 anilox laser cleaning system. Designed for the narrow web market, the automated system has new software programs and can clean an anilox roll in less than five minutes. 'Laser cleaning is the most sustainable method of anilox cleaning,' says CEO Martin de Wit. 'It not only removes pigments, but polymers, too. We've had lots of interest and are on course to sell at least four machines.'

Recyl presented Quick'Wash Resolv, its new cleaning technology for printing plates. This simple and effective cleaning technology is specifically designed to remove ink residues and impurities from plates contaminated with solvent-based ink.

Sitexco presented a laser cleaning system for anilox rolls, specifically designed for the narrow web industry. The company launched Sitexco Label L30, which extends the range to meet all modern cleaning needs.

CURING SYSTEMS

Excelitas promoted the Phoseon Nexus One UV LED air- and water-cooled systems designed for flexo printing applications. They deliver high total UV power output to achieve increased print speeds. Nexus One comes with real-time remote monitoring capabilities. Also on show was a Phoseon FireJet UV LED air-cooled system, capable of curing at high speeds for small, medium and grand format digital printing systems. Visitors could also see the Phoseon FireLine UV LED water-cooled system, designed for a wide range of web and conveyor-based UV curing applications.

Giardina Graphic, a division of G Technologies Group, showed G-LED, a high-performance UV LED curing system. Thanks to liquid-cooled COB modules with controlled temperature, G-LED ensures high irradiance, optimal thermal management and consistent performance. The company also presented the new PN40, a UV LED module designed for narrow web presses. Developed to ensure maximum compatibility both with new installations and with retrofits of conventional UV systems, PN40 delivers high energy efficiency, operational precision and reduced consumption, supporting print widths of up to 660mm.

"Converters are focused on increasing productivity and getting more out of existing equipment"



'Participating in Labelexpo Europe is a key opportunity for us to meet with customers and partners, but also an opportunity to share how the experience we've gained over the years allows us to offer increasingly high-performance and sustainable solutions today,' explains Samuele Guidolin, division manager.

GEW highlighted its latest LED products, the air-cooled AeroLED2 and water-cooled LeoLED2. Compared to the first-generation system, AeroLED2 provides a 30 percent increase in electrical power (70W/cm), a 30 percent increase in UV dose (170mJ/cm2) and a 40 percent increase in UV irradiance (26W/cm2). AeroLED2 is also ArcLED compatible. 'It can be used on presses with web widths of up to 26in, which is important because there are many more of these wider machines in the market,' says managing director Robert Rae.

Using the same fan and ducting arrangement as the E2C, customers can switch between UV arc and AeroLED2 on any print station.

LeoLED2 now has two power levels. Nilpeter was showing a FA-26 press equipped with LeoLED2 units running at 400m/min.

GEW also showed its ExciRay lamp systems, which enables converters to produce matte surfaces without the use of mattifying agents. The company also unveiled new process control tools, including the Dose Guard UV monitoring system, which provides closed-loop in-line control of the UV dose. 'It has been a great show. Our stand has been very busy,' says Rae.

Height-LED showcased a UV LED curing system with a service life exceeding 20,000 hours. The automatic width sensor adjusts the UV irradiation width based on print format, further reducing energy consumption and accurately detecting transparent films. Tailored UV LED lamp cassettes and mounting brackets are available for new and existing presses.

Hoenle launched its LED Powerline Web curing system, highlighting the technology's flexibility, efficiency and compact design. The system addresses modern production line demands with precise UV material curing capabilities. It offers two wavelength options: the UVA version cures printing inks, while the UVC version crosslinks UV coatings, silicones and adhesives. The UVC module can be positioned in any location, providing adaptability across various production environments.

The system features efficient water cooling. Its hybrid nature enables switching between conventional UV and LED technology in existing processes.

Hoenle also displayed its UV Scan MACS dose measurement system and complete UV technology portfolio for drying and curing inks, coatings and varnishes, including UV LED, IR/Hot Air and Inert UV technologies.

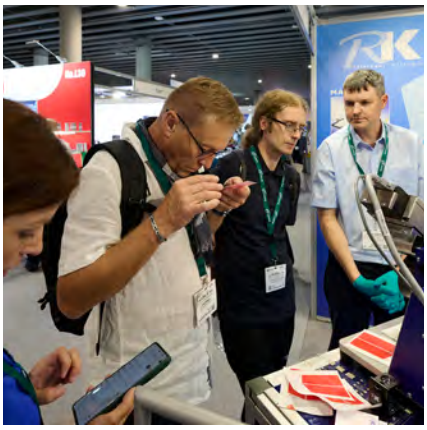
IST Metz showed a new range of UV LED curing systems for label printing applications. LEDcure NX features AI-supported SMARTcure technology, which enables maximum efficiency in operation thanks to intelligent control. The portfolio is complemented by the new Freecure system, which is equipped with integrated UVC booster technology. This was developed specifically with the stricter requirements of the new printing ink regulation in mind, particularly for the reliable implementation of low-migration printing applications. All UV lamp systems are LED-prepared as standard and can be easily converted to LEDcure NX. This creates investment flexibility for future production planning. 'We see enormous potential in the label market,' says Arnd Riekenbrauck, sales manager narrow web at IST Metz. 'Our aim was to develop cutting-edge technology that makes economic sense for both small and large label printers. With our new product line, we are convinced that we offer exactly the right answers to the challenges of this dynamic market.'

IST Metz's UK-based partner **IST Intech**, also part of Metz Holding, was also at the show, presenting specialized systems for digital label printing.

Lichtzen highlighted its UV/IR/LED printing portfolio, including UV LED retrofit systems, IR (NIR/MIR) LED drying systems and UV inks specifically optimized for label and packaging applications.

UV Ray presented its MaxLED lamps with a new air-cooled technology, complementing its water-cooled systems. The new air-cooled version maintains consistent temperature and emission performance throughout its lifetime, offering long-term energy and cost savings. It features a compact, modular design and precision-managed power for various UV curing applications. It can also be configured in hybrid set-ups with UV Ray's mercury lamps. The company also highlighted MaxLED as a retrofit option for straight-path presses and debuted its Goliath UV reflector, delivering uniform output with lower web temperatures.





"The relocation to Barcelona from Brussels has been a good move"

DOCTOR BLADES

Agergaard Group presented AkeBoose Nova TK, an all-in-one chamber doctor blade system, engineered for label, folding carton and flexible packaging flexo printing. Combined with the compact, low-pulsation, energy-efficient EPP100 peristaltic pump, suitable for both UV and water-based printing inks and coatings, the system enables a resource-efficient, closed ink circuit for elevated print quality and efficiency in flexographic workflows.

Esterlam showed its new-generation doctor blades, which use the latest developments in advanced polymer technology to provide instant start-up, enhanced print quality, longer blade life and improved operator safety, according to the company. Giving a uniform ink film across the entire anilox, Esterlam synthetic doctor blades have been proven to reduce dot gain, meaning less material usage and faster job changeovers. Requiring less pressure, Esterlam's self-lubricating blades will reduce wear and scoring to the anilox and increase doctor blade life. The unique edge profiles offer consistent performance and help eliminate ink spitting.

Flexo Concepts showed two new polymer doctor blades. TruPoint Polylam can replace steel blades in all applications and reduces wear on the anilox rolls. TruPoint Edge is a longer-lasting blade for specialty applications. CEO Kevin McLaughlin says: 'We've had excellent response to the new blades. We've been selling them for a year, but this is the first time we've had them at a show.'

PrimeBlade showed its ranges of doctor blades, with particular focus on its Nano Series, which features nano-technology integrated into the steel. Ronny Eriksson, head of sales, says: 'The nano-technology helps to provide extra-long life. Whereas our competitors use ceramic coatings, which are harder to recycle or cannot be recycled at all, our doctor blades are recyclable and feature 95 percent recycled steel.'

TKM showed NEOFlex, its latest patented doctor blade technology. Thanks to its innovative blade tip, the pressure can be reduced by up to 40 percent. This leads to lower wear on doctor blades, end seals and anilox rollers (including scoring lines and general wear). The tip ensures consistent ink transfer to the anilox roller. 'We've had a lot of great feedback and many leads,' says product manager Julian Stüven. 'The relocation to Barcelona from Brussels has been a good move.'

TESTING EQUIPMENT

ChemInstruments offers a comprehensive range of precision instruments designed for quality control, research and development. These instruments are engineered to test the performance of pressure-sensitive adhesives, labels, tapes, films and substrates according to key industry standards, including PSTC, ASTM, Finat and TLMI.

CISC Semiconductor showed products designed to boost the productivity and quality of RAIN and NFC inlay and label production. CISC's RFID Xplorer in-line production tester provides real-time analytics for quality assurance, encoding and process control. The company's tools empower manufacturers to identify and eliminate defects early, ensure compliance with RAIN standards and achieve higher yield rates.

RK PrintCoat Instruments showed its FlexiProof 100 machine, which incorporates a custom-designed UV LED unit, an alternative to the dichroic mercury arc vapor lamps currently used. It utilizes a doctored ceramic anilox roller and a photopolymer plate, allowing for realistic printability testing at a maximum speed of 100m/min on all types of flexo substrates. RK also showcased its VCML Pilot coater, the GP100, K303S Multicoater, Esi Proof, KLOX Complete and K Hand Coater.

Voyantic introduced the upgraded Tagsurance 3 system, a comprehensive system for measuring the performance of UHF and HF RFID inlays, tags and labels in different stages of the production process, from chip attachment to label converting and incoming inspection. Additionally, Tagsurance 3 enables the encoding of RAIN RFID labels on high-speed machines, eliminating the need for external encoding solutions and streamlining production processes.

WEB GUIDING/MONITORING

Erhardt+Leimer launched the Elscan OMS5 web monitoring system, which uses two high-resolution 18-megapixel cameras, each with distinct fields of view. In addition to the higher image quality, the dualView technology enables delay-free digital zooming up to the highest magnification level, eliminating the need for motorized lens adjustment.

Re unveiled the latest evolution of its established ReVision NET system, debuting with a new web tension controller that offers improved response speed, precision in web tension control, and an intuitive touchscreen. Also on display were the company's web guiding systems and edge sensors for achieving optimal web alignment and process stability.

Renova showed its new Futura web guiding system. It features an actuator and rotary sensor integrated into the roller body, allowing for quick and easy installation and ensuring fast and precise web centering even in the most compact systems. The all-in-one technology of the Futura system reduces mechanical backlash, misalignment drift and the typical

issues of physical pivots such as friction and wear. The Futura web guiding system is available in single or double roller versions.

MISCELLANEOUS

Baumer showed its Xdot digital UV varnishing system. The system is capable of jetting raised braille text to the Marburg Medium standard and offers high abrasion resistance and excellent readability. The company also promoted the modular Xtend^3 controller, offering a user-friendly interface, automated job management, and quick text and data import.

ContiTech presented its latest portfolio, which includes precision rubber printing blankets by Conti-Air, Phoenix Xtra Blankets, Printec, Rollin, Sava and Vulcan, for offset printing and sheet-fed applications, as well as flexographic printing forms for direct engraving by Conti Laserline and the Axcyl Flexo Plate Mounting sleeves.

Double E promoted its ranges of cores and core cutters, roll handling equipment, waste management and handling systems, and web guiding and tension control systems.

IEEC Power Electronics showed its latest compact and efficient corona treatment system designed specifically for narrow web and label printing. The system could also be seen in action on a press from Multitec at the show.

Lang showed a range of engraving machines, including CNC engraving machines of the Impala series, designed for milling of embossing dies, male and female dies and smaller cylinders. For bigger cutting and embossing cylinders, LANG offers the RM series. The complete system also includes the Pulsaris 300FS laser engraving machine, which features an ultra-short pulse laser for creating special effects, as well as a 3D software package for designing creative and complex projects.

Lenze presented the compact multi-axis servo drive i750 for precise motion control. The company also showed the intelligent i950 cabinet servo drive for demanding servo applications, which easily integrates into modular machines, and the C520 controller, featuring high computing power for demanding motion control in compact machines.

Lundberg Tech unveiled the new generation MatrixCompactor 160, a waste-capturing system designed to handle label matrix waste from one press. The system enhances production by capturing and compacting label matrix waste, reducing the use of virgin materials, cutting transport-related CO_2 emissions, eliminating unnecessary disposal of paper cores and easing physical strain on operators.

Macsa ID showed its coding and marking systems, including laser coding and track and trace systems. Among the technology on display, BlueBox allows laser coding directly on cardboard boxes, eliminating the need for labels, inks and adhesives. ClearPix performs laser coding on PET bottles with permanent, high-resolution marks. iLumiFlex is a UV coder for flexible packaging applications.

Martignoni launched Labelfles C109, a new high-performance corona treater.

Matho highlighted the Cuttobag (CB), a compact unit that integrates cutting, extraction and collection into a single, space-saving design. Suitable for film, label and edge-trim waste, the CB offers quiet operation, low operational costs and high cutting performance. Also featured was Matho's line of cutters, engineered for energy-efficient granulation of production waste.

Meech showed its range of static control and web cleaning equipment. Among the systems on display was the Hyperion ionizing bar product series, including the 945IPS Mid-Range Ionizing Bar launched earlier this year to improve safety and enhance product quality for mid-range applications, and the Hyperion 650QAC, designed for ESD-sensitive applications such as label printing with integrated RFID chips. 'Converters are focused on increasing productivity and getting more out of existing equipment, and our products can help them to achieve that,' says sales director Ian Atkinson. 'The show has been great and exceeded our expectations.'

Novacore showcased high-precision paper cores, produced with strict dimensional tolerances and consistent, repeatable quality.

Pluriservice Group demonstrated its modular Apix Cobot print apply systems. The company also promoted a wide range of software, including VisionTech for monitoring the vision station, Sentinel Software for centralized monitoring, real-time production monitoring software, E2K Collect Enterprise Software for data collection on Android devices, E2K RF Software for warehouse management, and E2K Spooler for print automation.

Qualivision exhibited its label overprinters and print-apply systems.

Rossini demonstrated its ranges of sleeve systems and printing cylinders.

Tootech promoted its laser barcode label printer, the TTE-72FK, which prints on the middle layer of labels, with a maximum size of 108 mm x 108 mm and a resolution of up to 2,000 DPI.

Valco Melton presented its LP Series Coating Lines designed to coat and laminate a variety of substrates using hotmelts or UV hotmelts, offering complete control of the coating process through programmed recipes and closed-loop capabilities. The company also promoted Akura Applicators, which feature independent hydraulic zones, each fed by a gear pump, to ensure uniform adhesive distribution. Coupled with Weight-Inspekt, the equipment enables real-time grammage measurement and closed-loop control.

Weight Inspekt automatically corrects the flow rate in the out-of-tolerance hydraulic zone when a grammage deviation occurs.

Visitors could also see Coat-Inspekt, which offers real-time vision inspection for coating processes, providing an immediate and intuitive overview of the production status.

"Participating in Labelexpo Europe is a key opportunity for us to meet with customers and partners"



Labelexpo Europe 2025 coverage continues with a review of Chinese exhibitors



Advertisers index

Achem 118
AVT 76
Baldwin Technology 26
Cartes 108
Cellopack 102
Cerm 45
Dantex 85
Domino 30
Durico C&T 76
Durst Group 41
Eckart 124
Erhardt & Leimer 33
Far East Yu La 107
Frimpeks 64
Gallus ..... IFC
GEW 6
Gietz 98
Harper 116
Heidelberg 81
Herma 42
Hoenle 62
Hueck Folien 82
Kocher + Beck 38
Kurz 55
Label Academy ..... 94, IBC
Labelexpo Asia 56
Lartec 90
Lintec 34
LOUPE 112
Mark Andy 101
Martin Automatic 86
Maxcess 36
MoistTech Corp 102
Nicely Machinery 12
Nilpeter 18
Nobelus 107
OMET 29
Pantec 82
Polilux 60
PPG 67
Re 72
RK PrintCoat Instruments 102
Rosas 58
Rotocon ..... BC
Schober 52
SCREEN 2
SEI 68
Sinkotech 107
Sistrade 98
theurer.com 52
TLMI 70
TOYOBO 27
Universal Engraving 1
UPM Raflatac 14
Vebex 48
Yupo 86
Zebra Technologies 102
Zeller & Gmelin 62

CHINESE EXHIBITORS

L&L China editor Yolanda Wang visits the Chinese suppliers present at Labelexpo Europe 2025

Chinese brands are gaining increasing recognition from international clients, and this trend is clearly reflected in the label printing industry. At Labelexpo Europe 2025 in Barcelona, a record 217 Chinese exhibitors showcased their latest innovations, marking a 34.8 percent increase compared to the previous European edition.

Show visitors interviewed by this writer were impressed by the innovation now coming out of China. More Chinese companies are looking to set up technical support centers and agency partners in Europe to help alleviate concerns about support and reliability.

TRADITIONAL PRESS TECHNOLOGIES

Although letterpress remains a significant technology in China's label market, no letterpress equipment was displayed at this year's European show. In the intermittent/semi-rotary offset printing segment, several manufacturers stood out: **Weigang** presented its ZX320 offset press, **Zonten** showcased its ZTJ Series intermittent offset press, and **Nickel** displayed its FS350 model. Remarkably, all of these offset presses were sold during the exhibition, demonstrating the strength of demand for intermittent offset in Europe.

FLEXO TAKES CENTER STAGE

Flexographic printing continues to dominate both the European and global markets, and it was a major highlight at Labelexpo Europe 2025. **Spande** secured nearly 1,000sqm of booth space – the largest at the show – to present three flagship press lines: the S7 flexo press, the S5 flexo press and the AC mid-wide web production line with an 800mm width capacity.

The AC series made its debut, featuring an 8-color, 800mm-wide configuration with nine servo motors per flexo station. It demonstrated high-speed flexible packaging production across a wide range of materials, from 12 to 800 microns, including paper, PE, OPP, PPC, PVC, plastic film, carton, self-adhesive substrates and aluminum-coated materials.

The AC series supports both roll-to-roll and roll-to-final-package workflows, integrating in-line finishing technologies such as embossing, creasing, die-cutting, stripping, inspection, sorting and stacking.

'We're seizing this opportunity to showcase our innovative flexo printing technologies and robust product portfolio to global users,' says Ye Keqin, chairman of Spande, who also confirms eight orders were secured onsite.

Weigang featured its best-selling ZJR350G flexo press, designed for labels, in-mold labels and flexible packaging applications down to 12 microns. The company reported nearly 40 percent year-on-year growth in overseas revenue in 2024 and announced plans to establish global technical service centers starting in 2026 to offer 24-hour customer support.

'Technology implementation depends on the trust of global partners,' notes Zhou Bingsong, CEO of Weigang. 'For Europe, localization means value integration, not just exporting products.' The company plans to open and independently operate an after-sales service center in Portugal.

Zonten introduced its ZTR Series modular flexographic press, which offers UV/LED curing, die-cutting, slitting and cold foil capabilities.

Hongsheng (HS) presented its SFLEX-450 flexo press and secured a deal on the first day with Spanish converter GSP Etiquetas, marking their second HS press purchase. A GSP spokesperson notes, 'We expect our production capacity to increase by 30 percent after installing this new equipment.'



"Compared to the show two years ago, we've seen a higher level of acceptance of Chinese-manufactured materials among European customers"

'Nearly 40 percent of our business comes from overseas markets, including Spain, Italy and Germany. We've moved into our own factory, which ensures component quality and delivery timelines. We completed 80 units by the end of August,' says Ruan Jinshu, general manager of HS Machinery.

First-time exhibitor **Qianrun** sold its displayed flexo press to a Spanish converter and signed distribution agreements with VBA in Italy and Imagraf in Spain. The company showcased its servo-driven Label King S5-370-8C in-line flexo press, an 8-color model tailored to European standards for precision and efficiency.

'We spent years preparing for our first Labelexpo Europe, refining our technology to meet European sustainability, efficiency and quality standards. The visitor quality exceeded expectations. They were looking for real production solutions. We've already rebooked for the next European show in two years,' comments Ding Yinqiu, CEO of Qianrun.

Fourth-time exhibitor **Label Source** conducted live demonstrations of its in-line flexo press F6-370-10C, featuring nonstop unwind and rewind, continuous waste removal and compression for 24-hour production with high registration accuracy.

Caisheng debuted its intermittent CS-J380F label press.

Hontec showcased three key products, including the FlexiCon460-8C, an eight-color servo-driven flexographic press. The press was sold to SugarPack in Spain, Fortune Pack and Yess Label in Dubai.

Finishing equipment providers **Brotech** and **Rhyguan** also made their flexographic press debuts, signaling strategic business expansions.

Brotech introduced the FF-X530, which it claims is the world's first AI-driven flexographic press. This press integrates advanced AI algorithms to monitor, analyze and optimize every stage of the printing process, offering real-time feedback to ensure consistent quality, reduce waste and minimize downtime. 'The FF-X530 represents a transformative step in flexographic printing,' says a Brotech representative. 'It brings automation, precision and

"European buyers are increasingly focused on compliance with environmental regulations, which is now a key factor in their procurement decisions"





sustainability to help converters stay competitive in today's fast-paced market.'

Rhyguan debuted its RF-330 flexo press, a servo-driven model with two operating modes: rotary speeds up to 180m/min and semi-rotary at 60m/min. It features a minimum print size of 330mm, ideal for cost-effective proofing and small-batch production.

Other flexo suppliers, such as **Nickel**, **Daba**, **Dowell**, **Jmetech**, **Bengraphic** and **Jingle**, also promoted their latest flexo press models.

DIGITAL PRESSES

Digital printing emerged as a key trend at Labelexpo Europe 2025.

Weigang introduced its WG S350Ultra 1,200 DPI digital press and the WG S230 600 DPI digital press, designed for fast, sustainable and low-volume printing.

'Weigang has continuously updated our products to align with market needs. Our offset and flexographic printing equipment have built a strong user base. We understand our customers' production requirements and digital printing technology is a valuable complement to our existing offerings,' notes Ryan Zhou, general manager of Weigang.

Zonten showcased its ZTD hybrid digital-flexo press, which integrates CMYK digital printing with flexographic modules, enabling variable data printing and rapid job changeovers.

First-time exhibitor **GIP** presented the compact Label Smart digital press in a CMYK + double white configuration. Also featured was the Label Ultra series digital label press with an upgraded 1,200 DPI printhead. At the Spande booth, GIP displayed its Label Modular hybrid press series, which supports up to eight colors and allows modular additions such as flexo printing, varnishing and foil stamping.

Flora unveiled the Orca 350, a highly integrated modular system that enables one-stop processing for printing, cold stamping, varnishing and laminating. The machine supports multi-color, high-fidelity output in CMYK+W+OVG, covering over 85 percent of the Pantone color gamut. Its in-line digital varnish unit meets embellishment needs efficiently.

Pulisi showcased two digital presses: the Aobead 600×1,200 DPI and the 1,200×1,200 DPI models.

'Aobead digital presses have been installed in numerous countries, including the US, Russia, Mexico, India, South Korea and Malaysia,' notes Olive Liu, CEO of Pulisi. 'Many clients have ordered second or third machines shortly after their initial purchase. We now have 350 Aobead units installed, with 40 percent serving overseas clients.'

HanLabel introduced a 1,200 DPI hybrid press featuring an inkjet engine, eight-color digital printing and four flexo stations with a non-stop system.

UPG presented a six-color UV inkjet press with integrated digital varnishing and foiling capabilities. The company also showcased a water-based inkjet press and the MonoLabel press.

In addition to label digital presses, **Pulisi** and first-time exhibitor **Arojet** promoted digital presses for flexible packaging, which will be displayed at Labelexpo Asia 2025 in Shanghai this December.

FINISHING

Finishing plays a crucial role in label and flexible packaging production.

Brotech presented the SDF PLUS 370, a smart, modular digital label finishing platform offering flexibility through its patented intermittent/rotary flexo unit. It can be configured with lamination, cold foil, hot foil stamping and various die-cutting options. The company also showcased the SpeedMaster, a semi-rotary flexo and die-cutting system that runs at 110 m/min in semi-rotary mode and up to 150 m/min in full rotary mode. It features Brotech's proprietary Digital Pressure Control system.

Hontec exhibited the DiGiFiNi MPX350, a multi-purpose digital finishing converter with UV digital varnish embellishment, ideal for premium wine label printing. They also displayed the UniCon350, part of Hontec's Ready-To-Ship program, offering fast delivery. According to Hontec, they sold 20 machines during Labelexpo Europe 2025, including flexographic presses.

Denchern, a third-time exhibitor, showcased four finishing machines equipped with inspection and flexo units. Pleased with the event, they have already rebooked a 160sqm booth for the next Labelexpo Europe.

AKO introduced its Alpha finishing equipment, which includes flexo printing, die-cutting and a nonstop turret rewinder. 'Forty percent of our business is now overseas and we've established a factory in Canada,' shares Waley Xuan, CEO of AKO, which also supplies self-adhesive materials.

Digital technologies in finishing, especially embellishment and die-cutting, are gaining attention.

Brotech showcased the IDM800 digital embellishment system, capable of producing special effects such as white, metallic and varnish applications. It supports variable data printing, including barcodes, 2D codes and braille.

SAPA, a first-time exhibitor and digital embellishment supplier, presented its flagship DMS 330WFR machine. This all-in-one solution offers digital varnish and foiling functions, along with a semi-rotary flexographic unit and die-cutting unit. SAPA secured five orders at the show, including the 800WP, designed specifically for flexible packaging, marking a strong entry into the European market.

Song Cheng, Chairman of Guangzhou SAPA, notes: 'This marks our debut at Labelexpo Europe, and our equipment has received significant attention from visitors. We've also introduced our sheet-fed digital embellishment machine for folding cartons, aligning with Labelexpo's industrial exploration initiatives under its Loupe platform.'

Reborn showcased its modular RBJ-Remix 3DW 370 digital UV embellishment series, featuring semi-rotary flexo, digital embellishment and rotary die-cutting. The machine includes a 2,000-meter unwinding and rewinding unit with forward and reverse functions,



as well as auxiliary features like dust removal and corona treatment. It operates at a maximum speed of 50m/min. Reborn also presented the RBJ-Ares 350 laser die-cutting machine and reported over 30 digital finishing machines installed in the European market.

Darui Machine launched its Smarter Die-Cutter Plotter S8/S9, equipped with a CCD camera for automatic job scanning and switching. It features an integrated casting blade head bridge for enhanced stability and automatic blade depth adjustment. The new version boasts a 40 percent speed increase. Darui also displayed the Darui 360, a laser die-cutting machine suitable for roll-to-roll or roll-to-sheet operations.

Golden Laser introduced the LC 350 laser die-cutting machine, which includes unwinding, laser cutting, dual rewinding and waste matrix removal. Its modular design supports roll-to-roll, roll-to-sheet and roll-to-sticker processes. They sold five machines onsite.

ADA debuted its ULC350 laser die-cutter, which offers no thermal damage, zero mold costs and instant setup, powered by AI-driven automation. The company claims the system reduces production downtime by 60 percent and enables ultra-short runs that were previously unprofitable.

Another notable finishing machine is the pouch-making and seaming equipment for flexible packaging. **ZhouTai Machinery**, a first-time exhibitor, introduced the AMD450FSL-S servo-driven flat-bottom pouch-making machine. It achieves 100 pieces per minute with ±1.5 mm eye mark accuracy and handles films up to 160 microns thick. A special cross-sealing design accommodates PE/PE materials and minimizes waste.

Jindali, also a first-time exhibitor, promoted its S model shrink sleeve seaming machine.

MATERIALS

Among the Chinese exhibitors at Labelexpo Europe, material suppliers represented the largest group.

"We spent years preparing for our first Labelexpo Europe, refining our technology to meet European sustainability, efficiency and quality standards"

Leo Deng, sales director of **Jinda**, shares: 'We began participating in Labelexpo Europe in 2005 and have continued without interruption. This platform has helped us expand our international business. Currently, the European market accounts for more than half of our overseas sales.'

He also notes a shift in buyer priorities: 'European buyers are increasingly focused on compliance with environmental regulations, such as the new European Union Deforestation Regulation (EUDR), which is now a key factor in their procurement decisions.'

Additionally, Deng observes a generational shift in the industry: 'A new generation of successors is entering the printing sector, and their expectations for materials are becoming more standardized and regulated.'

Super Color, an ink supplier making its debut at the exhibition, reported rising demand for low-odor, low-migration flexographic inks, according to Robert Luo, general manager. For digital printing inks, however, cost remains the primary concern for most buyers.

Jinwanzheng, a specialist in film-based label materials, stated: 'Currently, our overseas business accounts for 10 percent of total revenue. Compared to the show two years ago, we've seen a higher level of acceptance of Chinese-manufactured materials among European customers.'

The company plans to continue participating in future Labelexpo events to further expand its international presence.

Antac, another first-time exhibitor at Labelexpo Europe, has long been a regular at Labelexpo Asia. The company welcomed visitors from Spain, Italy, the United Kingdom, the Middle East, India and South America.

RFID

CLS promoted the CL-822 RFID automatic label lamination machine operating at speeds of up to 60m/min.

Hoaco showed an RFID finishing machine for die-cutting and lamination, which could be equipped with printing and coating functions in-line. It has two modes, roll-to-roll and die-cut pieces.

Nexqo promoted an extensive range of RFID hardware, including RFID labels, NFC stickers, RFID inlays, pre-laminated tags and tags designed for logistics, retail, healthcare, asset management, warehouse management, cashless payment and anti-counterfeiting.

CHINESE BUYERS VISIT LABELEXPO

The Chinese Packaging Federation (CPF) organized a group of over 30 converters, suppliers and brands from China to visit Labelexpo Europe. The group focused on digital and flexo printing technologies and RFID and flexible packaging features at the show.

Xu Wencai, chairman of CPF, says: 'Labelexpo Europe is the most professional label show in the industry. We hope to learn innovations that are shaping the future of this dynamic industry through this visit. We also want to let more international suppliers to know the needs in the Chinese market and welcome them to expand their business in China.'

Li Congfa, general manager of Jinan Xinxianfeng, a 28-year-old converter in Shandong Province, visited the show for the first time to see the most innovative technology in the industry, which hadn't been introduced in the Chinese market yet.

Thirty percent of his company's business comes from labels and the rest from publishing. He was confident in the label industry's prospects and planned to invest in a second flexographic machine by the end of the year.

Another label converter in the delegation, Chen, shares: 'I want to find some sustainable solutions because most of my client base is in Europe and the US. The sustainable needs from international clients are increasing, especially after the PPWR regulation. We are preparing for the new policy in the European market.'

John Zhang, CEO of Meiqi Group, adds: 'The main technology I'm interested in is a hybrid press, which combines the advantages of digital and flexographic presses, and decreases the cost of production. I also found the in-line folding carton flexographic production line interesting. I think this will be the next potential opportunity for label converters.'

As an increasing number of suppliers pursue global expansion, the overseas expansion of converters is likely to emerge as the next key trend.

Labelexpo Europe will return to Fira Barcelona under a new identity: Loupe Europe 2027. The event runs from Oct 5 to 8, 2027

Label trends

Labelexpo Europe 2025 closed on a high note with 670 exhibitors taking part in the event that took place between September 16-19, for the first time in Barcelona, Spain. Spread across 43,541sqm of exhibition space, the top trends included sustainability, automation and exploring new print segments.

670
Exhibitors

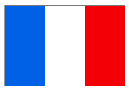
43,541
Square meters

37,122
Visitors

140
Countries represented

Top 10 visiting countries


Spain


France


Italy


United States


Germany


Poland

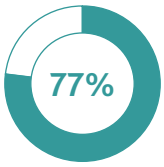

China


Netherlands


United Kingdom


India

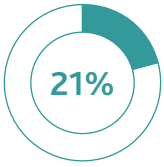
Visitor profile: Responsibility



Self-adhesive labels



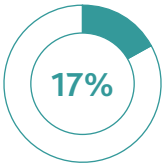
Flexible packaging



Folding cartons



Shrink sleeves

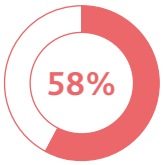


In-mold labels

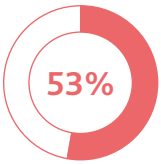


Wet-glue labels

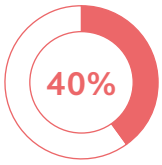
Visitor profile: Areas of interest



Flexo printing presses



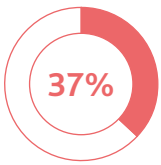
Digital printing presses (inkjet)



Inks, coatings, foils



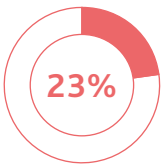
Labelstocks / films



Digital printing presses (toner)



Hybrid printing presses



RFID / smart labels



ILLUSTRATED FLEXIBLE PACKAGING

Flexible packaging continues to experience one of the highest growth rates across all printing sectors. Narrow- and mid-web printing using conventional and digital technology has opened up the market for both label converters and new customers entering this industry, who have never previously had a solution for short-run flexible packaging orders.

Flexible Packaging – a technical guide for narrow- and mid-web converters, is an essential read for those who are either setting out on their flexible packaging journey or looking to expand production.

This illustrated guide will provide you, not only with an overview to flexible packaging, but it will specifically look at:

+ Identifying the paper, foil and filmic substrates currently available in the marketplace
+ Offering a clear understanding and analysis of the multi-layer constructions and barrier properties
+ Providing practical market applications and opportunities

Also in the series:







LABELS & LABELING

A Labels & Labeling Publication

Order online at **WWW.LABEL-ACADEMY.COM**

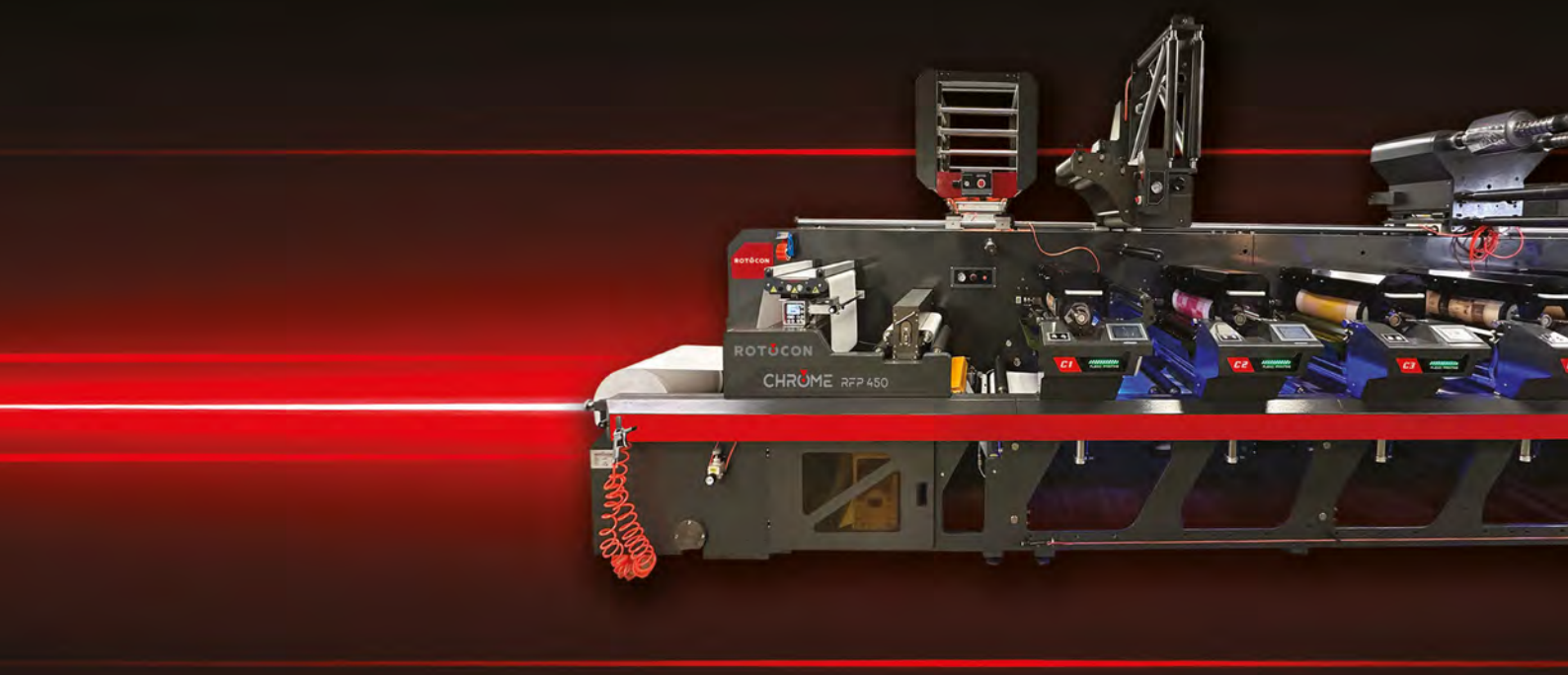
ROTOCON

The **Next** Chapter

Engineered in Germany. Built for the world.

ROTOCON unveils its new corporate identity — a bold evolution that reflects who we are today: a global brand.

With a new logo and website, ROTOCON advances with renewed strength, vision, and commitment to the label and narrow-web printing industries worldwide.



www.rotocon.world